| Week | Readings In Urban Missions |
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| 3 | Looking At Some Of Africa's Urban Challenges – Harvie Conn<br>Evangelizing World Class Cities –Ray Bakke<br>The City In The Gospels And Acts - John Edmiston |
| 4 | The Epistle of Philemon and Urban Social Justice in The NT Church – John Edmiston<br>Networks in The NT And In The City – John Edmiston<br>The City In The Epistles And Revelation - John Edmiston |
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| 11 | A Biblical Perspective On Politics – J.Ed.<br>Why Ecology is a Christian Issue – Fred Krueger |
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| 13 | Cyber-Missions – John Edmiston<br>Bridging the Digital Divide  - Denyse O'Leary |
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| 15 | From Problem to Solution Focussed – C. Iveson<br>Solution-Focussed Thinking In Ministry  – John Edmiston<br>25 Strategies For Urban Ministry – John Edmiston |
| 16 | Evangelism Is  Not Working - Mark Greene<br>Structures for Mission in the Twenty-first Century: A Blueprint (Congress on the World Mission of the Church) |
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# Cities In Scripture - Theological Foundations

*by John Edmiston*

**ARE CITIES VALID TARGETS FOR MINISTRY? ARE THEY A PROPER THEOLOGICAL ENTITY?**

When I first heard of 'Urban Ministry" I was very unconvinced. I didn't see "the city" as something that Christians ministered to. It was just an address. It was where the people you ministered to lived or the church you worshipped at was. It was just a collection of individuals and individuals were what missionaries were supposed to minister to - or so I thought. Before we undertake urban ministry we have to answer this question - can we minister "to a city" just as we minister to individuals within the city? Is talking about ministry "to a city" valid? Is a city a proper theological entity that can be addressed just like an angel , a demon or a person can? Should we just be talking about ministry "within a city" instead?

Cities are more than a mere collection of individuals. They have their own dynamics and feel about them just as any group of people such as a football crowd or theatre audience may take on a corporate personality and be described as a whole e.g. "that was an enthusiastic crowd" or "they weren't very responsive today' or "the audience was sullen and hostile". This can apply to a city and its responsiveness to the gospel. Everyone who has preached knows that in some churches there is unusual liberty in preaching the word and a wonderful sense of rapport while others are just plain hard work. Jesus seemed to see cities as theological entities that could be condemned for their hard-hearted unbelief even in the face of His teaching and miracles.

(Matthew 11:20-25 NKJV) Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: {21} "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. {22} "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. {23} "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. {24} "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

As Jesus goes through this list of biblical cities He speaks TO THEM and obviously considers them as valid theological entities that could be addressed. Jesus talks to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum and He talks about Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom and says that the cities themselves, as entities, would be judged on the day of judgement and that the standard of judgement would be how they responded to the light of the gospel. This judgement would be of the same nature as the biblical judgement of Sodom. In other words it would be a corporate punishment for corporate sin. This gives rise to a whole host of theological questions most of which are answered in two of the

other chapters in this book, "The Salvation of Whole Groups" and "The Spiritual Character of Cities". However the point as far as this introductory chapter is concerned is that the Bible sees cities as having a definite corporate identity , a definite corporate response to the gospel and a definite corporate accountability. Therefore a city is just as valid a unit for ministry as a person, church, tribal group or nation. The urban worker can be "called to" minister to a city just as much as a pastor can be called to a church or a missionary to an ethnic group or nation.

## THE CORPORATE PERSONALITY

Cities have corporate personalities Paris has one personality, New York another, Sydney a third, Beijing a fourth. These personalities are visible to those who minister to them as a whole or even to perceptive tourists but often become invisible to the actual inhabitants who are immersed in their daily lives. This corporate personality is the living context of urban ministry. Not only do cities have a feel or a personality they also have a spiritual character. Even a cursory reading of the prophets brings the conviction that cities have a spiritual character about them. Jerusalem is both the eternal city and the place where the gospel and God are most decisively rejected. Tyre is the place of wicked trade doomed to be utterly flattened by Alexander the Great and made a place where fishermen spread their nets. Babylon "the great" represents worldliness and sheer exultant hubris. This leads it to become a howling wasteland. Pergamum is the seat of Satan's throne. Bethel is the place where Jacob's ladder is and where angels ascend and descend. Rome is the harlot city that persecutes the saints but paradoxically is also where the gospel finally rests and prospers. Nineveh represents unwitting paganism simply heedless of God where 120,000 people " do not know their right hand from their left". It is mankind left utterly to itself and its own instincts. Sodom represents a city living in abundance and completely given to all forms of wickedness especially sexual perversion and slavery. It is the archetype of a city judged by God as is its companion city Gomorrah. The article "The Spiritual Character of Cities" goes into this in depth, sufficient to say that becoming aware of the city, its life, its networks, and its key people and institutions is absolutely essential to effective urban ministry.

## THE ORIGINS AND KEY ASPECTS OF URBAN LIFE IN GENESIS

Genesis is always a good place to start when examining a ministry issue so we will look at all the significant verses on cities in Genesis, omitting parallel verses etc.

### Life In The First City

The following twelve verses in Genesis 4:12-24 describe life in the first city, founded by Cain and called Enoch.

### People Become Alienated From Rural Life

(Genesis 4:12-24 NKJV) "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." {13} And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! {14} "Surely You have driven me out

this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." {15} And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

## The Population Grows, A City Is Built And Named

{16} Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. {17} And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son; Enoch.

## New Social Configurations Are Adopted

{18} To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech. {19} Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah.

## The Community Innovates There Is Specialization Of Labor and The Development of Technology.

{20} And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. {21} His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. {22} And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

## Crime Develops Among The Powerful And Arrogant

{23} Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me. {24} If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

## Comment

1. Cities come about as a result of population growth "she conceived - he built".

2. Cities are "built" they are human artifacts.

3. The city is not rural. In this case the first city was built by people who could not participate in rural life because for Cain the Lord had said "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." To this days most cities reflect this sense of alienation from the land.

4. There is an urban-rural tension characterised by different types of people and different modes of living. The first city dwellers were Cain's descendants while the line of Seth seems to have remained rural. Too much can be extrapolated into this

theologically. However certain stereotypes of urban and rural life seem to be almost constant across cultures. Like all stereotypes they need to be taken with a grain of salt.

| Urban | Rural |
|---|---|
| Cain | Seth |
| Alienation from the land | Close to the land |
| Away from the presence of God | "then men called on the name of the Lord" |
| Trade | Barter |
| Centre of music and culture, new ideas e.g. Jubal-Cain | Traditional, follows prior generations. |
| Centre of technology e.g Tubal-Cain | Peaceful, bucolic |
| Specialized labor "every craftsman.." | Mostly generalists - do everything on the farm. |
| Always awake, clock time, rhythms of business and political life. | Seasonal rhythms, governed by day and night, rhythms of crops and seasons. |
| New social arrangements often based around the desires of the powerful community members. | Traditional patriarchal family life. |
| Lawlessness and crime | In stereotype at least,country folk are honest. |

5. Cities are a way that non-rural people can avoid being "wanderers and vagabonds upon the earth.."

6. Cities are named - reflecting the perception that they are a living things in some way. Often, as here, they are named after people. In this case the naming process seems to reflect a desire for continuity and stability to counter Cain's alienation.

7. Community life in the city allows specialization of labour.

8. This in turn allows the development of craftsmanship and technology.

9. It also helps promote the arts and music.

10. Powerful people start ruling city life as Lamech did taking two wives and engaging in murder of a weaker, younger man. Crime develops among the powerful and arrogant.

**Cities Result From Human Expansion, Entrepreneurs and Empire Building**

Nimrod was an empire builder and an entrepreneur. The cities he founded became the centers of the Babylonian, Akkadian, and Assyrian empires respectively.

(Genesis 10:8-14 NKJV) Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. {9} He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." {10} And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel,

Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. {11} From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, {12} and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

11. Powerful people and companies build cities as part of their desire to expand their territory.

12. These people often have a predatory nature "a might hunter (predator) before the Lord".

13. The cities build by them can take on their expansionist and predatory nature as it is the spirit and purpose behind their foundation.

14. They then in turn expand and found their own empires. The classic example of this is Rome founded (according to legend) by the mighty legendary Greek warrior Aeneas and his descendants Romulus and Remus who were reared by wolves. Rome of course took on this predatory and expansionist nature in the consequent Roman Empire.

15. Thus cities tend to reflect their founding fathers and their nature. purpose, and vision. This can of course work for good especially in cities that have been founded specifically for Christian purposes.

**Grand Cities Can Be A Result Of Hubris - The Pride That Is Heard In Heaven**

Babel was not just a tower but a city. Later it would become Babylon the Great which would also carry the same desire to make a name for itself and also experience God's judgement. The word "hubris" is a word full of classical meaning, In Greek literature it was the attitude that most certainly brought about madness and one's doom. It is pride that goes beyond natural boundaries and tries to penetrate into the realm of the gods such as Icarus who tried to fly to the sun but his wings melted and he fell to his doom. It is the pride that comes before a fall. It is the pride Nebuchadnezzar had when he declared "Is this not Babylon the great which I have built" and for which he was punished by being sent insane by God (Daniel 4). Great cities that wish to become grand cities can fall into this sin and one of the recurring themes of hubris is the desire - or even the insistence to have "the world's tallest building.." and "to make a name for ourselves". Involved in this is the development of technology for the task. Babylon was in a flood plain with no hills and the tower would have been a prominent feature for miles. Like many flood plains there few stones so they had to make bricks to do the job instead. This great resourcefulness and unity in pursuit of their own fame led God to observe that nothing would be impossible to them!

(Genesis 11:1-9 NKJV) Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. {2} And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. {3} Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. {4} And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the

face of the whole earth." {5} But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. {6} And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. {7} "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." {8} So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. {9} Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

16. Cities reflect the linguistic unity of the community "one language and one speech". Most if not all cities have a predominant trade language though many other languages may exist within it.

17. Cities can undertake massive corporate projects in a common purpose.

18. Cities can be a way that people can consolidate against the vastness of nature.

19. Cities can become delusional "a tower whose top is in the heavens.." and proud "let us make a name for ourselves".

20. Cities which are short of natural resources will innovate and develop artificial alternatives in order to achieve their corporate objectives. Singapore is an example of this today.

21. Key themes here are journeying, founding, settling, building and scattering. This can be called "the life cycle of a city". This can be seen most evidently in mining towns today. People who are "journeying" discover the place and its resources, it is founded and for a while is settled. In time massive building and technological effort is expended until the mine runs out and the people are scattered. Cities can be also scattered (that is have the community dismantled) by war, severe famine and natural disaster.

**Warning About The Destruction Of The City Comes First To The Prophet**

Cities can not only be scattered - they can be totally destroyed. In Genesis 18 we find God telling Abraham His purposes (God calls Abraham a prophet in Genesis 20:7) thus God's purposes for cities come first to the prophets. (see also Amos 3:7).

(Genesis 18:17-21 NKJV) And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, {18} "since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? {19} "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." {20} And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, {21} "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." 22. Here the prophet is given the keys to the fate of

the city. This is no isolated incident either. Cities such as Nineveh, Tyre, Jerusalem and Babylon all had their corporate fate revealed first to a prophet who tried to turn them from their ways.

23. Thus urban ministry needs a "prophetic" component. That is a deep spiritual sensitivity as to what God is doing in the city and the message they are to bring to it as a whole.

24. The purpose of the revelation is twofold. The salvation of city and the edification of the church which beholds God at work. In this passage the second purpose is the main one" he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice".

**Intercession For The City**

Abraham Pleads with God for Sodom:

(Genesis 18:28 NKJV) "Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it."

Later we find that this intercession was heard and answered:

(Genesis 19:29 NKJV) And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

25. The urban worker should pray for the Lord to have mercy on the city.

26. The church in the city - the righteous in its midst preserve sit from judgment.

27. It is not far from here to seeing the church as the "salt and light" of the city and its main hope for transformation.

28. The church and its intercession is "hopeful" in that it can be effective for we deal with a merciful God and can at least preserve the righteous in theday of judgement.

**The Righteous Struggle With The State Of The City**

In 2 Peter 2:7,8 Lot is described as a righteous man whose soul was tormented day and night by the wickedness he saw.

*(2 Peter 2:7-9 NKJV) and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked {8} (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds);*

29. The church in the city struggles with the crime rate and "lawless deeds" all around it and like Lot may in many cases feel constantly tormented by it.

30. While the righteous both see and hear the lawless deeds they do not participate. Separation from the culture is an issue in which compromise can prove fatal - see Lot's wife.

**Warning Comes Eventually To The Righteous Who Struggle To Obey It**

(Genesis 19:12, 15 NKJV) Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city; take them out of this place! ….({15} When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." {16} And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 31. God's warning, first revealed to the prophet who intercedes now makes its way to the righteous inhabitants of the city. Despite a long series of circumstances Lot is not entirely convinced. "While he lingered…" says a lot. The prophetic is often received with some considerable skepticism by the righteous.

**The Righteous Warn The Wicked And Are Unheeded**

Genesis 19:14-16 NKJV) So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

32. Lot's warnings fall on deaf ears. Not entirely convinced himself he seems to his sons-in-law to be joking. The urban church can be in effective if a) it gets too close to the mores of the surrounding culture and b) if it is not totally convinced of the seriousness of the gospel and its mission to proclaim it.

**The Righteous Abandon The City And Judgement Falls**

(Luke 17:29 NKJV) "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

33. When the righteous finally flee the city it is a sign of impending judgement and doom.

34. This can happen as here that is God can, in reality be about to judge the city and so He withdraws his people before handing it over to lawlessness or destruction.

35. More commonly urban neighbourhoods are deserted by evangelical churches which, losing their vision for mission, flee to the suburbs. Without the preserving "salt and light" the neighbourhood gradually goes into serious decline and lawlessness.

36. Thirdly a city can reject the gospel and the righteous can leave the city and "shake the dust off their feet" as a testimony against them. Cities which thus reject the witness of Christ are doomed on the day of judgement (see Matthew 11:20-25 above)

**Sparing A Whole City**

The arrival of the righteous in a city and their acceptance can spare a city from certain judgement.

(Genesis 19:20-22 NKJV) "See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." {21} And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. {22} "Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

37. Cities that accept the righteous - especially as refugees, are spared by God.

**Judgement**

*(Genesis 19:24-25 NKJV) Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. {25} So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.*

38. Decisive and final judgement can come upon a wicked city. A relatively modern example of this is Port Royal , the wicked pirate city, the home of Bluebeard and the "the richest and wickedest city in the New World'. In 1692 the entire city slid into the sea and since then the original site of the city has seen a succession of hurricanes and other natural disasters.

**Cities Are Centers Of Commercial Dealings**

(Genesis 23:15-18 NKJV) "My lord, listen to me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead." {16} And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants. {17} So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded {18} to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

39. The gate of the biblical city was the place of trade, deals and the local courts. Here Abraham buys a piece of land from one of the leading men of the city in the presence of witnesses.

**Some Cities Have An Unusual Degree Of Spiritual Presence**

There are "sacred cities" all through the world from Jerusalem to Mecca to Benares in India to certain small country towns that make the Christian feel immediately at rest spiritually when he or she arrives.

(Genesis 28:16-19 NKJV) Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." {17} And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" {18} Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. {19} And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

40. Cities can have an unusual and manifest spiritual presence about them.

41. This presence can initially go unnoticed as with Jacob's statement (Gen 28:16) - " I did not know it.."

42. This can be a blessed presence of God as at Bethel, or a provocation to the spirit as in the "very religious" and idolatrous Athens that Paul preached in. (Acts 17:16)

**Rape, War and Intrigue In The Urban-Rural Tension**

Genesis 34 is the story of the rape of Dinah and the intrigue, counter-intrigue and the totalistic revenge of Jacob's sons. In this chapter we see the worst of both lifestyles, the sleazy rapacious opportunism of city life contrasted with the violent, patriarchal loyalties of the rural clan. To summarize the story…. In the city of Shechem Dinah is raped by the besotted Shechem (same name as the city) son of Hamor the ruler of the city. Shechem desires to marry Dinah but Jacob's sons deceitfully request that all the men of the city be circumcised first. The men of Shechem agree thinking that inter-marriage with Jacob's family will make all his vast flocks and herds theirs. While they are in pain from the circumcision Jacob's sons attack in fury and take revenge.

*(Genesis 34:26-29 NKJV) And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. {27} The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. {28} They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, {29} and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses.*

43. Cities can end up in conflict with the surrounding rural areas.

44. Not infrequently these conflicts center around wealth and marriage and various rivalries. The rural population feels exploited by the opportunistic city folk and develops a deep resentment which can move into a substantial rift between town and farm and even into open hostility as in the agrarian revolts in Europe.

**Political Centres**

*(Genesis 36:32 NKJV) Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah. (the first of a large number of parallel verses about so and so reigning in such and such a city…)*

45. Local rulers choose the city as their administrative base.

46. Some cities become "capital cities" over a large region. In this case the nation of Edom ruled by Beor had the capital city of Dinhabah.

47. The first of these capital cities was Calah founded by Nimrod in the Genesis 10 passage quoted above.

**Centralization of Power e.g. Grain Storage and Distribution**

*(Genesis 41:35, 48 NKJV) "And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities….So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.*

48. The city is being used a centre point for grain storage during the good years. Later they would become the centre point for food distribution during the famine. This greatly increased the power of the cities in Egypt at this time.

49. The ability of the city to centralise key processes and thus accumulate commercial and political power at the expense of the surrounding countryside is well-known. This is well known here in the Philippines where the agriculturally-based people of Mindanao complain loud and long about all the money and power going to Manila. Modern cities control government, commerce, law-making, access to ports and tend to be far better served with infrastructure than the surrounding provincial or rural areas.

**Urbanisation And Exploitation**

*(Genesis 47:18-21 NKJV) When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. {19} "Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate." {20} Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's. {21} And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end.*

50. The grain - that the farmers had originally produced, and which was taken from them by the government, is then sold back to them, first for their livestock and then for their land.

51. The city becomes a centre for rural dwellers who are escaping economic hardship caused by drought and famine.

52. The city becomes aware of its power and its favorable relationship with the central government and becomes the centre for taxation , dealing with government and economic exploitation of the poor.

53. Eventually the farmers are completely removed from the land and urbanized by government order.

54. When governments start the process of centralization and urbanization they can often go too far - in this case they destroyed the agrarian base of Egypt.

55. The process of urbanization and centralization can produce deep resentments. Some OT historians think that this action caused deep hatred of Joseph and his family. This entire period "the Hyksos period" was even expunged from Egyptian history.

56. The city wins. By the end of Genesis we see the absolute victory of the urban way of life. The city is a successful and highly predatory socio-economic unit. The ability of cities to survive famine and drought and to centralise and wield power efficiently means the city literally holds the surrounding rural areas to ransom.

**Conclusion**

Genesis records the absolute victory of the city as a socio-economic unit. From this point on mankind would become increasingly urban. Urbanization has never gone in reverse that I know of. An urbanized society has never turned back to live on farms. Cities are a successful and powerful way of living. Cities can organise efficiently and control huge empires such as the empires based in Babylon or Rome. It must be remembered that nationalism is recent. These were city-based not country based empires. The Roman empire was not "the Italian Empire" it was "Roman" springing from one very powerful city. Some modern political commentators predict the collapse of nationalism and the return of the "world city" as the primary political power. The city is the primary way that humanity organizes itself in community, it has a life and character of its own and will receive a corporate judgement for its corporate sin - or be spared because it welcomed the gospel. Cites are thus entities that we can and should minister to as urban workers.

# Megacities: Ready or Not
*by Karen Klein*

Increasingly, the great cities of the world "are megacities infected by a social cancer, magnets pulling people to them, whirlpools sucking people into a bottomless vortex of misery. They are a blend of slum pollution, poverty, crime, corruption."

- R. Franklin Cook, editor of *World Mission*

Over the past 100 years, on every populated continent of the world, people have been leaving rural areas in record numbers and seeking refuge in the city. For the first time in history, more than half of the world's population now lives in cities. Instead of finding refuge, however, many of these people find misery. More than 30 percent of the people living in the world's 50 largest cities are poor, powerless, and dying in urban slums - and the numbers are increasing.

Dr. Ray Bakke and Dr. Robert Linthicum are leading experts on Christian ministry in the inner cities. Bakke is the executive director of International Urban Associates, a nonprofit consulting group for church and mission agencies worldwide. Linthicum is the founder of World Vision International's Office of Urban Advance and has led urban ministry and community organizing training events in 53 cities throughout the world. He currently works as a consultant and operates an urban-ministry training organization, Partners in Urban Transformation, in Los Angeles, Calif.

**World Vision: Both of you have focused your life's work on cities. How do your approaches differ?**

**LINTHICUM:** I tend to stress what I call the work of the church with the city instead of to the city. The church tends to do good things for the city - that is, to discern what the issues are and then develop solutions for those issues. If you're talking about empowerment, however, you have to come alongside the poor, identify with them, cast your lot with them, and then work with them in addressing the issues.

**BAKKE:** My call is the bigger picture and Bob is putting it together. I'm challenging the church to face the city. To some extent, I'm calling for a worldview shift, a bias toward the city. The Bible contains 1,250 texts that mention the word "city." The city is an important theme, because the world is urbanizing at an enormous rate and we're just not ready.

**In light of this global urbanization, what are you telling churches and church leaders?**

**BAKKE:** We're seeing the greatest migration of people in human history, a migration of hemispheric proportion. More than 30 million people are wandering around the world without a home - and over half of them are Africans migrating in search of bread. The cities are the catch basins of these folks. The frontier of world mission is no longer

geographically distant. It's culturally distant and geographically right next door. It reminds me of Psalm 107, which is filled with images of people looking for a city to dwell in. In the Bible the city was a place of hope. If we really start reading Psalm 107 and other scriptures again, we'll gain a whole new perspective on what our cities need to look like as the catch basins of hope.

**Is your work producing real changes for urban poor people?**

**LINTHICUM:** God is making significant political, social, economic, and spiritual changes in regard to the poor. In Madras, India, for example - a city with over 8 million people and something like 1,000 slums -- World Vision is working in five slums, organizing churches and missions agencies and nongovernmental organizations to work together with the people. In five years, World Vision invested $34,000 in bringing these groups together. The result was, we got the government to build 2,000 homes, to deed land to 2,000 poor families, to build and open three schools and a library, to install adequate public toilets, to asphalt roads, and to put in street lighting, house wiring, and sewer lines -- which cost the government $1.5 million. So $34,000 was leveraged into $1.5 million.

**BAKKE:** The point is not to focus on the needs of poor communities, but to see their capacities and begin to work from strength.

**LINTHICUM:** Right - to call that strength forth! The $1.5 million and the government's capacity to use it was there all the time. All we did - through community organization - was get everybody together and get them mobilized. The result is five reborn communities and a growing indigenous church.

**What problems do you see in the major cities of the United States?**

**BAKKE:** Four new trends in the past decade or so have really increased the problems for urban people: first, a massive growth in the HIV epidemic; second, a massive shift in the drug and alcohol problem to crack cocaine, which is instantly addictive, immediately available, and cheap; third, a massive increase in assault weapons; and fourth, the change in the homeless population from mostly single males to mostly women and children.

In addition, the cities have large black populations that originally migrated to the north and to urban areas earlier this century, when cotton farming was mechanizing in the south. Just when they got to the cities, however, the jobs fled, leaving massive numbers of disaffected people living in cities around this country who have no opportunity other than entry-level service jobs.

To make matters worse, in the 1960s - when Congress changed the civil rights act, passed the voting rights act, and changed the immigration laws - Asians Latinos, and Africans started coming in large numbers to the United States. These immigrants came with nothing but an enormous sense of destiny - like Americans had 100 years ago. So the cities have populations that are growing in color, half of which are spiraling

downward and half of which are spiraling upward. That has complicated urban ministry dramatically.

A black woman friend of mine said the other day, with tears in her eyes, that on the right we seem to have a white male population in the United States that is angry because of the loss of entitlements and privileges of being white and male. On the left, she said, is the rising frustration of black males at the loss of hope. She was talking about how Christians should take a stand of reconciliation, in the middle, between the hatred on the right and hatred on the left. I agree with that.

**LINTHICUM:** It's always easy to find scapegoats for our cities' problems. Currently, the country's political agenda concerning our cities involves attempting to scapegoat, and it's picking the most vulnerable and powerless and marginalized people in society to do that scapegoating on.

Take the welfare debate, for example. If you ask typical Americans what percentage of the federal budget is spent on welfare, they'd probably say about 20 percent. They think we can save money in the budget by cutting back on welfare. Further, one of the basic principles in welfare reform is that you have to stop giving away so much money to people who are on welfare because they don't deserve it. The argument goes that we middle-class people have to go out and work hard for our money. Then we just give it away to poor people through programs like Aid to Dependent Children. So, the argument says, all these programs ought to be abolished.

But if welfare is eliminated, who will this affect? It's going to affect the most vulnerable people in our society. The typical person on welfare is a woman with two children who has no means of support, no capacity for income, little education, and can't get work. There are no jobs out there for a person like that. And if a job was available, it would take her away from raising her children. So she's extremely vulnerable and totally dependent on that aid.

The truth is, we won't save significant amounts of money by cutting back on welfare. In reality, less than one percent of the national budget goes for welfare. The amount of money actually spent on welfare is so minimal that it is impossible to reform it significantly without actually eliminating it as an effective tool. A 1 percent change in the federal budget is not going to profoundly affect the budget.

**Problems in U.S. inner cities still seem to be largely ignored by people living outside those areas. What do you think would be a good first step in helping us bring reconciliation and healing in our inner cities?**

**BAKKE:** We have to start bringing ourselves together again by drawing more parallels. I am a former rural person, and I always try to show people that we've got common issues here. We have to show that poor people in the cities are not the only ones benefiting from federal aid. Electrical power is cheaper in my home state of Washington because the federal government controls the Bonneville Power Co., which controls 30

dams, and is really a subsidized electrical base that allows cheaper farming and dairy operations. But we don't call it Aid to Dependent Farmers.

**LINTHICUM:** We must begin to understand that their problem is my problem. That the issue I wrestle with as a white, upper middle-class, suburban American is the same issue an African-American, working-class person wrestles with in the inner city. In essence, we are victims of the same global forces that are simply manifesting themselves in different ways in our respective situations.

The thing we have in common is powerlessness. We are not in control of our own lives. A black poor person, marginalized from the main thrust of American society, knows that he or she is powerless and has learned to cope with that. As a white middle-class person working for some giant industry, my standard of living is due to the fact that I have sold, and keep on selling, my skills and abilities to the company for financial security. As the song puts it, "I've sold my soul to the company store."

I am in a very vulnerable and powerless position, because only so long as the company needs my skills are they going to employ me. When they decide I no longer make that contribution, I become what organizations euphemistically call "redundant." Then I'm laid off, and I'm as powerless as those poor people in the inner city who don't have a job.

Yet when I begin to realize that my problem is their problem, and their problem is my problem, and that my future depends upon their future, and their future depends upon my future, then we can begin to work together. But as long as we see the suburbs and inner city areas as separate from each other, and against each other, we are playing into the hands of a system that wants to maintain and control all the power.

When I begin to realize that we cannot talk about the inner city and the suburbs, but that we're talking about one massive economically linked metropolitan area, that our problems are essentially the same, and that every one of us has to be concerned with the good of the entire metropolitan area, then there's a future for us and for our city.

Karen Klein is a free-lance journalist in Monrovia, Calif.

# Cities in God's Plan
*by John Edmiston*

O, Lord - how marvellous are the ways you work. You have plans and destinies for all creatures. Even the worm has a place in your plan, (Jonah 4:7) how much more the mighty cities filled with people! (Jonah 4:11)

(Jonah 4:11 NKJV) "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and much livestock?"

In this article we will look at what the Bible says about cities. I owe a debt of intellectual gratitude to Doug McConnell, Raymond Bakke, C. Peter Wagner, Ed Silvoso and David Claerbaut for getting me switched on to cities. Particularly to Doug McConnell who got me started when he recruited me to lecture at the Urban Ministries Training Centre in Port Moresby in 1986-87.

The following are twelve points that I see in Scripture about the spiritual nature of cities, they are gleaned from the 1322 references to city, cities or citizens in the New King James Version..

**1.The city is a multi-layered reality with a spiritual as well as a geographical component**eg Tyre and the "Prince of Tyre", Jerusalem and Zion (the spiritual Jerusalem). The city is portrayed as a geographical realm connected to and possibly ruled by an associated spiritual realm. Cities were ruled by kings and princes and corresponding to those were "principalities" in the spiritual realm. Jerusalem is a special example because it is the city of the Lord.

(Matthew 5:34-35 NKJV) "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; {35} "nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

On the other hand Ephesus was the city of Artemis (Diana of the Ephesians) a demonic principality and pagan goddess. The people of the city saw their city as "belonging to" Artemis just as the Jews saw Jerusalem as belonging to YHWH. They held festivals in her honour and maintained a magnificent temple This dark being opposed the preaching of the gospel by Paul and seems to have worked through those associated with its cultus to create a riot and drive the apostle from the city.

(Acts 19:27-28 NKJV) " {27} "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." {28} Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Such persecution of Christian workers by spirits associated with a city is not unknown today and some cities are deeply resistant to the gospel. A Biblical example of this is

Pergamos (also known as Pergamum or Pergama) which was ruled by Satan himself and thus was vigorously hostile to the gospel. Apparently this even resulted in a "faithful witness" called Antipas being martyred.

(Revelation 2:12-13 NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: {13} "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Thus we see that the church in the city stands in direct opposition to the spiritual powers and principalities that govern it thus creating a direct conflict and hostility. This can lead believers to feel besieged and helpless and unable to break through. To the believers in Ephesus - where the temple of Diana was, Paul wrote....

(Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. {11} Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

**2 The associated gods of the city were responsible for its prosperity** including its defence from invasion. If one city or nation was able to invade the other it was assumed that its protecting deity was the more powerful.

(Isaiah 36:18-20 NKJV) Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? {19} 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? {20} 'Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

**3. Salvation can be corporate** and the city can experience salvation ie a change of dominating spiritual reality. We see this with wicked idolatrous Jerusalem (before the exile) being changed to righteous Jerusalem. after God had dealt with her.

(Isaiah 26:1-3 NKJV) In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. {2} Open the gates, That the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. {3} You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

This salvation can involve having God dwell in its midst.(Zechariah 8:3 NKJV) "Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain. The Holy Spirit seems to be able to indwell corporate entities (eg a church) as well as individuals. Scriptural examples include the Holy Spirit dwelling in the temple (Ezek 43:5-7), the city (Zec 12:10) and the nation (Ezek 39:29) and sanctifying them

through conviction and purging (Isaiah 4:4) and the production of the fruits of the Spirit in the community as a whole(Isaiah 32:15-18, 61:3). The nation can grieve the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10) which is "within them" (Isaiah 63:11)and gives them rest (Isaiah 63:14).. Ezekiel talks of a "new spirit" being given to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 11:19,20, 18:31, 36:26-28) that results in national prosperity.

When God's judgment comes the righteous cities will experience salvation while the unrighteous will be destroyed. Eg Jerusalem and Babylon which are contrasted in succeeding verses of Isaiah.

(Isaiah 46:12- 47:1 NKJV) "Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, Who are far from righteousness: {13} I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, For Israel My glory. "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called Tender and delicate.

This judgement is like the judgements of individuals in that it seems to be based on how they have responded to God's revelation in Christ.

(Matthew 11:20-24 NKJV) Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: {21} "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. {22} "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. {23} "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. {24} "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

**4. The city can make a corporate response of repentance and faith in God**This is generally through the leadership. Perhaps the best example of these "multi-individual" people movements is the repentance of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah. Note that the people seem to be affected first, then the King hears and orders the whole city to adopt sackcloth and ashes and repent.

(Jonah 3:4-10 NRSV) Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" {5} And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. {6} When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. {7} Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. {8} Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. {9} Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish." {10} When God saw what they did, how they turned from their

evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

They can also reject God as a corporate entity.(Luke 10:10-12 NRSV) But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, {11} 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' {12} I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.This happened to Antioch in Pisidia.....(Acts 13:50-51 NRSV) But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region. {51} So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium.

**5. The city has spiritual qualities** eg righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, truth, praise and glory. A city can experience the indwelling presence of God and be properly called righteous and holy. When it is unfaithful to God it can be called a harlot. In the final stages of ungodly rebellion the presence or glory of God can leave the city and the city as a whole can experience God's wrath.

(Isaiah 1:21 NKJV) How the **faithful city**has become a**harlot**! It was full of justice; Righteousness lodged in it, But now murderers.

(Isaiah 1:26-27 NKJV) I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the **city of righteousness, the faithful city**." {27} Zion shall be redeemed with justice, And her penitents with righteousness.

(Ezekiel 11:23 NKJV) And the **glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city** and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.

(Daniel 9:24 NKJV) "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your **holy city**, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

(Zechariah 8:3 NKJV) "Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the **City of Truth**, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.

**6. Cities have spiritual focal points** eg temples, palaces and courts at which they transact business with their spiritual overlords through pacts, festivals and observances to the gods and the enacting of the laws handed down from those gods. These transactions reinforce their (the gods) control over the city. The customs of a city are thus not merely cultural and artistic but spiritual as well.

(1 Corinthians 10:19-22 NRSV) What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? {20} No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they

sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. {21} You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. {22} Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

God's message to cities is often proclaimed during festivals and at the very "spiritual hot spots" of the city. When Paul spoke at the Areopagus (Mar's Hill) he was addressing the people in control of the religious customs of ancient Athens. When Jesus ministry reached its peak He "spoke daily in the temple". When Paul evangelised a new city he tended to start at the synagogue or local Jewish prayer meeting. Many of the prophetic messages to cities in Scripture were proclaimed during festivals in the temple or at the "high places" such as Bethel which were respected for great spiritual events having occurred there in the past. A message proclaimed in Westminster Abbey seems to carry more weight than if it is proclaimed from the small church I go to here in Townsville, Australia. If we want to take cities for God we must proclaim His message from the points that the city itself recognises and authenticates as being a part of its spiritual tradition and centre.

**7. The city is often dominated by a certain spiritual associations or sets of meanings**. Just as we would associate Zurich with money, Washington DC with power, Paris with fashion and romance, Rome with religion and culture, or Los Angeles with beautiful people. In the Bible Bethel with meeting God and dedication to Him, Jericho with spiritual warfare, Tyre with bartering for souls, Dan with idolatry, Babylon with organised proud rebellion or "hubris".

**8. The people in the city are affected by this atmosphere** and their salvation and the cities salvation are intertwined. That is not to say that an inhabitant of Babylon or Tyre is beyond salvation but that it is harder to be saved there than say in the restored Jerusalem. The classic case of this is Lot and his family in Sodom and Gomorrah.. Lot's family had spent so long in Sodom that many members of it had absorbed its values.(Genesis 19:12-26) While the New Testament tells us that Lot's soul was tormented day and night by what he saw (2 Peter 2:7.,8) it is clear that this did not rub off on his family. His wife ended up as a pillar of salt and a memorial to the consequences of loving this present world. His two daughters were on the brink of marrying unbelievers who scoffed at angels and perished in the destruction. These daughters had spent so long in Sodom and been so eroded morally by its values that they later got Lot drunk and committed incest with him. (Genesis 19:30-38). The descendants of this union became the Ammonites and Moabites, perpetual enemies of Israel. What may have originally been a godly (but possibly weak) family was shattered into fragments because it had been deeply affected by the ungodly value systems that dominated the cities where they lived. With respect to their salvation they were "saved as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15) escaping with their lives and nothing more when the cities were destroyed

**9. Cities are not immutable**. They can, and do, change character after a trauma. They can be purified by judgement or sink into idolatry. Jerusalem was a godly city under David and Solomon then gradually fell into idolatry until it could only be described as a

"harlot". God punished Jerusalem with war and famine and exile and after the exile in Babylon it again became a God-fearing city. Nineveh (above) changed drastically for a while under the preaching of Jonah.

**10 . God has destinies for cities as well as for individuals.**

There are many prophecies concerning cities in the Bible eg Jericho, Tyre, Sidon, Jerusalem, Babylon, Ekron, Gath all have destinies mapped out for them in Scripture. The prophecies for Tyre for instance have been fulfilled in exact detail though given hundreds of years before the events occurred. Sometimes the fulfilling of these destinies involves the active prayerful cooperation of God's people.

(Isaiah 62:6-7 NRSV) Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest, {7} and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth.

**11. Cities can suffer as a whole unit and experience desolation**. Isaiah vividly describes the abandoned Jerusalem as(Isaiah 54:11 NRSV) O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. The distress of the city is abandonment, desertion, lack of people and an absence of glory in its midst. Proverbs describes the ruination of a prince and his city(Proverbs 14:28 NRSV) The glory of a king is a multitude of people; without people a prince is ruined. It is the people, not the structures, of a city that are its glory. When they leave or are decimated by famine, war or plague then the city suffers as a whole. We see a reflection of this today when a major employer in a city lays off thousands of staff and the whole economy of the city is affected as they move to other areas. The city is so inter-related that when one part suffers it tends to affect the rest. The biblical images of suffering cities are not just metaphors for individual suffering (which is described elsewhere eg Lamentations) but a real description of the anguish of the corporate entity.

**12. Glory is a central concept to the identity of a city** The city seems to reach its fullest meaning, its zenith, when it is described as "full of glory". This reaches its zenith in the new Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 66:10-11 NKJV) "Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; {11} That you may feed and be satisfied With the consolation of her bosom, That you may drink deeply and be delighted With the abundance of her glory."

(Revelation 21:23 NKJV) The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

The glory of a city is its ability to be honoured and to bless all who dwell there. It is a combination of total prosperity and absolute holiness.

(Isaiah 54:12-13 NRSV) I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones. {13} All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children.

# The Urbanization of Our World
### by Timothy M. Monsma

This article first appeared as "The Urbanization of Our World" in *Cities, Missions' New Frontier* by Roger S. Greenway & Timothy M. Monsma from Baker Book House Company, ***http://www.bakerbooks.com***.

My parents were born during the last decade of the nineteenth century, in "horse and buggy days." When my mother was a teenager living on an Iowa farm, someone in the house shouted, "An automobile is coming down the road!" Everyone in the house ran outside to see what they had never seen before: a strange contraption sputtering down the road of its own accord with no horse pulling it!

When my mother died at 100 years of age, she was living in a world of freeways, airplanes, television, computers, and trips into space, with still newer and amazing inventions waiting on the drawing boards. To a greater or lesser extent, the entire world participated in the explosion of technology and inventiveness that took place during the twentieth century.

Along with the explosion of technology and a rapid increase of population came the explosive growth of cities. Here are quotes taken from *World Urbanization Prospects* published by a United Nations agency in 1998:

> It is projected that just after the turn of the millennium, in a few years, for the first time in history urban dwellers will outnumber those in traditional rural areas . . . By 2006, half of the world population are expected to be urban dwellers. The urban population is growing three times faster than its rural counterpart. By 2030, three of every five persons will be living in urban areas. *(1)*

**FIGURE 1**: Click *here* to view Figure 1 (in a new window), a graph of the *Top 10 Most Populous Cities 2000*
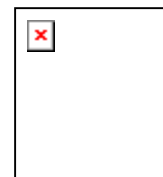
The giant cities of today's world would not be possible without tremendous technological advances. It is surprising, therefore, that some of the largest metropolitan areas in our world today are located in some of the least developed areas. And some of these cities have grown in spite of extensive and chronic unemployment.

In this chapter we will briefly review the reasons for urban development and look at the fifteen largest cities of the world with their prospects for continued growth. This will be followed by some of the implications for Christian missions during the twenty-first century.

**The Dynamics of Urbanization**
What is the reason for the origin and growth of cities? In other words, what is the reason for this process that we call "urbanization"?

Cities are centers of service and dominance. That is to say, cities arise and grow because they serve the towns, villages, and farms that surround them. This activity takes various forms; some cities emphasize one more than the others. As a city grows larger, however, it tends to serve and influence its hinterland in at least eight major areas. People who live in towns and villages expect cities to render these services and would be disappointed if cities failed to provide them. Note that each of these services requires personnel to run them, and therefore each contributes to urban growth.

*1. Government.* Many ancient cities began as centers of government. All modern nations need not only national capitals, but, if they are large enough, regional capitals as well. These capitals cover all people, whether they live on the farm or in the city.

*2. Education.* We are all familiar with university towns. Most schools of higher education are in cities, which offer libraries, part-time work for students, and easy access from the surrounding area. This is especially important in the developing world, where people rely more heavily on public transportation than they do in the West.

*3. Health care.* A big hospital can usually give more extensive medical care, including surgery, than a small hospital. Big, diversified hospitals are found in large cities. This is especially true in the developing world. Throughout the world, therefore, the health care industry promotes urbanization.

*4. Information.* People, even those who are illiterate, want to be informed about the world, and especially about their own nation. Information is provided by radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and books. All these avenues of information originate in the city. The sphere of influence of a given city often extends as far as its radio waves. Radio and television place virtually everyone in immediate contact with the city. Nowadays, at least one radio can be found in most every village, no matter how remote.

*5. Entertainment.* Whether it's through the fine arts, museums, popular music, sports, movies, or eating out, people go to the city to enjoy themselves. They expect the city to provide this type of cultural leadership. With the help of radio and television, sports events that originate in the city are enjoyed by people in towns and rural areas for many miles around. The entertainment industry helps cities to grow.

*6. Trade.* In the days when people were more dependent on shipping goods by water than we are today, cities grew by the riverside or where there were deep harbors. Later, cities grew where railroad lines and roads intersected. Now airports (or the lack thereof) affect urban growth. Commerce and the transportation that it involves contribute mightily to the growth of cities.

*7. Industry.* Manufacturing has given tremendous impetus to the growth of Western cities and some cities of the developing world. It is surprising, therefore, when cities having minimal manufacturing nonetheless achieve world-class status (a population of at least one million and direct ties with the world beyond its national borders). Remember, however, that there were large cities in the ancient world, including China

and India, long before industrialization took place. Some cities grow large even without extensive industrialization.

*8. Warfare.* Some cities began as military camps. This is the history of Ibadan in Nigeria and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, not to mention all cities whose name begins with "Fort." The need to set up military camps and defense plants encourages urbanization during wartime. Many young men in Africa and Asia first left their home villages in order to join the armed forces. Once they had seen the world, there was no way to get them to settle back in their home villages again.

## Three Other Factors Affecting Urban Growth

*1. Internal growth.* Studies have shown that the greatest growth of most cities does not result from people moving in from the countryside, but from the surplus of births over deaths taking place within a given city. The rural population also has a surplus of births over deaths, but the surplus tends to leave for the city, usually because there is no extra farmland available. When there are more births than deaths in the city, the surplus population, with rare exceptions, stays in the city and helps to swell the total population. Urban growth by way of childbirth is also encouraged by the superior health care usually found in cities.

*2. Push and pull factors.* In most places people are pushed off the farm mainly because there is no surplus farmland available. If a farmer has three sons, only one can inherit the farm from him. The rest must find work elsewhere. Shortage of farmland is made worse by drought, a drop in farm prices, and landlords demanding high rent from tenant farmers.

In addition to the "push factor" there is also the "pull factor": The city attracts many people, especially those of the younger generation. They are intrigued by the night life, the entertainment, the excitement, the jobs, and the ambiance of the city. One must remember in this connection that most villages and farms in the developing world are still without electricity, running water, gas stoves, and other amenities, but these conveniences are available in the cities.

*3. Missions' encouragement of urbanization.* The educational programs of missions promote urbanization. Whether they have reduced a language to writing and taught people how to read it, or whether they have established primary and secondary schools, missionaries have enabled the graduates of their educational programs to migrate to cities. Modern cities cannot function without a large population of literate men and women. Missions have not only taught them how to read; they have taught many other skills that are useful in the city.

Missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, have also made a decisive contribution in the area of health care. In many countries where 50 percent of all children once died before they reached 5 years of age, missions have worked on public-health education and other strategies to prevent disease, and in hospitals and clinics to forestall the mortality that accompanies it. Because of tremendous advances in the field of medicine during the twentieth century, medical missions together with government-sponsored

programs are now contributing to a population explosion such as the world has never seen before. Even death through warfare and epidemics like AIDS, although retarding the growth rate in certain nations, has not been able to erase what by the grace of God medical science accomplished during the twentieth century. Thus population growth will continue in the twenty-first century partly because of many dedicated doctors and nurses motivated by the love of Christ. This in turn will impact continuing urban growth.

Let us now look at the fifteen largest cities in the world, using their growth as a sample of growth in many smaller cities as well.

The information given in the graphs is based on figures in the United Nations publication, *World Urbanization Prospects; the 1996 Revision. (2)*



**FIGURE 2**: *Click here* to view Figure 2 (in a new window), a graph of *Projected Growth of Mega-cities: Top 15 by Year, 1995-2015*

**FIGURE 3**: *Click here* to view Figure 3 (in a new window), a graph of *Projected Growth of Mega-cities: Top 15 by City, 1995-2015*



**Lessons to Be Learned from the Bar Graphs**
*1. Location.* The growth of mega-cities will be dominated by the non-Western world for the foreseeable future. (Mega-cities, according to U.N. studies, are metropolitan areas or urban conglomerates with 10 million or more inhabitants.) For all other cities, their growth is a fact of life that covers the globe, including both the developed world and the developing world.

*2. Asian dominance.* The fifteen largest cities in the world in 1995 were pretty well spread over the earth, but concentrated in Asia: eight in Asia, four in Latin America, two in Northern America, one in Africa, none in Europe, and none in Australia and nearby islands. This trend will continue for the foreseeable future.

*3. The rate of growth.* Virtually all the mega-cities will continue to grow, but some at a faster pace than others. The growth of Lagos illustrates the rapid growth of many smaller cities in Africa.

*4. Medium-sized cities.* According to Brockerhoff and Brennan *(3)* as well as others, the growth of mega-cities in the developing world has slowed partly because cities of medium size are growing more rapidly than previously. While smaller nations may have one "primate" city that dominates all, larger and more populous nations (such as India, China, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Brazil) have numerous cities with a population of a million or more in addition to the mega-cities.

*5. The importance of smaller cities.* The growth of mega-cities illustrates the growth of all cities of various sizes. While the mega-cities are larger than cities have ever been before, the majority of city dwellers do not live in the mega-cities, but in much smaller

cities. In some nations the medium-sized cities are growing at an even faster rate than the mega-cities.

The chart below shows where urbanites worldwide were living in 1995, beginning with the very largest cities and descending to the smallest cities:

| Where Do City Dwellers Live? (1995) | |
|---|---|
| **Size of the Metro Area** | **Percentage of Total Urban Population** |
| More than 10 million | 7.6 |
| 5 to 10 million | 6.7 |
| 1 to 5 million | 22 |
| 500,000 to 1 million | 9 |
| Less than 500,000 | 54.7 |

Chart: "Where Do City Dwellers Live?," United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects*, p. 27.

The distribution of urban dwellers in cities that vary greatly in size, as noted in the chart above, has an impact on mission strategy, and this will be considered in the next section.

**Implications for Christian Missions**
Missions during the twenty-first century must face the fact that the majority of the world's population increasingly will be living in cities. Cities are to be the target of mission penetration not only because most ethnic groups once living in rural areas now have representatives in cities; they are to be the target also because cities contain many social groups that have not yet been reached with the gospel. Furthermore, cities are centers of dominance and therefore are the pace-setters for a society. If numerous groups in the giant cities of the world receive the gospel, the good news of God's salvation may then spread from city to hinterland just as it did in New Testament times.

"He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:9b-10). "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia-your faith in God has become known everywhere" (1 Thess. 1:8).

Many cities in the Southern World (or the developing world) are growing even though they have high rates of unemployment and are surrounded by the shantytowns of the poor.

Already at this point it can be said that the presentation of the gospel must be accompanied by a demonstration of the gospel in tangible Christian compassion for those in need. As my colleague Roger Greenway has said in a recent booklet entitled *Together Again*, **_(4)_** authentic Christians have always known the "kinship of word and deed," and this must be taken seriously among the poor who are crowded into many contemporary cities.

This is not a new idea in evangelical circles. More than one hundred years ago, the Dutch reformer, theologian, and statesman, Abraham Kuyper said:

> The gospel speaks to you of a Redeemer who, although he was rich, became poor for your sake so he might make you rich . . . It points you to God's Son, but one who became the Son of Man and went through the country, from wealthy Judea to the poorer, despised Galilee, addressing himself to those who were in need or oppressed by sorrow. Yes, it tells you that this singular Savior, before he left this earth, stooped before his disciples in the clothes of a slave, washed their feet one by one, and then stood and said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). **_(5)_**

Remembering the poor in the giant cities of the world is not to suggest that only the giant cities ought to receive our attention. It has already been observed that if one looks at sheer numbers, the majority of urban residents actually live in much smaller cities, and the smaller cities are also important.

Paul did not limit his ministry to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, the three largest cities of the Mediterranean basin; he went to many provincial capitals and other cities of note as well.

Christians the world over have rejoiced in the demise of Marxist rule in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This writer strongly supports the efforts of the Christian community to send missionary recruits to that part of the world. Someday the cities of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union may rival in size the cities of Asia and Latin America. In the meantime the Christian community needs missionaries who are there for the long haul, stationed in all the cities of the former communist bloc.

Just as there recently has been great enthusiasm to reach unreached peoples in rural areas, tremendous enthusiasm may now develop to reach them in mega-cities and other important cities. However, other important cities might be neglected in the process.

# Looking At Some of Africa's Urban Challenges

**Harvie M. Conn**

Protestant or Catholic, the record of the church in the African city has not been strong. Writing of the Catholic Church in 1974, Aylward Shorter notes that "the Church is simply not organized to deal with the urban scene. The population of the cities is growing rapidly and the church is unable, with her present structures, to keep pace with that growth" (Shorter 1974:43). Almost twenty years later, Shorter was repeating the charges: "In Africa today members of the younger generation display a frenzied urban bias, while the church struggles lethargically to shake off its toils [sic] of anti-urbanism" (Shorter 1991:137).

Patrick Johnstone adds his amen for the Protestant side in 1993: "Christianity has grown best in rural areas and among the better educated. Few indigenous denominations and agencies have the skills, resources, and spiritual gifts to make an impact where the need is greatest" (Johnstone 1993:39).

Within the churches, widespread nominalism is calling for re-evangelization. Church planting falls far behind the growing demographics of the growing city. Issues like the relation of the gospel to culture, ethno-tribalism, Christianity's confrontation with Islam and with African traditional religions, continue to be carry-overs in the church's life.

But the focus of this special issue is not primarily on the church. It is on Africa's new urban context. What will the cities of Africa look like in the year 2001 if the Lord tarries? What are some of the new challenges, the old burdens reinforced by urban growth, that will be carried into the new millennium? I underline just a few of them in this editorial.

The Growth of the African City
Accurate statistics on demographic change are hard to come by. Since the early 1980s no census data has been available for almost half of the continent's countries. But a couple of generalizations are still true.

Africa still represents the lowest degree of urbanization of all the continents, 8.8 percent of the world's total urban population. By 1950 only three of its cities were listed by the United Nations among the world's 100 largest cities. By 1990 there were seven, their populations between two and ten million plus. Five of these were in northern Africa.

But, on the other hand, in recent decades "Africa has certainly had among the most rapid population growth and urban change of any of the world's regions" (HABITAT 1996:80). Her cities are cities in a hurry. Most African cities, small, medium-sized or large, have grown severalfold over the last few decades; some have grown tenfold during this same period. By 1990 fourteen countries had over 40 percent of their population living in urban areas. And of those countries, six had urban population

figures lower than 15 percent in 1950. In many countries, the most rapid growth has been in medium-sized cities.

The Poverty of the African City

Poverty is an old problem in Africa. The city just dramatizes it more. "Of the world's forty poorest nations, thirty-two are in Africa; of these, about thirteen are in almost complete collapse" (Johnstone 1993:35). Fifteen African countries out of twenty-seven with national populations in excess of five million record annual per capita earnings of less than $500 (U.S.). Nine of these are in East Africa.

Many factors wear away at the economic stability of the city and multiply the pain of poverty-corruption and injustice, war and political/ ethnic conflicts, a general deterioration in public services and the infrastructure, growing unemployment in the formal sector. And in the place of the "self-help city" appears the "informal city" of the small-scale street vendor and hawker, the corner food seller.

Estimates made in the 1970s suggest, in fact, that in the typical African country, that informal sector of the underemployed constitutes 60 percent of the urban labor force. For individual cities it is also high: Abidjan (44%), Nairobi (44%), Kumasi (65%), Lagos (50%), Brazzaville (37%) (HABITAT 1996:90). For these working poor, the urban center of gravity has shifted from the center city to the periphery of the larger cities, where shantytown and slum become home to more and more of the population.

The Children and Youth of the African City

Up to two-thirds of Africa's urban population is made up of the 0-25 age group. More than 45 percent is under the age of fifteen. This disproportionate number will grow with Africa's high population growth rate. And all this while their parents are dying from AIDS.

In Africa's cities the United Nations estimates that children make up seventeen percent of the workforce (80 million, says a 1998 report of World Vision). In Tanzania many of her underage workers labor as long as eleven hours a day, six days a week, on sisal plantations, growing fibers for twine, rope, cable and other export products.

With poverty as their pimp, hundreds roam the streets of Nairobi and Kampala. They rummage in the city's dumps for recyclable items such as paper, plastic, glass, and scrap metals. "They survive by means of theft and expediency. Without affection, education, and the security of family life, they are abused and maltreated by adults whom they regard as enemies" (Shorter 1991:112). In Liberia small boys under the age of fifteen are abducted from the streets to become terrorist soldiers in Small Boy Units. Child soldiers under fifteen years of age were reported in eight African countries in 1995 (John 1997:5).

The worst off in all this are the girls. Also forced into military service, they often become soldiers' sex slaves. In Malawi the exploitation of female children is on the

increase, mainly in urban areas. Masters rape servant girls, older men their relations. School girls are lured into prostitution in order to get pocket money. In some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, five times as many girls aged fifteen to nineteen are infected with AIDS than boys.

AIDS and the African City
"Africa, a continent with 9 percent of the world's population, contains 80 percent of the world's HIV-positive citizens. It is estimated that there will be 70 million Africans who will be HIV-positive by the year 2115" (Yamamori, Myers, Bediako, and Reed 1996:52). By 1998, in some parts of Africa, one in four adults is infected. That is a sharp contrast to the United States and western Europe, where the rate of infection is fewer than one in a hundred. One million Zimbabweans will die of AIDS by the year 2000. A 1996 report indicates that 111 people die of AIDS every day in Kenya (Shorter and Onyancha 1997:107). Across much of Africa one entire generation is already disappearing as city and rural areas alike feel its impact.

And the Church?
In many places there are signs of hope that these challenges will be faced. Africa's churches are beginning to face the issue of too few churches in too large cities. The Nairobi Church Survey, a city-wide model well worth copying, called for every denomination in Nairobi to triple their number of congregations by 2000 - and this only to keep up with their present rate of growth (Niemeyer 1989:73). To press these goals, theological schools like the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, the ECWA Jos Seminary, and Nairobi's International School of Theology are adding urban-oriented courses and training modules to their curricula.

Though hampered by a lack of funds, the African church is also developing a growing sense that evangelism must be tied to social responsibility. Gospel word in tandem with gospel deed must tackle poverty and child welfare issues, substance abuse, ministry to AIDS patients. Larger relief organizations like World Vision, Food for the Hungry, and MAP International are offering their services. The church is beginning to recognize "that the fulfillment of the Great Commission requires that we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, plan and nurture churches, apply the principles of Christ's kingdom in all areas of community life (compassion, justice, stewardship), and seek to reclaim the whole cosmos (soil, water, air, minerals) from the control of Satan and his kingdom" (Greenway 1998:25).

And where shall we start? Kwame Bediako, one of Africa's most prominent evangelical theologians, offers a good first step. The church in Africa must develop "a biblical and Christian viewpoint that sees these problems as opportunities for men and women of faith, with the help of God who is always working (John 5:17), to seek biblical solutions" (Yamamori, Myers, Bediako, and Reed 1996:183).

Harvie M. Conn

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# Evangelizing World Class Cities
## by Ray Bakke

Definitions of cities fall into two broad categories. Louis Wirth defines cities by forms - in other words, by structural criteria such as size, density or heterogeneity. (1) Lewis Mumford defines cities by functions, stating that "the unique office of the city is to increase the variety, velocity, extent, and continuity of human intercourse." (2)

The term urban connotes both places and processes. Los Angeles, for example, certainly qualifies as an urban place, but that does not exhaust its roles or functions. The media exports urban experiences and values, creates new language and changes expectations of rural America. One might call this "the Los Angelization of America." In other words, urbanization goes beyond places with boundaries to processes that affect us all.

With notable sunbelt exceptions, most large cities in postindustrial societies are losing people. But they are far from witnessing a decline of urbanization. Instead, large cities are extending their influence over ever-increasing spheres of life. As forms or places, large cities may be regarded as becoming less significant, but as functions or processes major cities represent continued growth and accelerated significance.

Roles of the City
Cities are sometimes classified by roles: cultural, economic or administrative. These categories enable us to see obvious differences among most cities. For example, Chicago, São Paulo and Bombay are clearly economic or industrial cities. Boston, Benares and Rio de Janeiro have primarily cultural roles in their respective countries. Washington, D.C., New Delhi and Brasilia assume roles of governance.

No one can doubt that the structures of community life, histories, ethos, population profiles and expectations of these cities are broadly shaped or influenced by the roles they play in the larger society. On a smaller scale, numerous port cities and market or county-seat towns maintain similar roles with equal regional significance for those seeking to design ministry strategies within them.

The differences between large cities and small cities or towns are of degree, not kind. Realistically, then, a culture wide decentralization of Western world cities represents not a decline in urbanization but rather a new reality. Suburban sprawl and the growth of formerly rural towns represent an extension of cities and not an escape from them. Because the roles which formerly belonged to cities are now being distributed broadly throughout the developed world, the social matrix in which God's church functions, therefore, seems to be vastly different from most people's perceptions of it. The import, however, for worldwide urban evangelization can be summarized here as a threefold rationale for the concerted evangelization of world-class cities. These three elements relate to the demographic, prophetic and strategic perspective of the city.

Demographic Perspective of the City

Worldwide urban growth has been pegged at 7.2% a year. At that rate, city populations will double in a decade. Seen concretely, the birth-over-death rate alone is creating a new Chicago and Los Angeles (six million people) in the world every month. Mexico City has passed Tokyo and Shanghai to become the world's largest city with a current growth rate of about eighty thousand persons a month, the equivalent of a million a year. A little more than half of this growth is by birth, the balance by immigration.

Urban growth in the modern developing world and that of cities a generation ago are characterized by three fundamental differences. First, current urban growth in developing nations is based upon a rapidly increasing birth rate, not simply a transfer of population from rural areas; rural areas are growing as rapidly.

Second, cities everywhere are shifting from labor-intensive to capital-intensive economies. The jobs needed to serve these growing populations just do not exist and will not exist for millions of people who come to the city hoping for a better life. But current data shows that massive reindustrialization for the sake of creating urban jobs worldwide is not happening. It is very unlikely that it ever will happen.

Finally, cities more recently formed have assumed there were neither limits to energy nor constraints on their environments. Now cities know better, and their prospects for dealing with these realities are not hopeful.

Seen globally, then, in terms of numbers, our world of 4.3 billion people is nearly fifty percent urban.

A Prophetic Perspective of the City
A second aspect of a rationale for the study and evangelization of cities is based on the role of cities as the research and development component of society as a whole. What shows up in cities today, whether new kinds of crime or new discoveries for medical care, will arrive in non-city areas tomorrow. Therefore, the future for rural and small-city dwellers is visible in large cities today. Mission strategists have not been quick to recognize this. For practical reasons, therefore, any constructive scenario for evangelism training might test ministry design and skills in the urban context before projecting it upon the culture at large.

In rural areas nearly every relationship is a primary or emotionally significant one. Almost everyone has a general relationship to everyone and everything in a routinized fashion. Not so in the city. There we choose relationships, and life is much more specialized. Thus, people for whom life was formerly a series of primary relationships must adapt to a life of mostly secondary relationships. This produces all sorts of specialized, pluralistic behavior and belief systems. In this setting, training can generate and test a variety of new strategies for evangelism.

Ghettos, for example, show up first in cities usually as responses to some of the dynamics just described. But ghettos per se are not the real problem of our times but are visible symptoms of fundamental, systematic processes. To treat ghettos as the

basic urban disease, or even to make them special targets of evangelization strategies as the sine qua non of urban ministry, is like treating a sick person's temperature rather than the disease.

Christians need strategies to cope with broad urban realities - a plethora of tactics, models and styles. Obviously, no one form of ministry constitutes an adequate response to urban pluralism.

Strategies for Evangelism

Lamentably, we observe many single-strategy evangelizations for large cities. In these cases the evangelists do not recognize the need for multiple responses to the urbanization of the world. God's people should seek to minister not only in the city but to it as well.

Cities have inherited an unusual share of all our problems and problem peoples who have dropped out of other places. Evangelism is most effective when the passion for evangelistic effectiveness is adorned with broad-ranging concerns and goals for the renewal of the whole of city life.

As in the days of old, urban evangelization is most effectively accomplished by those within the city itself (See, for example Jer 29-4-7 and Is 58:12.)

Is it not ironic that many contemporary Christians who claim a high view of Scripture continue to ignore the biblical truth stated plainly in hundreds of Old and New Testament texts dealing with urban mission? Surely "the blessed hope" is the Lord's intervention, not the church's continued flight from the presence and task of urban evangelization.

If our analysis is correct, evangelization of the cities today will affect the countryside tomorrow. Surely the cost accountants of mission budgets cannot fail to see the significance of urban mission as a high-growth investment, even though in the short run it often costs more than ministry in rural areas.

For nearly two thousand years the church has possessed the mandate to disciple all the peoples or nations of the world. Now, in this generation, we are discovering where these peoples and nations are located: in the large cities of the world. Urban pastors and missionaries need a global perspective to interpret the modern city. They need international skills to live and serve there. Among the nearly sixty thousand residents (1980 census) within a one-square-mile area of an inner-city Chicago neighborhood, about fifty nations of the world are now represented. Theologically, one might ask, "What is God trying to accomplish by the urbanization of his world and the internationalization of our cities?" The fact that he is doing it is undeniable. Could it be his way of showing us the priority now for urban evangelization?

Every city now has links with populations "back home." To reach out to a person in the name of Jesus Christ in East London is to simultaneously reach out to the Punjab. In

Paris it is to impact Algeria. Reaching out in Amsterdam affects Surinam, Goa or Indonesia. In Berlin it affects Turkey and other places.

Though a declining population is characteristic of some world-class cities, others are experiencing rapid growth. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is in the process of urbanizing. With their large and international populations, major cities have become a microcosm of the world and thereby provide a place to develop and test strategies of world evangelism.

Cities continue to challenge churches and mission agencies to develop specialized structures and functions. But by no means can most cities be classified as evangelized. Even if they were "reached" today, at the rate cities recycle peoples and cultures, they may be "unreached" by tomorrow.

Strategies for evangelism must be devised that will meet the task of the whole city, reaching every group and person head-on.

Notes
1. Louis Wirth, Ghetto (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

2. Lewis Murnford, Culture of Cities (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970).

**Raymond J. Bakke is a professor of ministry at Northern Baptist seminary in Lombard, Illinois, and is cofounder of the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE). This article originally appeared in Faithful in Christ Jesus, ©1984 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the United States of America**

# The City In The Gospels And Acts

Last week we saw that:

The Kingdom of God is where God's will is done on earth, including in the individual life, the church, the city and the nation.

That the gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom and involves a Christian order, a Christian way of living, of treating people well out of the love of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom is righteousness, joy and peace and involves life being ordered by the Spirit in freedom, grace and love.

**The gospel is a gospel of the Kingdom of the Heavens.**

[There are three heavens or "shamayim".

The first heaven is where "the birds of the heavens" fly. (Genesis 1:20, Psalm 104:12, Daniel 2:38)

The mid-heaven or second heaven is where the angels fly and do battle. (Revelation 12:4-12, 14:6,7) After the second heaven is cleanses in chapter 12, the gospel is proclaimed in it in chapter 14!

The third heaven is where God dwells, where Satan was cast out of and where Paul or the person He knew heard "inexpressible things". (2 Corinthians 12:2 NKJV)  I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago; whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows; such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

Satan falls from third heaven where he as an anointed cherub, to second heaven in the OT, after the cross he falls from second heaven to become "the prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians. After a  battle in Rev 12 where Satan tries to retake the second heaven he is cast out of the heavens entirely. He is forced to Earth and incarnates as the Anti-Christ. He wars with God and is cast to the Pit. After 1000 years Satan tries to retake Earth and loses yet again and his final place of punishment in the lake of fire.]

The kingdom of the heavens is where God's heavenly power is manifest, where the will of God is done 'on earth as it is in heaven" where His power reaches out of the Third heaven and down to us in healing, resurrections, exorcisms and transformations and in the gospel being preached to the poor.

Thus the **Ideal City** is a place where the Kingdom of the Heavens is present on Earth and God rules over the city in its entire order – its laws, its worship, its social life, its wealth, the longevity of its inhabitants, the relationships between neighbors in safety, justice, joy and peace.

The gospel is thus much, much more than the Four Spiritual Laws. The gospel involves right relationships between persons in the city. The gospel is the good news of god's Kingdom order being available here on Earth and a call for us to repent from that which is contrary to the Kingdom order and to enter into it with humility and joy.

**The gospel can be contradicted not just by heresy but by criminality:**
(1 Timothy 1:9-11 NKJV)  knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, {10} for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, {11} according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

**Denying the gospel is not just a matter of doctrine but of lifestyle:**
(1 Timothy 5:8 NKJV)  But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
(Titus 1:16 NKJV)  They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.
(Jude 1:4 NKJV)  For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**The gospel is impossible to fulfill alone.**
The Kingdom of God involves having a group of people obeying a certain goldy lifetyle in community. There are many "one another" commands in Scripture: have peace with one another (Matthew 9:50)  love one another as I have loved you (John 13:34, Romans 13:8) Romans 12 has: be kindly affectionate to one another (v.10), give preference to one another (v.10)  be of the same mind to one another (v.16) do not judge (Rom 14;13), accept o.a. (Romans 15:7), admonish o.a. (Rom 15:14), Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:6, 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12), do not go to law with o.a. (1 Cor 6;7) do not deprive one another (1 Cor 7;5) ait for one another (1 Cor 11:33), have the same care for one another (1 Cor 12:25), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), bear with one another (Eph 4:2), be kind to one another (Eph 4:32) forgive one another (Eph 4:32), speaking to one another is psalms and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19) submit to one another (Eph 5:21) , do not lie to one another (Col 3:9), comfort one another (I Thess 4:18) edify one another (1 Thess 5:11), exhort one another (Heb 3:13) consider *the spiritual condition of* one another (Hebrews 10:24), confess your sins to one another (James 5:16) and pray for one another (James 5:16), have compassion for one another (1 Peter 3:8), be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9) and minister to one another (1 Peter 4:10) plus a host of "do nots" such as do not grumble to one another etc.

The city is the local community in which the commands and lifestyle of the Kingdom of God are carried out.

To preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God in the city means to call the city to repentance, and to enter into a new Christian lifestyle based on love of God and love

neighbour and participation in the Kingdom of The Heavens and its manifest spiritual power and blessings.

**Preaching the gospel to the City in the NT involved:**

**Miracles:**

(Matthew 9:35 NKJV)  Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

(Matthew 10:5-15 NKJV)  These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. {6} "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. {7} "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' {8} "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. {9} "Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, {10} "nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. {11} "Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. {12} "And when you go into a household, greet it. {13} "If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. {14} "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. {15} "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

(Luke 10:8-9 NKJV)  "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. {9} "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

(Acts 8:5-8 NKJV)  Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. {6} And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. {7} For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. {8} And there was great joy in that city.

**Teaching With Authority**

(Luke 4:31-32 NKJV)  Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. {32} And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.

(Luke 4:43 NKJV)  but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."

(Acts 8:40 NKJV)  But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

**Personal Testimony**

(John 4:28-29 NKJV)  The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, {29} "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

**Making Disciples**

(Acts 14:20-22 NKJV)  However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. {21} And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, {22} strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

(Acts 15:36 NKJV)  Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."

**Public Debate**

(Acts 17:17 NKJV)  Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

**Leadership Training**

(Titus 1:5 NKJV)  For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you;

**In Acts The City Is Where The Spiritual Conflicts Over The Kingdom Took  Place**

(Acts 13:44-45 NKJV)  On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. {45} But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

(Acts 13:48-50 NKJV)  Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. {49} And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. {50} But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

(Acts 17:16-18 NKJV)  Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. {17} Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. {18} Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

(Acts 18:5-11 NKJV)  When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. {6} But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." {7} And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. {8} Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. {9} Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; {10} "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." {11} And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.


**The Epistles Are Addressed To The Church In The CIty**


(Romans 1:7 NKJV)  To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Ephesians 1:1 NKJV)  Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

(Philippians 1:1 NKJV)  Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

(Colossians 1:2 NKJV)  To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.


**The Goal Of The Gospel Is A Saved City And A Redeemed And Perfected Christian Community**

(1 Timothy 2:1-4 NKJV)  Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, {2} for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. {3} For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, {4} who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(Revelation 21:2-3 NKJV)  Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. {3} And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

**The Effect Of The Kingdom In The City Is Joyous Transformation**

**Jerusalem:** (Acts 4:31-35 NKJV)  And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. {32} Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. {33} And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. {34} Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, {35} and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
 (Acts 5:14-16 NKJV)  And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, {15} so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. {16} Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.


**Samaria:** (Acts 8:5-8 NKJV)  Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. {6} And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. {7} For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. {8} And there was great joy in that city.


**Ephesus:** (Acts 19:9-20 NKJV)  But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. {10} And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. {11} Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, {12} so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. {13} Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." {14} Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. {15} And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" {16} Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. {17} This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. {18} And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. {19} Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. {20} So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

**The Church In The City Consisted Of Networks Of Believers, Often In House Churches**

(Acts 2:46-47 NKJV)  So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, {47} praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

(Acts 5:42 NKJV)  And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

(Acts 8:3 NKJV)  As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

(1 Corinthians 16:19 NKJV)  The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

(Colossians 4:15 NKJV)  Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.


**The City That Does Not Respond To The Gospel Faces Judgment**

(Matthew 10:14-15 NKJV)  "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. {15} "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

(Matthew 11:20-24 NKJV)  Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: {21} "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. {22} "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. {23} "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. {24} "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

(Matthew 23:37-39 NKJV)  "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! {38} "See! Your house is left to you desolate; {39} "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

**For the Kingdom of God to be fully manifest it must order the lives of people in a certain geographical location**, when this location, this city, refuses to be ordered

according to God's ways and persists in allegiance to its old Gods and traditions, it is ripe for judgment.

**The Kingdom of God, when it orders the life of a city, will change the spiritual atmosphere, the ways of the inhabitants and quite possibly the politics and economics of the entire city.**

(Acts 19:23-28 NKJV)  And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. {24} For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. {25} He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. {26} "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. {27} "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." {28} Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

**Summary**

1. In the gospels and Acts the primary reality for the city is how it responds to the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God.
2. The gospel of the Kingdom of God involves repentance from sin and entering into a lifestyle consistent with a heavenly order.
3. Denying the gospel means denying this heavenly order and refusing to live a holy and loving life.
4. The gospel is the good news of a forgiven, joyous and gracious lifestyle in fellowship with God and one another. Entrance involves submission to the Kingdom of God and changing their spiritual allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. This Kingdom lifestyle makes blessing available to all (Matthew 5:1-8)
6. The aim of this gospel is the formation of a blessed, Spirit-filled and transformational Christian community that obeys the Sermon On The Mount and the "one another" commands and which then transforms its community into the Kingdom lifestyle.
7. The gospel is thus a gospel about a corporate reality.
8. The expression of this corporate reality will be in a local area, a city.
9. The gospel brings this heavenly order, the Kingdom of the Heavens, into a city that may have another dominant spiritual order.
10. The new heavenly order frequently manifests in miracles, and deliverances as the battle for the spirituality of the city is engaged.
11. As this local area experiences the presence of the Kingdom it may wholly accept the gospel, accept the gospel except for a resistant segment such a Jews or idol-makers, or reject the gospel entirely.
12. Acceptance or rejection of the gospel in the Gospels and Acts is predominantly by communities or major subsections of communities – not by individuals. (Luke 17:25 NKJV) "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (Acts 13:46 NKJV) Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.
13. If the city rejects the gospel it will be judged with a very severe judgment.
14. **The city is the place where the gospel is accepted or rejected and is where the Kingdom will find its expression in a godly Christian community living in peace.**
15. The city is the place where Paul writes his epistles, and the Christians, who were often in house churches, fellowshipped in networks.
16. Cities are ruled by "kings and those in authority" such as the city clerk in Ephesus, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and Caesar in Rome. These officials are frequently gateway people who can assist or hinder the gospel.
17. As the Kingdom is manifest in the city customs may change and religious, political and economic life may be impacted.
18. The city is not just a place of preaching the gospel but for disciple-making and teaching and training to produce mature disciples and obedient communities obeying all that Jesus commanded.

19. The final obedient city /Christian community is the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is opposed by the world community, the idolatrous Babylonian city.
20. Thus the goal of the gospel of the Kingdom in the gospels and Acts is a fully redeemed and Spirit-filled city in perpetual joyous revival, that is discipled into obedience into the all the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ and where equality and community and love and joy and peace and safety reign.

# The Epistle to Philemon: Community and Social Justice In The Early Church

*by John Edmiston*

The epistle to Philemon is a masterpiece of Christian persuasion, of mercy, of grace and of the God of second chances. It is a plea for genuine mercy to be exercised towards Onesimus the runaway slave. When the historical context is taken into account it gives us a glimpse into the principles of community and social justice in the early church. The glimpse may be through the small window of this brief epistle - but it has an amazingly wide view! We shall go verse by verse and watch the story unfold.

**Verses 1-3**

**(Phile 1:1-3 NKJV) Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow labourer, {2} to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: {3} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The opening greetings which we will study today give us a glimpse into church life in the first century. There are three things that show up. Firstly that the church was made up of active people, secondly that the church met in houses, thirdly that there was a strong mutual affection between a widely dispersed network of active Christians. Lets look at each of these in turn.

The church was not a group of spectators, it was active. When Paul refers to them he uses terms like "labourer" and "soldier" indicating strenuous effort and determined endurance. This seems not to have been true of just the apostles but the ordinary active Christians of this little house church. How many people met in Philemon's house? Twenty? A dozen? Yet of that small number 3 are commended by Paul. The church contained an appreciable percentage of active Christians who were real workers for the Lord.

Secondly and quite obviously the church met in houses. The New Testament always refers to the church as the people - never the building. The church can "meet", but buildings cannot gather! In many places in the world and increasingly in the West Christians are meeting in homes as their primary means of fellowship. This is perfectly legitimate. You can be just as good a Christian at home as at Winchester Cathedral. But not at home alone. The church meets - remember! Its a gathering! You must

have a number of people present for it to be a church. The location can be grand or humble - the Lord will still be present.

Thirdly the house church was not isolated from the wider Christian community. It was not tucked away. It was part of a much larger network that accepted the authority of Paul the apostle. Paul knew them by name and treasured them as people. There is obvious warmth in his greetings and later he tells Philemon that he may stay there on his way through. There was a flow of fellowship between Paul and Timothy, the church at Philemon's place and the church at large. The church at Philemon's place was no cult. It was a natural part of the body of Christ as a whole and participated in its life and accepted the authority of its apostles. House churches need not be small-minded - they can still embrace the larger Christian community.

Should we all rush out and start house churches? I don't know. It is certainly a biblical model with many advantages which can work very well. Yet the leaving of denominational churches can be counter to Christian love. If your denominational church is any good - stay there! Nurture the relationships you have and do not leave in bitterness or found a house church out of an independent spirit. House churches and denominational churches can work together as part of God's Kingdom to achieve His purposes. House churches are generally better at relationships and acts of mercy and love. Denominations can have missionary boards, hospitals, Christian schools and orphanages. Each has their place.

**Verses 4-7**

There are some significant differences between bible versions in these verses...

**(Phile 1:4-7 NKJV) I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, {5} hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, {6} that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. {7} For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.**

**(Phile 1:4-7 NRSV) When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God {5} because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. {6} I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. {7} I have indeed received much joy and**

**encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.**

**(Phile 1:4-7 NIV) I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, {5} because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. {6} I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. {7} Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.**

With all this diversity I went back to the Greek and did a literal translation of verse 6 which comes out as:**"in order that the commonality/fellowship of your faith will become productive - in the experiential knowledge of every good thing - that is in you in Christ".**Not much better huh? Paul seems to want Philemon to have a faith that is participating in community so actively that he discovers in a real experiential way all the good that Jesus Christ has placed inside Philemon's heart.

People are undiscovered treasures. Undiscovered both to themselves and others and it is only as we actively share ourselves with others that we will discover all the wonderful things that God has put inside us in Christ. To give you an example. God is gradually turning me from tactless into gracious. This new graciousness is often a surprise to me. It is when I find myself being gracious in tense situations that I think "where did that come from". It came from Christ within me! It is my involvement with others that brings to the surface the good that Christ has worked deep down in my life. I discover in a real experiential way ("epignosko") the good things Christ has put in me - and in those around me. We discover what Christ is doing in each other as we relate in a dynamic community of faith.

Philemon seems to have been the perfect host. His ability to "refresh the hearts of the saints" is noted as is Philemon's exceptional love for God's people - "your love for all the saints". It may seem a little strange to us for Paul to say " For we have great joy and consolation in your love,". It is unusual for us to commend people for their ability to love others. We commend people for their financial giving, their preaching ability or their zeal. We tend not to publicly commend them for being loving and hospitable. When was that last time your church gave an award for "being very loving" ?. Yet love is top of the biblical agenda. Its top of Peter's list of virtues - brotherly love and agape (2 Peter 1:5-7) and it is the basis of the two great commandments. Therefore if we are to commend anything about anyone - it should be their ability to love others. Paul was spot on in doing so!

What does this say to us? It says to me that the most important ability I have is the ability to love others and to draw out of them the riches that Christ has placed within them. Any intellectual, physical or spiritual abilities I have need to be servants of love and to the community of faith. I am by nature competitive, yet I find that two different atmospheres exist - the ethos of love and the ethos of competition. Its either-or. I cannot develop my "killer instinct" and love my neighbour much at all. I can choose to live in love and for love or in competition to win. If I live in love I bring the riches of Christ out of myself and my neighbour. If I live in competition I bring out envy, jealousy and strife.

May I call you into the deep abiding realisation that your great ability - the ability God and the apostles observe, is your ability to love others and to draw out of them the riches that Christ has placed within them.

**Verses 8-13**

**(Phile 1:8-13 NKJV) Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, {9} yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you; being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ; {10} I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, {11} who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. {12} I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, {13} whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.**

I always chuckle when I read this part of the letter. It is about as manipulative as you can get and still be a good Christian. Paul, having told Philemon what a good chap he is, in a public letter, now starts a bit of arm twisting by bringing to mind certain pertinent facts. "For love's sake I appeal to you", "Paul the aged", "though I might...command you", "in my chains", "my own heart", "my son Onesimus". It is a relentless flow of reminders that create an absolute obligation on Philemon - and yet more obligations will follow in succeeding verses!

Is it right to remind someone so forcefully of their moral obligations ? If the epistle to Philemon is Scripture, and it is, then the answer must be "Yes". Christian community involves maintaining proper moral obligations to each other. It can be said that we have legitimate demands on each other. It is not a community of the irresponsible but of the accountable. One of the most commonly acknowleged of these demands is that those who do God's work should be paid for it. It is a Christian moral obligation that "those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel". What happens when this obligation is not being met? The minister

concerned has every right to hold the community accountable and to remind them of their clear, scriptural moral obligation to him - but if the minister is wise he will do so as tactfully as Paul does here. Moral obligations to one another exist - and we can insist on them being upheld.

Would everyone would leave church if we did that? I don't think so. This intuition comes from the observation that companies which tactfully insist on staff meeting their obligations (say not taking long morning tea breaks) actually end up with more committed staff and a better happier work environment - wheras those that are "soft" on such things end up miserable places to work. I'm not sure you can translate this to churches but I suspect that you can to some extent. If people are lovingly held accountable then the jobs around the church get done, the new people get greeted and taken home for lunch, and the worship is better organised. Also if we are held accountable for the way we love others and the way we treat people at church - then we will lift our game a bit. Not that love should be all obligation - but a certain expectation of right living helps us watch our moods, our temper or our sarcasm.

The particular moral obligation being asked here was the restoration and right treatment of Onesimus the runaway slave. Paul was insisting on a gracious reception for a Christian brother, he was asking Philemon to lay aside his "legal rights" to punish Onesimus and instead to treat him well. Sometimes a Christian brother sins against us in a way that is punishable by law or actionable in a civil court. The Scriptures are quite clear that we must not go to court against each other before unbelievers (See 1 Cor 6:1-8) because of the disgrace this causes. Legal action and the spirit of revenge tears to shreds any Christian community very quickly. Paul wants Philemon to build Christian community through the exercise of true Christian grace, restoration and forgiveness - not to destroy it through punitive legal action.

Christian community involves us in moral obligations based on grace. Love is holy and responsible. Love forgives. Love remembers what is due and performs it. If we are part of God's network of believers, if we receive good from those we know in Christ, if the gospel has come to us through others, then we should contribute back into that network and "pull our weight" for the edification of the body of Christ in love and fulfil our obligations to each other. And we can lovingly exhort others to do what is right also.

**Verses 14-19**

**(Phile 1:14-19 NKJV) But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. {15} For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might**

**receive him forever, {16} no longer as a slave but more than a slave; a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. {17} If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. {18} But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. {19} I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay; not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.**

This is diplomacy at its best. How far Paul has come in himself! In his early days of ministry before he went to Arabia for up to thirteen years) he was tactless and abrasive, so much so that Acts wryly puts the following narrative together..."(Acts 9:29-31 NKJV) And he (Paul) spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. {30} When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. {31} Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."

Paul was so tactless in his boldness that he was actually dangerous! He had to be removed from ministry and sent home to Tarsus - then the churches enjoyed peace! Paul was Luke's hero but he records his early days as a humiliating flop. Later on Barnabas remembered this firebrand and sought him out when someone with a passion for Greeks (Hellenists) was needed at Antioch. Now the great disputer has mellowed with the years and is using clever persuasion to gain his way with Philemon. Paul appeals to Philemon's better nature and draws the desired response out of him. He gives Philemon freedom to choose so that his good deed may be a voluntary one and not done "under compulsion". He reminds Philemon of the new status of Onesimus as a "beloved brother" - not just property, a slave, and beloved also to Paul. He implores him to receive Onesimus "as you would me" and with many other persuasions makes his point.

Philemon is not humiliated, those hearing the letter read would gain the impression that Philemon was being given the choice to be noble about sending Onesimus back to Paul as Paul's personal servant (see verses 11-13) This is a good example to us - perhaps we could draw the desired response out of people not by compelling them, or guilt-tripping them but by appealing them to show how noble they can be, by calling on their best side and asking them to show the nature of their love.

Finally Paul deals with the thorny practical problem of any financial losses that Philemon may have occurred through the loss of his slave. Paul takes personal responsibility for them saying "put them on my account, I will repay.". Then Paul tactfully reminds Philemon of his obligation to the apostle who shared the gospel with him: "not to mention to you that you

owe me even your own self besides." This is strong language! In times of old if someone saved someone's life then the person who was rescued owed the rescuer a huge debt forever. We have forgotten this principle today. Yet it is biblical. Paul, as the one who shared the gospel was "owed the life" of those who came to believe through his sacrificial ministry. The debt we owe towards those who have shared the word with us is immense! The effect on Philemon was to create an obligation that could not be got out of. Onesimus would have to be received with grace then sent back to minister to Paul.

To sum up what we can learn from this cameo historical situation: Firstly that people can change! Paul has changed from a tactless young missionary who had to be sent home to a master diplomat and statesman. Onesimus has been changed from a useless runaway slave to a "useful" (the name Onesimus means useful, and Paul describes him as such in verse 11) and beloved brother in the Lord. Secondly we learn that people need advocates - Saul had Barnabas to say that he was now useful and now Onesimus had Paul. When we have fallen and "messed up" we need someone who believes in us to come alongside and help us up as part of the restoration process. This is part of the healthy Christian fellowship that we have been talking about in this series.

Thirdly we see that we are all in debt to someone and we need to remember that before we "exact our dues" from others. We are all in debt to Jesus Christ, we are all in debt to those who have shared the gospel with us, we are all in debt to those who have helped us through the rough patches of life. We should not go around "collecting our dues" from others unless we want God to "collect His dues" from us. The parable of the King and the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-35 makes that point very clearly. We owe big - therefore we must be merciful to those who owe us a little.

**Verses 20-25**

**(Phile 1:20-25 NKJV) Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. {21} Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. {22} But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. {23} Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, {24} as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow labourers. {25} The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.**

Philemon is greeted by some of the top names in Paul's travelling missionary band. This would be like saying Dr. James Dobson greets you,

along with Bill Bright, Billy Graham, James I Packer and Mother Teresa! Philemon is greeted by three of the writers of the New Testament - Paul, Luke and Mark. Epaphras, Aristarchus and Demas were well known as well - despite Demas falling away later on. Its a very kind way of saying "all the top names are watching you to see how this turns out." These greetings would have given Philemon enormous status in the eyes of his house church while at the same time subtly putting pressure on him to comply.

A second thing this list of luminaries brings to mind is that "something is going on here". Why are all these top people so interested in the fate of a runaway slave? Because Paul's epistle to Philemon is setting a public precedent for relations between Christian masters and Christian slaves. It is a very diplomatic appeal by "the top brass" for Christian masters to treat their slaves well as brothers and to, if possible, set them free.

That is why we still have the letter today and why it was copied and passed around. It was of general application as a precedent for the entire Roman Empire, it was never meant to sit in the top drawer of Philemon's filing cabinet and be lost. This was never a personal appeal to begin with! It just looked like one! It was saying publicly "This is the way Christian masters should regard their Christian slaves - as beloved brothers." Precedents had powerful force in those days and the letter would have been absolutely revolutionary in its impact.

The list of luminaries are the top apostles of the Gentile church. Jewish Christians would have been used to regarding Christian slaves as brothers as that is the clear teaching of the Torah. Gentile Christians though would have had no such teaching in their culture and it would be easy for them to have a huge blind spot and deep economic interest in the preservation of slavery. They would not have listened to the Jews - they had to hear from their own and to feel that they were being respected in the process before they would "give up their legal rights". So all the main names are Gentile names or names of apostles to the Gentiles. Onesimus, Philemon, Paul, Luke, Mark...all the actors in this drama are people that Gentile slave owners could identify with. Philemon, the slave owner is not painted as a villain. He is complimented at every turn. Thus these "big three" apostles to the Gentiles are saying "To Christian slave owners: We appreciate the benefits of your wealth and your hospitality and your love but we would like you to treat your Christian slaves a lot better please."

Philemon is thus a strongly counter-cultural epistle. It is asking prosperous Christians to live a lifestyle that their wealthy peers would laugh them to scorn for. It is asking for them to live simpler lives, to sacrifice some of the monetary and social benefits of slavery and to treat their slaves so well that many around them would probably regard them as weak and silly. Its touching the hip-pocket nerve and the social status nerve and the sense of

personal justice and sense of property all in one hit. It is applying the basic principles of redemption to the issue of slavery and asking Christian slave masters to take "the next step along the road" to emancipation of their slaves. Its social justice at its best.

However Paul is not content to make a written appeal and leave it to the persuasive power of truth alone. He knows too well (possibly from his experience in Ephesus) that when truth and money collide - money often wins. Paul backs it up with a personal visit to inspect how things are going. "But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you." To the epistle's wider audience of Christian slave owners Paul is clearly implying (in a way they could not have missed) "If any of the churches top leadership passes by your way they will check on how you are treating your slaves." Paul emphasizes the accountability of Christian slave owners by using such phrases as "your obedience" and "I trust you will do even more than I say". They are clearly being called to a lifestyle of continuing Christian grace and and generosity towards their slaves in the light of all that they themselves owe to God and to the gospel.

How can we apply this today? Obviously in fair treatment of our employees that goes well beyond contract conditions and treats them as brothers and sisters in the Lord. To the abandoning of economic rationalism, to repent of threatening people through continual downsizing, to refrain from using lawyers to oppress people at every turn. We are called to incarnate the principles of redemption into our economic situation - even if it costs us some money and some social position. God values all Christians - including wealthy ones. He isn't out to condemn them or judge them but He does want them to be kind, to love Christians they have economic power over and to act to others as Christ has acted towards them.

# Networks In The N.T. And The City

**Do Local Area Networks Of Churches Exist In Scripture?**
Most exponents of early church history such as Robert Banks argue that the early church met in houses and these houses were linked together in city-wide networks. I see it as a bit broader than that.  I find (at least) four kinds of networks of local churches & Christians in the New Testament.

1) Ethnic networks such as those that emerged in the Jerusalem church between the Hellenistic Jewish Christians and the Hebrew speaking Jewish Christians and between Jewish and Gentile networks in Rome. These strong family-based ethnic networks were a threat to the unity of the local church. These networks exist in two types networks within the local church such as at Jerusalem and Rome and networks larger than any local church such as the Jewish Christian diaspora addressed in Hebrews. A modern day example would be the network of overseas Chinese Christians that is international and influential today. They are a network with a distinct way of being Christian but are not formalised as a denomination.

2) City-wide house church networks where believers "met from home to home, with breaking of bread and prayer.." There are references to "the church that meets in your house.." etc. With the persecution of churches believers mainly met in homes or catacombs or in the woods and such groups networked with each other passing along Scriptures "make sure this is read by the Laodecians..etc". The city seems to be the defining unit here with epistles being addressed to the networks in Colossae, Phillipi, Rome and Ephesus. The church in country towns such as Charters Towers has largely taken this form with the churches seeing themselves as somewhat merged and often holding joint meetings or combined evening services. While they largely maintain their denominational distinctives their "way of being" is as a community not as separate churches.

3) Regional and national networks such as Northern Galatia (Galatians), Crete (Titus) and in Asia Minor (Revelation) where city churches were networked together and addressed as a whole. Hebrews may sneak in here or as a sub-category of number 1 depending on your theory about its recipients.  In Revelation each individual city network is addressed in the first three chapters and then the remainder is addressed to them as a regional network as a whole.  "The house-churches in China" is probably the prime example today of networks operating across a region or  nation.

4) The entire network of believers which is referred to in Paul's phrase "as in all the churches" and is possibly the real target of the epistle to Philemon. If you read the greetings at the end of Philemon it includes many of the heavyweights of the early church including some of the main authors of Scripture such as  Mark, Luke, and Paul . It's a letter signed by representative heavyweights right across the church and tactfully intended for a very wide audience using the literary ploy of addressing one man's particular situation to reason towards general principles. The Internet acts as a tool for Christian discussion right across the entire world and creates international communities of believers around common networked themes.

**What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of local area and other networks of churches?**

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| Independent churches in a network are still in fellowship with other churches and can receive financial contributions (2 Corinthians 8&9) and theological instruction (the epistles) from them and share itinerant ministers (such as Paul and Luke). They are not lone, unresourced mavericks. | Networks tend not to be very good at organising missions, hospitals and schools. Denominations or task focused organisations are needed here. |
| **It's a natural way to organise things that can be grasped by the average Christian.** | The theological diversity within local area networks tends to mitigate against the process of complex theological formulations being achieved and agreed on. |
| Believers in local area networks share a common locality, go to the same schools, witness to the same community and feel many of the same local pressures thus it makes sense to work together. | Networks if run badly or if dominated by a single local church can be quite dysfunctional. Though that probably applies to whatever organisational structure is chosen. |
| Networks tend to have more openings for lay ministry than denominational structures and more points of entry to the body of Christ. | Networks allow a diversity of doctrine and practice which can be difficult to bring into line without an authoritarian structure e.g. the problems at Corinth and some of the problems experienced within the Vineyard Fellowship. |
| | Lack of a career path for ministers. |
| Basic common theology such as the Apostles Creed can be affirmed at meetings of the network and act as a basis for fellowship. The first Universal Creeds were formulated without the existence of denominations or much in the way of formal structure. | Networks are untidy and awkward. There tends to be a lack of things such as agendas and minutes. They require believers to trust each other and be vulnerable to each other. |
| | Christians will tend to move from church to church more often within a network. |
| They facilitate church planting and evangelism by giving an accurate picture of the state of the church in a given area. | Churches that derive a great deal of their identity from being different from other churches will be unable to join in networks constructively but able to organise their own denominations well. |
| They are capable of surviving financial hardship and persecution and depending on your end-times | |

| | |
|---|---|
| theology we might just need them in the not-too-distant future. | They are much less competitive and remove one of the driving forces in church growth – inter-church rivalry. |
| If run properly they act as a point for building trust and unity between churches in a given locality. | |
| Greater energy, creativity and adaptability to change . | |

## Why Not?

Is there any good Scriptural reason why Spirit-filled, bible-believing churches in a local area should not cooperate together and network together for the common good? I cannot think of one. Even if we don't abandon denominations we should at least form local area networks that go beyond an occasional ministers fraternal meeting.

## But aren't hierarchical structures the Scriptural model?

Many people see an episcopal structure in Scripture of deacons, elders, pastors and bishops governed by apostles in a strict hierarchy. There is a lot wrong with this view as I will show and I think that it may have arisen in part because up until now we have lacked the terminology to describe or model networks. To describe an apostle as a "hub" and a local church as a "node" would have made little sense until the Information technology revolution made networking terms common parlance. We simply haven't had the mental models to fit these terms into a non-hierarchical structure. Our only main alternative has been "democracy" and congregational government which is still denominational and hierarchical and to my mind just almost as bad as an episcopal structure.

## Jesus forbade hierarchy in the Church

(Mark 10:41-45 NASB)  And hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. {42} And calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. {43} "But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; {44} and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. {45} "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

(Matthew 23:5-12 NASB)  "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. {6} "And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, {7} and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. {8} "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. {9} "And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. {10} "And do not be called leaders; for One is your

Leader, that is, Christ. {11} "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. {12} "And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

**There Were Multiple Loci of Authority For Each Congregation**
Congregations were not ruled over by one man who was accountable to just one other etc. They seem to be ruled over by a plurality of elders, a number of visiting apostles and prophets and accepted directions in letters and via messengers. While Peter and James and John had pre-eminence it was not in a line management sense and they did not give direct orders on controversial issues without meeting with others in council such as in Acts 15. Paul, though not one of the Twelve could say that "I am not the least inferior to the most pre-eminent of the apostles." (2 Corinthians 11:5, 12;11) which would be an impossible statement in a line management culture.

**The construction of a leadership network is similar to but not at all the same as construction of a hierarchy.**
When Titus is instructed to appoint leaders (plural) in all the churches in Crete he is actually setting up a leadership network then moving on. After he departs the elders are presumably to network together and govern the churches. The Cretans were a depressed community noted for a rather laid-back lifestyle to say the least . This seems to have meant that some outside intervention by Titus was needed if leadership was to be set in place. It was also common practice after evangelising a new region. (Acts 13). What are some of the differences between constructing a viable and workable leadership network and constructing a hierarchy?

- The apostle moves on after setting up the network and while he/she may visit it to encourage it and help its life and growth the apostle does not run its day to day operations in a line management style.
- There is no indication of a regular reporting relationship between the elders and Paul or Titus. Such relationships are essential to hierarchy.
- The role of elders is the edification and growth of the network not "lording it over them" which is expressly forbidden. (1 Peter 4:10).
- Paul describes his authority as being given "for building up not tearing down" and it comes from the manifest calling and  gifting of God not from ordination or a position appointed by another human being. In fact he makes it very clear that he did NOT derive his apostleship or his gospel from any other human being. (Galatians 1).
  Thus I see the appointing of elders being a recognition of the Spirit's work in placing calling, character and competence to lead into certain Christians lives. Such appointments are the construction of a dynamic, Spirit-filled network not a human and man-made  bureaucracy.

**Would you please clarify the difference between a network and a hierarchy. It hasn't quite clicked for me yet?**
A network is like the Internet which functions quite well despite having now owner and no organisation running it. A hierarchy is like the military which has a clear vertical chain of command.

Networks have important points within them like the system engineers who helped design the structure of the Internet and who decide on its configuration such as the recent decision not to allow a capability to eavesdrop on Internet communications to be built in to the Internet. However you can hook up to the Internet without having to consult them at all and what you put on the Internet
is your business. No-one owns the Internet and no-one runs it and no-one is Mr. Internet and says what will and won't happen.  However it functions very well indeed. People make their contributions to the network if and when they please and according to their varying degrees of expertise. In a hierarchy people make contributions as they are "allowed to".

**Ok that helps but how can the Church be a network, it doesn't fit with my idea of the Church at all.**
Lets look at some of the metaphors that Scripture uses to describe the Church

- **The Body** – various parts linked through a central nervous system and where each has its part in the system as a whole. There is variety, freedom and co-ordination. The co-ordination is by the Spirit not a central HQ. The parts of the body are neither independent from each other or inferior to each other. There is no rank order of body parts. Eyes are not higher than feet as a general is to a corporal for instance. There is equality between the parts.
- **A Temple of Living Stones** – each part of the holy structure is alive and living and contributes to the whole. The key phrase is "you are being built together".
- **The Bride of Christ** – speaks of the Church's relationship with Jesus as a beautiful, pure organic whole.
- **The Pillar and Support of the Truth** - *(1 Timothy 3:15 NASB)  but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth*. This metaphor certainly suggests an ordered rigid structure and even a bureaucracy but does not describe the internal operation of the Church. Rather it's a description of its ontological relationship to other heavenly realities. The church as a whole is solid. It is its faithfulness to Scripture and the holy lives of the believers that give it this quality not a system of church government.
- **The Olive Tree –** Here branches are grafted in or out according to their faith.  The Olive Tree is a living network of believers.
- **The Kingdom –** While this is undoubtedly a hierarchical metaphor its overtones of privilege and place were constantly played down by Jesus who emphasised servanthood in the Kingdom and rebuked James and John for wanting high places. Places in the Kingdom are not assigned by man or by committees but by God . The degree to which the Church and the Kingdom overlap is quite an area of debate among theologians. The Kingdom is not a bureaucracy.
- **The Leaven –** In this parable the Church is seen as infiltrating and transforming society from within the culture. The leaven makes its way right throughout the dough. It does not sit in a lump by itself it is a good picture of an incarnated network.

While only a few of the metaphors of the Church directly suggest networks – the Body, The Leaven and the Olive Tree particularly, none of them are hierarchical or

bureaucratic. The vision of the Church in the New Testament is a far cry from today's formal denominational structures.

## Networks and The Church In Revival

The church in revival in the New Testament was a highly networked gathering of called out believers living under the direct impetus of the Holy Spirit. Since then one of the precursors to revival most commented on in the literature is ***fervent united prayer by believers of differing denominations in a local area***. In Ed Silvoso's excellent book "That None Should Perish" he describes how such a strategy won the city of Resistencia for Christ. In other words revival seems to depend on believers in a local area forming a network that at least prays together. Further evidence for this can be found in studies on revival such as "Praying The Price" by Stuart Robinson and "Informed Intercession" by George Otis (Jr.). Those who kept revival going for a long time seem to have always used networked small groups as the basic structure.  Paul Yonggi Cho has used this to build the largest church in the world with a dynamic prayer ministry at Yoido Gospel Church in Seoul Korea.

Sometimes, such as in the Reformation and the Methodist revivals the revival continued up until the point that the network became a denomination. While the Methodists were primarily a well organised network of cell groups under John Wesley the revival was powerful. When it was systematised after his death it lost its way. When the Reformation spread across Europe from place to place and small group to small group and community to community it was dynamic. Once the organisations and denominations were created it moved out of revival power. This is such a phenomenon that many have described the  "institutionalisation" of the revival movements with the comments such as  "who wants to live in an institution"? Who indeed?

## Does Denominationalism Hinder Revival?

*When believers in a given local area are so disunited that they refuse to cooperate across denominational boundaries then revival is undoubtedly hindered.*
Denominational structures encourage disunity between believers in a local area and to the extent that they do so then revival is hindered. On the other hand the formation of a vital local area network of believers loving each other, praying together and cooperating in the spread of the gospel is a very good sign of an effective church.

## Are You Saying That Networks Are More In Tune With The Holy Spirit Than Denominations?

Restricted opportunities create rivalry and jealousy. If I wanted to start a fight among children I would have only one chocolate and wave it around enticingly. Hierarchical structures are restricted in their opportunities. They are like the "one chocolate" and by their nature combined with human nature, they start fights. What I am saying is that the hierarchical structure of denominations  easily aligns with "the flesh" and its desire for power and promotes division and competition between local churches. Networks don't allow quite as much room for the flesh. They also tend to promote cooperation and some spiritual virtues a bit better. Networks can still go bad and have sinful people in them. They are not a panacea. But they don't automatically cause division the way

denominations do. For instance no-one is fighting for control of the Internet – though it seems Microsoft would like to.


**All that is well and good but how would such networks work in practice? What might they look like?**

There would be a wide diversity of local churches within the network catering for different kinds of Christians. Some churches would be traditional, some would be contemporary, some would be ethnic churches, others would be churches for drug addicts or gang members. There would be churches that believed in infant baptism and churches that believed in believers baptism. There would be small churches and large churches and cell churches and house churches and even Christian campsites and campus groups and varying ministries to people. Various events would bring the network together as one voice – a city-wide crusade, a local tragedy, a night of prayer and fasting or even a contentious political issue on which the church in the city needed to have a voice. In between all these churches would be people that everyone knew and who could pull the pastors together in unity. Christians would see each other as brothers and sisters, not as rivals. On the front  of the church building would be *Townsville District Baptist Church  a member of the Townsville Christian Network* - or words to that effect. The churches would share resources and itinerant ministries and when one was in need, say after a fire, the others would help out. They would be committed to one another. Their primary allegiance would be to the other churches of the community - not to a denominational office overseas or a thousand miles away.

**Has that ever happened?**

The church at Antioch seems to have consisted of two networks – a Jewish network and a Gentile network which overlapped and to some extent shared resources.  It seems to have produced a major and remarkably healthy church. The early Quakers were a dynamic and persecuted network as were the early Methodists and the house churches in China today. Believers learn of each others needs along these grapevines and pray for each other and even supply  financial and other help. The networks between missionaries are very close though informal and many missionaries feel more a part of "the missionary culture" than their own local church. Millions of dollars flow along the Overseas Chinese Christian network and speakers and even pastors are shared. In Charters Towers the churches meet together for a combined evening service once a month and two of the small churches share a pastor. There is such close fellowship between the Baptist, Churches of Christ and Uniting Churches that they are for all intents and purposes the one fellowship. In Townsville the youth groups of the Uniting, Baptist, Churches of Christ and Presbyterian churches are very close and members seem to go from one church to the other almost interchangeably. The youth have said quite openly to me that "brands are irrelevant". Where Ed Silvoso and the prayer house strategy has been implemented whole cities have changed their church signs to read like the example in the paragraph above or eliminated the denominational tag entirely. Local area networks are not just a pipe-dream they are here and they are helping people to find unity in the Spirit.

# The City In The Epistles And Revelation

**Revision**

1. The city is the context for the church.
2. The city is the address of most of the epistles and the seven letters to the churches.
3. The church seems mainly to be a "city church" a network of believers in a certain place.
4. The network is not divided by denominationalism though some personality cults have developed.
5. The city is an entity that God wants to redeem and make holy.
6. The city can accept or reject the gospel.
7. The joyous establishment of the Kingdom of God in the city in righteousness and peace is one of the goals of the NT church.
8. The city is a place to make disciples and to be disciplined into the commands of Jesus Christ.
9. The city is governed both by earthly leaders and by spiritual principalities in the heavens.
10. The gospel intersects the spiritual life of the city and results in spiritual, social and economic transformation.


**Bible Verses On The City - Romans - Revelation**

*The Church In The City*

(Romans 16:23 NKJV)  Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.

**(2 Corinthians 11:26 NKJV)  in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;**

(2 Corinthians 11:32 NKJV)  In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me;

 (Titus 1:5 NKJV)  For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you;

   (James 4:13 NKJV)  Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";

*Sodom And Gomorrah*

(2 Peter 2:6 NKJV)  and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;

(Jude 1:7 NKJV)  as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

*Earthly Jerusalem*

(Revelation 11:2 NKJV)  "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

(Revelation 11:8 NKJV)  And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

(Revelation 11:13 NKJV)  In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

(Revelation 14:20 NKJV)  And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

(Revelation 20:9 NKJV)  They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

**Babylon – The "Great City" And The City Of Wickedness**

(Revelation 14:8 NKJV)  And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

(Revelation 16:19 NKJV)  Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

(Revelation 17:18 NKJV)  "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

(Revelation 18:10 NKJV) "standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

 (Revelation 18:16 NKJV) "and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!

(Revelation 18:18-19 NKJV) "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' {19} "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

(Revelation 18:21 NKJV) Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

### *The Heavenly City – The New Jerusalem*

(Ephesians 2:19 NKJV) Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

> (Philippians 3:20 NKJV) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

(Hebrews 11:10 NKJV) for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

(Hebrews 11:16 NKJV) But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

(Hebrews 12:22 NKJV) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,

(Hebrews 13:14 NKJV) For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come

(Revelation 3:12 NKJV) "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

(Revelation 21:2 NKJV) Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

(Revelation 21:10 NKJV)  And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

(Revelation 21:14-16 NKJV)  Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. {15} And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. {16} The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

(Revelation 21:18-19 NKJV)  The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. {19} The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

(Revelation 21:21 NKJV)  The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

(Revelation 21:23 NKJV)  The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

(Revelation 22:14 NKJV)  Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

(Revelation 22:19 NKJV)  and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

## Points We Can Glean From The Above Verses

1. The church in the city is part of a complex socio-economic and spiritual reality.
2. The church and the city are not mutually exclusive – Erastus worked for both.
3. The city can be a place of peril and persecution.
4. Elders, in Titus , were of the city network, not the local church.
5. The city can be a place of proud commercial activity that plans without God.
6. Sodom and Gomorrah are types and examples of the ungodly city that will be judged by God.
7. Sodom and Gomorrah demonstrate that an entire community can go to gross excess in sexual immorality.
8. Jerusalem is a mixture – part Egypt and Sodom, part  "the beloved city".
9. Jerusalem is the epicenter of God's prophetic agenda.
10. Jerusalem, though often wicked, is redeemed in the end.
11. Babylon is a vast worldly trading city.
12. It rules over the nations and is incredibly wealthy and wicked.

13. It crushes all spiritual resistance to it values and is "drunk with the blood of the saints".
14. It is noted for both spiritual and physical fornication.
15. Despite its power it is not a lasting city but will be completely overthrown.
16. Our spiritual home is not in the Babylons of this world, which will pass away, but our citizenship is in heaven.
17. Christians do not seek a community that is of this world but a holy and heavenly community of which we are already citizens.
18. Faith enables us to seek the city that is to come (as Abraham did).
19. The heavenly city is festive and happy and populated by angels, saints and heavenly beings and its maker and founder is God.
20. The heavenly city is centered on God and His glory not on a human economy.
21. While the human economy is absent, yet the holy city is glorious and abundant in wealth and precious things that are bestowed by grace.
22. The New Jerusalem is the Kingdom made manifest and is full of healing and joy and righteousness and in it is no more sickness or crying or pain. The Tree of Life is central to the city.
23. The heavenly city is not attained by social evolution. Its does not rise up from earth, but comes down from heaven.
24. The New Jerusalem is perfect and holy and calls us into the same holiness and perfection.
25. The city is entered through the commandments. Treating one another well, in love of God and neighbor and in the power of the Holy Spirit is the key to abundant and glorious Christian community.

## *Class Discussion Questions*

1. How are the spiritual city and the carnal city intertwined in the cities of the Philippines?
2. Can you see the development of Babylon like trading cities in the new world economy?
3. Some political theorists such as Rees-Moggs and Davidson are saying that the nation state will collapse and that the world will be ruled by a confederation of powerful cities. Is this plausible?
4. The collapse of the Roman Empire was thought by many, including Augustine, to signal the rise of the City of God. What was wrong with this analysis?
5. What are the intrinsic tensions between the city of trade and the city of God?
6. How can Christians partake of the excellence of the New Jerusalem?
7. What is the role of the church in the city? Is the city unredeemable as Harvey Cox says?
8. The biblical vision of the perfect community is deeply compelling – what can we do to manifest it in the imperfect here and now?

# Sorry . . . The Frontier Has Moved!
*by Viv Grigg*

> Then the Lord said, "Broadcast this message in Jerusalem's streets. Go
> from city to city throughout the land" (Jeremiah 7 1:6).

It is a Marxist city of ten million. Two-and-a-half million live in the *bustees* (slums). Most of the middle-class families are poorer than the street people of Los Angeles. Sixty-seven percent live one family per room.

And the church? There are only two house churches In the *bustees*. Some of the middle-class and other individual families from the *bustees* are involved in the 143 middle-class churches. But the poor of the slums and the 100,000 poor on the streets, while having seen some Christian missionaries, have never known a poor people's movement nor churches of their own. No one proclaims Jesus to them. No holy person lives among them to show them Jesus in word and deed, in acts of mercy and deeds of power.

Once I had the joy of finding such a person. He had been imprisoned for working with the poor. He clearly couldn't face talking of it. But he had gone back to the ragged wretched orphans, widows and beggars whom he loved and for whom he labored. He was a man who took Jesus' pattern of ministry to the poor seriously.

But where are other such followers of Jesus?

This book is a report on two years of walking the slums of the great cities of Asia, looking for God among the poor, seeking to know how the great mission surge of the last decades had established the church among the urban poor.

The sad report is that after thorough research in ten Asian cities I found only two such embryo movements. The conclusion: *The greatest mission surge in history, aimed at the last frontiers, has entirely missed the greatest migration in history*, the migration of rural peasants in the Third World to the great mega-cities.

**Convictions to begin from**

Two assumptions in mission seem self-evident. The first is that Jesus is our model for mission. Did he not say, "As the Father has sent me even so I send you" (John 20:21)? And did not his first declaration of his own great commission tell us:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach
> good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
> and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are
> oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

Surely with these words he modeled the gospel as primarily good news for the poor. And he defined ministry to the poor, declaring that the ministry to the poor is holistic,

involving preaching, healing, deliverance, justice and doing good deeds, but is initiated by proclamation (and reception) of the kingdom.

The second set of assumptions is simply pragmatic missionary strategizing:

1. Urban is the direction of history.

2. The poor are the direction of responsiveness. This is true both in Jesus' teaching and in missions history as well as sociological analysis.

3. The migrant poor are the greatest responsive group across the face of the earth today. I have found this responsiveness among Muslims in Karachi, Hindus in Calcutta, Buddhists in Thailand, and Catholics in Manila. All are in a state of rapid socioeconomic and world view change and are hungry for the reality of a new relationship to a god.

Jesus commands a focus not so much on the last unreached *unresponsive* people groups in the world, but on *responsive*. The period of time within five years of a person's or family's migration is one of those times of greatest responsiveness.

Dr. Roger Greenway, who has done a great deal to focus people's attention on urban missions, speaks of his ministry to the urban poor with the phrase: "If the streets are paved, move on."

**The frontier that moved**
The experience of walking through the slums and seeing hundreds of thousands of squatters in destitute poverty is devastating. As history moves towards its climax, the wound in God's heart for this migration of people must make it difficult for him to hold back his judgment. To walk again and again into the destitution of these millions sears the soul with a darkness and grotesqueness that we could not cope with outside of the rest of Christ that comes from the refreshing balm of his Spirit and the hope of the returning King.

If the destitution of the urban poor is staggering in itself, their numerical growth is just as devastating. Since World War II, an endless convoy of smoke-belching, overladen, chicken-squawking bus after bus have careened down newly-constructed highways into the mega-city capitals of the Third World, disgorging crowds of wide-eyed impoverished farmers and teenagers looking for the next step towards affluence (or, more likely, poverty) in the squatter areas.

Wherever land can be found, huts and plywood shacks go up. Few governments have the capacity to prevent it or to provide services for the people arriving. The majority of new arrivals remain in squatter areas. Each capital city will continue to grow exponentially as it exploits the resources of its rural hinterland.

**Hardly a church, rarely a pastor, seldom a missionary**
More nightmarish than the poverty and the staggering growth of that poverty is to find

no more than a handful of God's men, God's women ministering among these poor in each city.

I do not mean that there are no relief and development agencies. They are many, and most of them are doing good work in their roles as diaconal agencies of the church. *But the church has given bread to the poor and has kept the bread of life for the middle class.*

My search has not been for aid programs but for people who are establishing the kingdom of God, for the men and women working and living among the poor to bring them the bread of life by both word and deed.

I have found only a few. In the midst of the darkness, they are some of today's heroes. In each city, a handful of people have followed Jesus fully in his calls to renunciation and involvement with the poor.

There is a pastor in one west Asian city who wears the sandals and blanket of the poor, walking as holy men do. God has used him to mobilize and deploy 300 workers into the slums.

There is a man of God, a doctor, on the streets of one city ministering to the sick. The government has tried to deport him for ministering to the poor. For four years he has remained, by bringing a court case against the government and quietly continuing to serve the poor.

There is a pastor who for some years has chosen to live among the poor in a relocation area of Manila. He has worked to provide housing for the poorest in his community. The official housing manager and gang leaders were curious about this man and his concern for their people. They decided to help him build houses. Ultimately, they were converted because of his obedience in living out the love and justice of God among them.

There is excitement in Bangkok, for a new generation of creative church leaders is seeing new breakthroughs for the gospel. There are now 97 churches in this city of nearly six million.

Hidden in these statistics is an old, highly successful Finnish Pentecostal church planter. At the age of 70, he daily spends long hours in a slum area, quietly establishing a church.

Despite all of this, there are only two churches and two house groups in Bangkok's 1,024 slums. Only two percent of churches are among the migrant poor.

Examples of men and women who are following Jesus in his ministry to the poor should not be the exception but the rule, if we as a church were truly following Jesus. We must refocus our energies and make the urban poor the primary thrust of missions.

In an otherwise excellent article by Dr. DuBose on the urban poor, he makes an unusual series of conclusions:

> Like the poor who have long gathered in their urban store fronts in America, the Christian communities are proliferating among the urban poor in the wake of an impressive advance of the gospel and are gathering in "shop churches" and in "house churches" in all major areas of the world. *(1)*

This statement simply is not true. Perhaps it is a misunderstanding of the word "poor." To Americans all the world are poor, including the middle class of the Third World. Or perhaps he is inaccurate because he is using Latin American Catholic categories for the church among the poor. I have wondered whether his statement might be true of African churches, but discussions with missionaries from those countries indicate that though there is more activity than in Asia, the percentage and focus of activity is about the same. My two years of research in Asia do not bear out his conclusions.

**The great misconnection**
When faced with the sad failure of the great mission thrust to reach these poor one must ask "why?" and beyond the why, "What can be done to rectify this failure?" The following appear to be some factors:

*1. As mission leaders we have failed to foresee both the immensity of urban growth and the fact that most of the urban growth would be in squatter areas. The opportunity to save the cities from many traumas associated with this development, as well as the opportunity to establish a church in every squatter area that has formed have been lost almost entirely.*

Perhaps it is because these poor are hidden. As we drive through third-world cities we see occasional glimpses of squatter and slum communities, but they are tucked behind houses and buildings and down in the hollows by the river, so that no one sees them. Those who emerge are dressed in their best clothes, soon to blend in with the middle-class people of the city. No one knows that they are poor. The poor do not advertise their misfortune.

People are being thrust out to the last frontier, but the last frontier has moved. Perhaps we could encourage missions researchers to revise their multicolored charts of unreached peoples. Instead of dividing them by religion alone, perhaps they should also be divided into urban-rural and rich-poor. We may find that the largest group of truly "unmissionaried" people would be the urban poor.

*2. Some missions have made a deliberate attempt to reach the rich, believing in a sort of religious "trickle-down" theory. "Trickle-down" works no more in the kingdom than it does in the economic realm. This strategic mistake lacks support both in biblical exegesis and in sociological analysis, and already has been competently refuted.* **(2)**

The gospel "trickles up." Any man or woman who would follow Jesus and walk among the poor will affect countless members of the middle and rich classes. People in these classes will come to the slums because they are curious. They hear of good deeds and like Nicodemus, they come seeking for truth and reality.

Despite the failure of affluent missionaries to preach the words of Scripture about unjust wealth and to live simply themselves, the converted rich come because these new believers can read the Bible. They come searching for the person who has chosen the poor, because they know that here is a true answer to the problems of wealth. They come because they are now concerned for the uplift of those they previously exploited. Jesus has an answer for the rich man. The rich middle-class missionary often has only words.

*3. The same strategic reasons that led to defeat for an affluent power in the Vietnam war have led to failure in this spiritual war. Depending on affluent and high-powered programmatic approaches, the mission force has been out of touch with the realities of the third-world poor. A missionary living on $2800 per month in a western-style house and sending his children to a westerners' school while trying to reach people who live on $200 per year is like a B-52 bomber attacking guerrillas.*

*4. This failure in the great Western mission thrust is, at its roots, ultimately not strategic but spiritual. A church trapped by cultural perspectives on affluence rather than adopting the biblical stance of opposition to the "god of mammon" has exported this into missions. We must return to the pattern of Jesus, who chose non-destitute poverty as a way of life, took the time to learn language and culture, and refused to be a welfare agency king. We must return to the way of the apostles and of the wandering friars who have been the key to the conversion of the world in generations before us. Non-destitute poverty and simplicity must again become focal in mission strategy.*

*5. Some perhaps have concluded that the poor are unreachable. This is a culturally logical conclusion for those of European descent growing up in the capitalism of the United States. Claerbaut, in an excellent analysis on urban ministry, has some penetrating insights into American cultural attitudes to the poor:*

> The truths of stratification and self-perpetuation of the socioeconomic system are not widely known or accepted. As a result, negative attitudes towards the poor persist.

> To argue that poverty is a self-perpetuating condition in a capitalistic society is to attack the nation's sacred civil doctrine of the self-made person. To suggest that one is poor because of an unequal distribution of opportunities is to suggest that riches are as much a matter of good fortune as of virtue.*(3)*

The poverty of the third-world urban poor, however, is a direct result of social forces and oppression, not of personal sin. The oppressed poor in the Scriptures are considered to be rich in faith and the ones for whom the kingdom is particularly to be preached.

*6. The propensity for the Western church to accept the agenda of aid organizations as focal to the Great Commission has seriously skewed mission. Mission to the middle class is seen as proclamation. To the poor it has become giving handouts or assisting in development as defined by Christianized humanitarian perspectives. It is far easier for churches to give thousands of dollars than to find one of their members who will walk into the slums for a decade.*

## Vows of poverty

My convictions have deepened and been modified during these months of wandering, preaching to the poor and research.

### *1. Apostolic movements*

The central one remains: we must thrust out groups similar to the devotional communities of 12th century preaching friars, or the wandering Irish monks that converted Northern Europe between the fifth and ninth centuries, before the Catholic hierarchy gained control there. In our case we must send communities of men and women, married couples and singles, with commitments to live as the poor among the poor in order to preach the kingdom and establish the church in these great slum areas.

Westerners and upper-class nationals who choose such lives of non-destitute poverty may be catalysts for movements of lay leaders from among the poor in each city. The spearhead of such a thrust will be those who accept the gift of singleness for some years. We must set up new mission structures for this to happen. The key is young couples who will choose to give leadership to these communities of pioneers.

We need men and women who will commit themselves to lives of simplicity, poverty, devotion, community, and sacrifice in areas of marriage and family.

### *2. Devotional communities*

Most missionary teams are not communities, but teams. The focus of most teams is to work. On the other hand, traditional communities in the church are by definition primarily committed to relational caring, worship and a devotional pattern. These emphases are essential if workers are to survive in the slums. Working and living two by two in various slum areas, they need to come together every two weeks for a day of ministry to each other, of worship and relaxation.

### *3. Poverty, chastity, obedience*

The commitments to non-destitute poverty may be similar to those of the older Catholic orders, without the legalism.

So too is a commitment to singleness - taken not as a vow of celibacy, but for a period of time. We Protestants have lost the concept of the gift of singleness. Marriage has been seen as the only ideal. The biblical blessing on chosen or given singleness has to be recovered. Part of the blessing of that gift is freedom to pioneer in difficult and dangerous places.

Obedience for Protestants is democratized by the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. We obey God within the defined decision-making processes of our organization.

### 4. New structures

Historically, movements among the poor have consistently been thrown out of the middle-class churches. It is traumatic for one missionary living on $2800 per month to have to be in the same mission team with someone willing to receive only $500 needed for living expenses and all ministry and travel costs.

To avoid such trauma, it would be wise for mission directors to create new orders of men and women called to the poor. These could be within or without their old mission boards. Ultimately this will both create effectiveness and prevent disharmony.

Such orders should only be guided by persons in authority who have lived, for long periods, this kind of sacrificial and incarnational lifestyle. Authority should never be given to administrators who have not lived out this lifestyle. Incarnational workers do not want protection. They want pastoral care from leaders who have been on the front line, who will keep them at the front line, and who will take the "bullets" out when the workers are wounded.

### An opportunity lost?

God is offering Western missions the chance to return to a biblical commitment to the poor and to incarnation as the primary missionary role model. The need is urgent: several thousand catalysts in the slums of scores of third-world cities who can generate movements in each city. Two billion people cry out.

If Western mission leaders, boards and pastors do not heed this call, God will sidestep us and rely only on emerging Latin American and Third-World missions to meet this focus of mission in the next decades.

How sad to miss the focal call of the Scriptures to preach the gospel to the poor! For the God who sent his Son to a manger will find a way to send other sons and daughters to those poor for whom particularly he came. He will not leave their cries unheard.

### Notes

*1.* DuBose, Francis M., "Urban Poverty as a World Challenge," *An Urban World*, Larry L. Rose and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds. pp 51-74, Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press. 1984.

*2.* See for example McGavran, Donald A., *Understanding Church Growth*, pp 269-294, Eerdmans, 1980.

*3.* Claerbaut, David, *Urban Ministry*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1983.

# Telling It on a Mountain
### *by Jane Sutton*

Father Benigno Beltran worked with garbage scavengers in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, helping to transform them into a productive Christian community. His ministry has earned many honors, including World Vision's 1997 Robert W. Pierce Award for Christian Service. But Fr. Ben points to obediencez\sz: "I would not do otherwise. Jesus would not do otherwise."

When Father Ben Beltran came to Smokey Mountain 20 years ago, he saw a garbage heap almost 100 feet high, reeking of methane gas and polluting the air and water. The dumpsite - ironically named for its resemblance to the Smokey Mountains in the United States - was a blight on the landscape, a political hot potato, a shameful symbol of urban decay. It was also home to a large squatter population.

The young Catholic priest resolved, "In a Christian country, there should not be 25,000 people surviving by picking through the garbage." That day, he began to dream of a new Smokey Mountain.

Now, the dream is being realized by Sambayanang Kristiyano, Smokey Mountain's self-sufficient, spiritually-strong community. Under Fr. Ben's tutelage, community members have turned from humiliating scavenging to better jobs, and converted the squatter settlement into something resembling a real neighborhood. The success earned Fr. Ben international attention, funding, and access to Philippine President Fidel Ramos. But to this modest man, none of that equals his long, loving association with Smokey Mountain, where children take his hand and press it to their foreheads in a gesture of honor.

**Going to the Mountain**
Fr. Ben's life is inextricably entwined with Smokey Mountain. He has become more a product of this place than the forests of Mindinao (a southern Philippine island) where he was born in 1946. His parents, Benigno Sr., a retired government official, and Concepcion, a teacher, recall that Ben, the oldest of five, was drawn to the religious life early, signing up to be a church altar boy before he could see over the altar. A serious student, he was valedictorian of both his elementary and high school graduating classes.

After college, Ben entered the seminary of the Society of the Divine Word, assisted by Benigno Sr., who quit smoking and drinking and put that money toward Ben's expenses. Although originally interested in missions work in Africa, the newly-ordained Fr. Ben seemed destined to teach in the seminary. But he was troubled by his inability to connect theory with practice. His solution: "I decided to look for the poorest of the poor and just be with them." He asked the Sisters of Charity, Mother Theresa's order, to help him find a needy place. They sent him to Smokey Mountain.

Since 1954, Manila's government had been dumping garbage on this former fishing area. As the dump grew, so did the number of scavengers - people broken by the

hardships of the city who had no choice but to live among refuse and rats. Politicians, journalists, and aid workers came to gawk at the dumpsite, quickly fleeing the stench and crushing poverty. Fr. Ben stayed.

"I was not trained for breathing in smoke and particles 24 hours a day, or eating inside mosquito nets because otherwise the food would be full of flies," he says. "Nobody can train you for that." He developed chronic bronchitis and allergies.

Fr. Ben led the celebration of the Eucharist every Sunday in a run-down chapel that was later repaired to become the Church of the Risen Christ. "[The Mass] was the answer to the people's prayers," Fr. Ben says. "It gave them a sense of identity." He walked around the shantytown and talked to people, gradually earning their trust.

Fr. Ben's vision for the community crystallized in 1983. The government, eyeing the financial opportunities of a revitalized waterfront, forcibly resettled the Smokey Mountain squatters to another area. "The people came back because there were no jobs," Fr. Ben recalls. "They were starving to death." He set up a tarpaulin for a temporary chapel, and the work began in earnest. Starting with the natural leaders, he began training people to form "basic Christian communities" - families grouped into cells with elected leaders representing their interests on various problem-solving committees, including livelihood, health, education, culture, spirituality, sport, and housing.

Some community factions opposed the work. Fr. Ben received death threats. Once, a grenade was hurled onto the roof of his living quarters. It didn't explode, nor did it deter him. He dismisses the incident as a nuisance "on equal terms with the flies." His parents remember Ben's perseverance: "I cannot run away from problems," he told them.

Smokey Mountain changed Fr. Ben. "I learned that God is speaking through the poor," he says. "We should not think that only theologians understand the Bible. We have not listened to the poor. Just because they are unlettered does not mean that the truths of the Bible cannot be revealed to them."

Fr. Ben implemented Bible sharing, in which community members read and discuss Scripture, empowering them to take a more active role in their faith without cues from clergy - a break with tradition in this predominantly Catholic country. "Even in our absence, people can talk about problems and settle issues," says Fr. Jerome Marquez, who joined the Smokey Mountain staff in 1995. "It makes the Bible the key to community organizing, sustenance, and growth."

As funding came in from the Philippine and U.S. governments, private donors, and relief agencies (World Vision supported leadership training), the community launched education programs and built a water system, a multi-purpose center, and paved walkways between people's homes and the dump. Such changes had great impact on residents such as Christine Calisterio, who used to be shunned at the market because she smelled after trudging through muddy garbage. Families also moved from their squatter shacks into temporary housing, and soon will live in attractive permanent apartments. "I only started to believe in miracles when I came here," says Fr. Jerome.

**Missionaries to the Asphalt Jungle**

The Society of the Divine Word seminary in Tagaytay, a three-hour drive from Manila, offers a glimpse into the other side of Fr. Ben's life - contemplation regeneration. The quiet seminary, surrounded by lush banana and coffee plants and colorful bougainvillea, provides the perfect setting.

Fr. Ben teaches here two days a week, preparing young seminarians for urban ministry. "You have to read and keep up with theorists, otherwise you run out of ideas," he explains.

Part of Fr. Ben's effectiveness in the classroom is that he lives what he teaches, says Fr. Jerome, a former student. "[The work] becomes very concrete when you see it in action."

"A new humanity is being born in the city, and that's why missionaries should go there," insists Fr. Ben. "Our romanticism tells us we should go to places like New Guinea. But the decisions influencing the lives of hundreds of millions are not made in the villages, but in the asphalt jungle."

Recently he presented a multi-media symposium on "The Church in the City," introducing seminarians to global urbanization trends and the complex needs of the urban poor, ending with a challenge to the church to respond. The information overwhelmed many of the young men from rural regions. But in the open forum, one student commented, "Hope for the city is in our hands. We are the church. But before we can change the world, we must change ourselves."

Such is the task of those who will follow in Fr. Ben's footsteps. At 51, he is ready to leave Smokey Mountain in the capable hands of community leaders. At the year's end he will travel to the United States to set up an urban ministry training program with missiologist Ray Bakke. There are, after all, many Smokey Mountains in the world needing the "new heavens and new earth" promises of Isaiah 65.

"What we have reaped here is all because a man had a vision," says Fr. Jerome. "It's like Jesus' vision for everybody - the kingdom of God."

# The City and Unreached Peoples (Urbana 87)
**part 1 of 2**
*by Harvie M. Conn*

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*This article is a transcript from an address originally given by Harvie Conn at Urbana 87*

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What is a city? For a North American white, a city is a melting pot. For a suburbanite it's a ghetto. For my next-door neighbor in inner-city Philadelphia, a city is "One large collection of nothings."

Now all these definitions are wrong, and they're all wrong for the same reason. Yuppie, suburbanite or black, most people can't see anything in the city except mathematical urban units of one. They're like the pastor I met once in our ministry in Korea. At a moment of truth he confided in me, "I have a very hard time telling all Americans apart. You look so alike." I think that's how we all see cities. They all look so alike - sort of an urbanized Charles Bronson death wish.

A rose is a rose is a rose. And a city is a city is a city - a monoclass stereotype where everything becomes the least pleasant denominator. And when you see nothing else, you resort again to that Norman Rockwell worldview, the melting-pot myth where everything looks so nice and everyone is equal - of course some are more equal than others. In this scheme we're all in this together, and there's plenty of room for those that must sit in the back of the bus. We're all one big happy family. Tell that to the single parent on welfare in Newark, New Jersey. Ethnic differences, poor and rich neighborhoods, Yuppies, blue collar workers, physicians, roofers - they all slowly evaporate into this new homogeneity that is usually identified only as urban.

Now, what does all this have to do with world missions? You can't reach what you can't see.

Take a look, for example, at Lima, Peru. If you took your first look in 1984, you would find a city somewhere between four and a half and six million people, which, by the way, account for one-third of the total population of Peru. In 1982 people were moving into the capital city of Lima at a rate of 230 people per day. Today it is several times that figure, but if that is all you notice about Lima, your picture is still too general. You still haven't seen what you need to see to minister effectively there.

Lima is full of migrants, migrants from the provinces and the remotest Andean villages. And as you look closely, you will notice that they don't lose their identity as soon as they get off the bus. You won't see them with their knees shaking, looking around ready to have a mental breakdown because suddenly they've made it to the big city. Instead they come to the city and form social clubs, organized around their home locality. These regional clubs give them a place to gather, to feel at home in their new surroundings, a buffer zone that cushions the impact of the new urban world that they are part of. In

1957 there were 200 such associations in Lima. By 1984 there were more than 6,000. Now don't tell these people that Lima is a melting pot. Lima is a salad bowl. In fact, it may be 6,000 salad bowls awaiting the gospel's salad dressing.

Look again. Here's another Lima - the Lima you see on the street, an army of street venders, 200,000 to 300,000 strong. Up to 70% of the urban labor force in Lima make up this nonformal business world.

Look again and see Lima's 10,000 abandoned children. They shine shoes, wash cars, change tires and go begging during the day. At night they sleep in parks or on the sidewalk They are a part of the fifty percent of Lima's population that is under 22 years of age.

When you look at Lima like this, what do you see? You see magnetic centers that are sucking or pulling people into their fields. These magnetic fields are people groups. And they pull in different ways. Sometimes the pull is language or ethnicity. For example, 30% of the 18,000,000 Peruvians speak only Quechua. Yet there are only two Quechua-language evangelical congregations in all of Lima.

Sometimes the bonding that holds people together is geography, social space, a commonly shared residential territory. Migrants, for example, in Lima pour into something called the *pueblos jóvenes*, a euphemism meaning "young towns" to the government, but "slums" to the city. Three of every ten Limeños live in one of these young towns. The children who fill them live on a cup of tea and a couple of bread rolls a day. And an inflation rate of 125% keeps them there.

Sometimes the bonding that brings people together into a group is nongeographic social space. The street vendors and abandoned children represent such groups. Sometimes vocations bring non-neighbors together. Sometimes its common interests.

For seven years in Korea I did evangelistic work in brothels, sharing Christ with the country's prostitute population of over 50,000. They too represent a people group. A new and massive people group has emerged in just the last decade. It crosses ethnic, linguistic and even social barriers. I speak of those suffering from AIDS.

Some months ago I was visiting the midwest, and a friend invited me to go to a midnight prayer meeting. We went into this row house and up a set of rickety stairs and opened the door. There was this long table and about twelve people sitting around it, all with Bibles in front of them with beer cans strewn all over the smoke-filled room.

The Bible study leader was at the end, smoking this long, black cigar - and she really enjoyed it. At the other end of the table was this guy, built like Sylvester Stallone, wearing a black T-shirt with a white skull on it. On one arm was a big tattoo, a heart with the word *mother* on it and a big dagger through it.

So we sat down for a two-hour Bible study. Having been teaching at a typical white suburban theological seminary where everything's safe, I had my doubts when things

started, but when we were done, I had no doubts about what was going on. These were people who really loved the Lord, most of them brand new believers. The gentleman at the end of the table with the tattoo had been responsible for leading almost everyone there to Christ.

These were bikers. They wouldn't feel much at home in our community or in most of our churches. Two or three of the members of the Bible study were former members of Hell's Angels. A member of the Christian Biker's Association, the fellow who started the Bible study spends six months of the year with his wife on the road, and his whole ministry is spent trying to reach bikers for Jesus. "Most outsiders," he told me, "are turned off by the beer and cigars. You ought to have seen what they were smoking and drinking a few months ago. Some Christians start at 1; other, at -3." I had found another unreached people group, one I didn't have to travel overseas to find. And I had also been reminded that sanctification follows justification, not vice versa.

What does this all mean for world evangelization? It means we need to realize that cities are not single, homogeneous little packages - Limas, Lisbons and Los Angeles'. They are conglomerates of thousands of different people groups. There are TV-movie entertainers in Seoul, soccer teams playing in São Paulo, Brazil; there are truck drivers spending 12-15 hours on the road between Osaka and Toyko. There are the cosmopolitans of Singapore, who communicate only in English, their class-consciousness high, their ethnic-consciousness low.

Last summer, as a classroom experiment, I sent three teams of missionaries to Times Square in New York. Their assignment: to survey the same area of about six city blocks in the course of an evening and to come back the next day with a list of fifteen unreached peoples.

The next morning we all gathered to present our lists. They included over fifty people groups with an overlap of only three or four. In the same area we came across only three Christian groups and churches, and only one of those, we found out, was working with the people in that area. We also found that the bars in the area were much more aware of people groups than the church, There were gay bars, singles bars, bars for the theater crowd and bars for newspaper people. Remember the opening line of the *Cheers* theme song, " . . . where everybody knows your name"?

We had begun to see the unreached people of the city, visible to God, but too often invisible to us. On our list we put prostitutes, sidewalk vendors, tourists, police, gays, theater people, teenage runaways, bag ladies, the homeless, store owners. We found all sorts of gospel targets and no sharpshooters. And we were also discovering that if you aim at everything, you will hit nothing.

**Urban People Groups from the New Testament**
Look with me at still another city with its people groups. We'll pick one with heavy population density, perhaps 200 people per acre, the equivalent of the industrial slums of Chicago or Philadelphia. This city has been devastated by war, and it has been rebuilt and gentrified by its Yuppie population.

It has become a thriving commercial center and capital of its province. Its reputation is built on a combination of religion and sex - all without benefIt of television or industrial-strength mascara. It's name has become a proverb for the good life, for a free-wheeling lifestyle. We're talking, of course, about the city of Corinth in the days of the apostle Paul.

The Lord had told the apostle Paul on his first visit to Corinth not to be afraid. "You don't have to hide in the suburbs, man. Don't forget what I did for Moses in Egypt. There are a lot of good folks in the city." That's my rough paraphrase of Acts 18:10.

Now when you read Romans, probably written from Corinth, and Paul's two letters written to the Christians in Corinth, you can see how God kept his promise. High and low, rich and poor, Jew and Greek - all the social, political and ethnic networks are there, and the gospel is touching them all.

Erastus - you find his name in the last chapter of Romans - either the director of the public works department (NIV) or the city treasurer (RSV) is there in Corinth. The aristocracy is being touched as well as the influential and the wealthy. First Corinthians 1 mentions Crispus. He came to Christ during Paul's first visit. Acts 18:18 calls him a ruler of the synagogue. That was a leader of the Jewish worship service, someone who assumed responsibility for the synagogue building. it also meant a man with money, social influence, far beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community itself.*(1)* I wonder if that isn't why in Acts 18:8 we read of the great impact of Crispus's conversion on the city. "Many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

He had a baptismal partner named Gaius. Romans 16:23 informs us that he was "host of the whole church" at Corinth, and that certainly means that he had a house big enough to put up Paul and to accommodate all the various Christian groups in Corinth that met together. He too was a fellow with some wealth and property.

At the other end of the social scale were the slaves, and the Corinthian Christian community included them as well. In fact, the numerical strength of the Corinthian church probably heavily leaned toward the have-nots of society. That's how God builds his church. With the wise and the powerful and the have-nots, all together doing the work of Jesus Christ.

In I Corinthians 1:26-28 Paul draws some gospel lessons against the background of these social realities. He paints a sociological picture of the church. There are "the wise," the educated classes; there are "the influential"; there are those of "noble birth." But there are "not many" of these in the church, though there are some.

By contrast, there are "the lower born," "the despised," "the things that are not." Primarily, among these people groups, "the refuse of the world, the offiscouring of all things" (I Cor 4:10-13 RSV), the church grows. And, says Paul in his best theological voice, that is the usual way God does things.

Is it easy to build an urban church out of such diverse groups? Not if Paul's experience is typical. First Corinthians 1 gives you a good sample of the problems.

Ethnic differences pick away at the gospel. Greeks look for wisdom; Jews look for power. What is needed is a new vision of Christ crucified, "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor 1:24). Social differences create conceit. Wealthy and influential Christians presumably were looking down their "noble born" noses at the "have not" Christians. The answer, says Paul, is God's weird peculiarities of grace in election, the foolish things of this world chosen to shame the wise (I Cor 1:27-28).

**NOTES**

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**Harvie M. Conn**, former missionary in Korea, is professor of missions and director of the urban missions program at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

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1. Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), pp. 74-75.

# The City and Unreached Peoples 2 (Urbana 87)
 *by Harvie M. Conn*

**Biblical Guidelines for Reaching the Unreached in the City**
What do we learn when wey read and hear all of this? At least three things, three messages from Paul's picture of Corinth.

*1. The cutting edge of the church in the city is evangelism.* The cities of Paul's day were crowded with voluntary associations and private clubs. Mainly they existed for the purpose of getting together, especially for people of like interests and occupations. They had regular meetings, their odd-ball Shriner-like initiation rites and special meals.*(1)*

The Christian church looked a lot like one of these special clubs, I suspect. That's how they survived at first in the city. They had their regular meetings, they had their initiation rites, they looked a little kooky, they had their special meals, but they were a different kind of club. They were the only club that existed for the sake of its non-members. Always before our eyes, says Paul in his letters, must be those on the outside.

Artisans, says Paul, are to lead a quiet life, to mind their own business and to work with their hands (I Thess 4:11). Why? That their "daily life may win the respect of outsiders" (I Thess 4:12). Likewise, the Corinthian Christians must put no stumbling block before Jews and Greeks. The exercise of the gift of tongues in public assembly is to be restrained if visiting unbelievers get the wrong idea and think we Christians are insane. Any practices judged as disgraceful by the Gentiles must be curtailed (I Cor 11:4-6). Colossians 4:5 sums it up: "Behave wisely toward the outsiders, and cash in your opportunities."

Evelyn Quema, a short, stout, single Filipina, is barely noticeable in a crowd of women her age. At the age of 22 she gave up her desire to be a lawyer or a doctor and moved to the city of Baguio. She arrived on a Thursday with six dollars and no place to live. By Sunday she had conducted a church service for thirty and saw four conversions. Three years later she had planted four churches and started eleven outstations, one of them five hours away by bus. She had seen 300 solid conversions to Christ and several hundred more professions that she had not been able to follow up. Miriam Adeney, who tells this story, adds, "There are hundreds of Christian women like Evelyn in Southeast Asia."

*2. The cutting edge of the church in the city is evangelism to all unreached peoples.* Paul's churches saw that. Membership went from slave owner to slave (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3.22-4:1), from the household of Caesar to manual laborers, skilled or unskilled (Phil 3:22; 2 Thess 3:6-13). We find wealthy artisans and traders like Lydia with high incomes but low occupational prestige. We find poor Christians in Jerusalem, recipients of financial support from poor Christians in Corinth and Macedonia (I Cor 16:1-4).

This is one of the reasons that the poor are so prominent in the New Testament. Not because they have special privileges in heaven or because they can get in on the basis

of an empty savings account. But because God really does love every economic and social class, and because the wealthy, and sadly enough even wealthy Christians, are often in danger of forgetting them. Marginalized minorities and powerful majorities - the Lord has room for all of them in his church.

There are about 10,000 Muslims in my city, Philadelphia. About 80% of them are American Blacks. Too many of them are like my former next-door neighbor. They grew up in Christian homes, worshiped in Christian churches and finally turned to Islam. Why? My neighbor put it to me this way, "The most segregated hour of the week in America is Sunday morning at 11:00 A.M. I dig Jesus. I just don't like his church." An unreached people have become an invisible people.

The picture is the same around the world. The church in too many cities listen to too many sermons on success rather than suffering while many feel left out in the ecclesiastical cold.

The industrial workers of Taiwan - three million of them - complain "that the message of local churches is irrelevant to their daily life and most programs are geared toward the needs of the intellectuals or the middle class."*(2)* Over 40% of Singapore's workforce is blue collar, production-industry workers. Yet only 4% of them are Christians.

At the bottom of society's value scale, and often the church's, are the poor, the squatters, the new urban migrants. Forty-six percent of Mexico City's population, 67% of Calcutta's, 60% of Kinshasa's, live in slums. And the gap between them and the church now grows into a gulf.

Yet they hear the word gladly. in the hall here at Urbana a missionary recounted to me how he had targeted Japanese businessmen for Christ, inviting them to play golf with him. Their response to this "golf evangelism" was largely negative, but one of the caddies listened as they walked and talked. He in turn talked to other caddies, many of whom came to Christ through his witness. This missionary was wise enough to see what the Holy Spirit was doing and shifted his attention to a people group he had never seen before - Japanese golf caddies.

How do you tell which unreached people group in the city to focus on when there are so many? You watch for the footprints of the Lord and follow that trail.

Viv Grigg, a New Zealander, has made the same discovery about Jesus, "a companion to the poor." In 1979 he moved into Tatalon, a squatter community of 14,500 people, jammed into six city blocks in Manila. Now he pleads for the Lord's people to join him in creating Christian communities in the slums and shanty towns of the world. A new mission board has come out of his kingdom perspective called Servants Among the Poor. An old vision has been renewed: mobile men and women, freed for pioneering, prophetic, evangelistic church planting among the poor. How does he put it? "The greatest mission surge in history has entirely missed the greatest migration in history, the migration of Third World peasants to great mega-cities."*(3)*

*3. The cutting edge of the church in the city is lordship evangelism - Jesus proclaimed by word and deed, Jesus our justification and our justice.*

A biblical call to repentance and faith in Christ does not call us away from the city; it calls us to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of the city. Personal commitment to Jesus is foundational. But on that foundation we erect a model home, living out the full implications of the gospel for urban Christians.

Isn't that how Paul saw it as he wrote to Corinth? I have heard people say that Paul never dealt with social, political or economic issues. But that doesn't square with the list of pastoral questions he tries to answer in I Corinthians - ethnocentrism, the social gap between rich and poor, lawsuits, sex and prostitutes, slavery, homosexuality, women's liberation.

Cities like Corinth or Colomb don't let you get away with dividing your Christian life into safety zones - one zone labeled faith, another the world. Ask Malcolm X. American racism turned him from talkative Christianity to what he saw as real brotherhood in Islam. Ask the Black Christians of Soweto. A plea for peace without justice can turn good news into cheap grace. "I was sick and you did not look after me; I was under the ban and you never visited me." Ask the Blacks and Latinos who come to Urbana. Ask them why you have to search so hard to find their brothers and sisters on the mission field abroad or on this platform at Urbana or on the mission boards represented at the armory. It's hard to hear "Go into all the world" when the same voices don't also say, "Come into all our neighborhoods."

Paul saw a social revolution brewing in the things we now identify as "church matters." A simple table meal to remember the Lord's death shatters social hierarchies long held sacred. At Corinth the wealthy apparently were making the Lord's Supper into a "private dinner party" (I Cor 11:21). And when the meal was over, the haves were drunk and the have-nots were hungry. Paul calls for a new kind of urban social order to be built from the table and the sacriflce that had prepared it (I Cor 10:16-17; 11:18-19). Wealth in the body of Christ becomes an opportunity to serve, prestige a call to humility.

None of this is easy in the city. Political and social networks fit together too tightly. You may find yourself one day a missionary pastor in a Central American country, the members of your congregation united in their commitment to Christ but divided in their political allegiances. Late one evening a knock may come to your door, There in front of you stands a member of your congregation, a brother in Christ with strong anti-government sympathies. There is a bullet in his arm; blood drips down his coat. "Pastor," he asks, "can I stay the night with you?" Suddenly your Christian response to a brother becomes a political decision.

More than ten years ago I was on a mountain in Korea. I was up there for three days of evangelistic meetings at an isolated village with no electricity. I was talking that night on the love of Christ and how Christians love one another, and at the end asked if there were any questions. An old man raised his hand. "I have a question, sir," he said. "If

Christians are supposed to love one another, how do you explain what happened in Birmingham?"

There we were on the top of the mountain in the middle of nowhere and this old farmer with a horsehair hat asked me about Birmingham. In the barbershop in the village that day, they got a newspaper, the only newspaper this village ever got. There it was spread out in front of the barbershop and all the villagers were reading it. On the front page was a picture of Bull Conner letting the dogs loose on the Black Christians praying in Birmingham, Alabama. Suddenly I discovered that the questions of racism and reaching unreached peoples are not two separate questions.

In 1890 the Southern Presbyterian Church sent to the Congo a man who had learned these things. William Henry Shepherd spent twenty years in Africa. Respected by the Africans, he was called "Shoppit Monine, the Great Sheppard." Working among the Bokuba people, he showed a cultural respect and sensitivity for things African seldom seen among missionaries of his day. He knew how large this simple gospel was.

The Jesus that he preached was revolutionary in African society. For example, he resisted the custom of killing a slave to accompany a recently deceased master. He protested against the practice of trial by poison. When the Belgian government imposed a heavy food tax on the people, he protested. The tax forced the Africans to work for Europeans to pay it, a subtle form of colonialism. In addition, the government used soldiers who were cannibals to collect the tax. Shepherd discovered that the tax-collecting efforts were a cover for slave raids and for cannibalism. His protests brought the entire issue to the attention of King Leopold of Belgium. Strained relations with the government and with his mission finally brought him back to the States in retirement in 1910.

Sheppard had gone to Africa when the White Churches had almost no interest in Africa for Christ. Sheppard was Black, one of the 113 American Blacks who served in Africa from 1877 to 1900.

Who can tell how many Bakubans heard the word of Christ and believed because they saw Sheppard standing for the oppressed and the sinned against. How many there saw Sheppard himself as one of those sinned against? Could it have been that which brought them to Jesus Christ and to the cross?

What deed done for Christ will yet stir the hearts of the urban world's unreached peoples to hear the word spoken by Christ? And who will speak it and who will go do it?

**NOTES**

**Harvie M. Conn**, former missionary in Korea, is professor of missions and director of the urban missions program at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

1. Wayne Meeks, The Moral World of the First Christians (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), pp. 113-14.

2. Quoted in Harvie M. Conn, A Clarified Vision for Urban Mission (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 162.

3. Viv Grigg, "Sorry! The Frontier Moved," Urban Mission 4, no. 4 (March 1987), p. 13.

# Prosperity and Poverty In The Urban Context

### *by John Edmiston*

Urban ministry is often focussed on helping the urban poor. Distortions in this are common. Many ministries are so intent on poverty alleviation that evangelistic zeal is lost, others mistake "holistic" for comprehensive and fragment themselves by trying to run too many different kinds of programs, yet others become crass extensions of prosperity teaching while others see the poor as "in need of values" and descend into almost Victorian moralizing. Balance is urgently needed. Thus the following article is split into three parts:

a)  What is prosperity?
b)  How is it generated?
c)   How is that further conditioned by Kingdom interests?
d)  How does that operate in the urban context.


**Two Major Reframes Of  The Poverty Question**
**Reframing the Question:** Notably missing from this article is the problem-focussed question "why are they poor?" The question being asked in this article is rather the solution-focussed question - "How can the poor be made to prosper?" Thus this is a solution-focused biblical approach to poverty alleviation. When a problem-focussed approach is taken to poverty alleviation among the urban poor there is a whole host of undesirable outcomes. A long list of people and institutions to blame is generated, the poor are told they are poor because either they are victims or they lack values, useless emotions from outrage to hopelessness are generated and those involved become immersed in endless conferences, papers and analysis with little real and tangible transformation of the live of the poor occurring. Two questions are much more effective in helping alleviate poverty. Firstly "How are they finding ways to prosper already? What are they doing that is working for them? How can they do more of it?" This takes advantage of their resourcefulness and acknowledges their informal economy and empowers them giving their current solutions some dignity. Secondly there is the question "What else can be done to help them to prosper? How can business and economic opportunities be generated? How can employment outcomes be increased? How can we find access to cheap capital, training, resources and markets? This unleashes a whole host of solutions that can genuinely create Shalom for the urban poor.
**Reframing The Expected Answer:** When the question "why are they poor?" is asked a whole list of injustices are brought into view so that the "solution for poverty" seems to be legal action, mass action and even terrorism. However they are not solutions at all. Legal action, mass action and terrorism have not made the poor become rich or even middle class. Pursuing justice has not solved the problem of poverty. In fact it has often made it worse. While issues of justice for the poor are real they need to be placed in a completely different framework. When we ask the question "How can the poor be made to prosper" we get the biblical answer "By giving them the power to make wealth.". Those solutions that have tackled the issue of "the power to make wealth" - such as the Grammen Bank in Bangladesh have been positive and successful in alleviating poverty. The poor have prospered. Their lives have been transformed. While the solution to

poverty is money it is not handouts or windfall cash that is needed but rather the ability to create wealth on a consistent basis with dignity and purpose within a righteous and just lifestyle. When we see the issue of the poor lacking the power to make wealth then justice issues are included but in a far more constructive framework such as "we are blocked in access to markets - lets take legal action so we can open up an opportunity for wealth creation".

## WHAT IS PROSPERITY?

**Prosperity Is The Physical Manifestation Of The Blessing Of God.**
Prosperity in the Old Testament is condition by a group of words in the SHLM family such as Shalom and Shalem - meaning peace and wholeness respectively. Those blessed by God experience Shalom and those whose minds are faithfully fixed on God receive double or perfect Shalom (Isaiah 26:3). However there is no Shalom for the wicked. (Isaiah 48:22, 57:21). Shalom is thus the physical manifestation of the blessing of God.

The underlying picture of this word family is one of rural bliss. The righteous man and his godly wife have seven strong sons and seven beautiful daughters, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, a bountiful harvest is in the field, a warm fire burns in the hearth, the land is at peace, the family is respected, the poor are taken care of out of their bounty, there is joy and singing and gladness of heart, the commandments of God are kept and even taught to others, the blessing of God is felt in every part of their lives and "God is in Heaven and all's right with the world". Prosperity is thus a comprehensive wholeness of life that radiates from the blessing of God to those who fear Him and abide in His commandments. Blessing and prosperity are first corporate before they are individual. It is in the blessing of God on the nation and the city that the individual finds blessing. Even the righteous man does not enjoy great prosperity when God is judging the nation as a whole. The classic example of this is Baruch, Jeremiah's servant in Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian invasion. He longed for some prosperity but was told (Jer 45:2 NRSV) Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: You said, "Woe is me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest."… And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh, says the LORD; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go." Baruch's "prosperity" was simply being allowed to live while others around him died of plague, famine and war. It was the prosperity of the escaping refugee who "makes it". Thus prosperity has a social component that can place severe limitations on individual prosperity. This will be a key factor when we come to examining prosperity in the urban context.

Because prosperity was seen as the physical manifestation of the blessing of God there is a very close and even absolute link in Scripture between righteousness and prosperity. Job's question to God was basically "I have been righteous therefore it is not just that I should not be prospering but instead be suffering". The times when the righteous suffered or the wicked prospered were major challenges to this world-view. Differences between the righteousness of an individual and their wealth were seen as

anomalous. The prosperity of the wicked needed to be explained and a major source of personal grief. (Psalms 37, 69 and 73). This absolute linking of righteousness and prosperity persisted into the New Testament times so that the disciples were astonished that the rich young ruler , who seemed to have so much of the blessing of God on his life,  could not enter the Kingdom. And cried out "Who then can be saved?". (Matt19:23-25). Thus a  major source of spiritual grief among Third World pastors of the urban poor is their own intense poverty. They ask the searching question "I have served you and been righteous - why then cannot I at least have a car or send my children to a good university or prosper in my finances?" This deep sense of God's injustice feeds a bitterness and disappointment of spirit that can lead to the exploitation of  apparently wealthy Western missionaries or even the developing of deep resentment towards them. Prosperity is not just an economic problem but a problem of God's justice towards them. When this justice is long delayed common responses include: loss of faith in God and adoption of a skeptical liberal theology, radicalization, adoption of the prosperity gospel, "tent-making" that is actually a distraction from ministry, study courses involving overseas scholarships, going into "business" which is often ill-founded multi-level marketing schemes, and giving up the ministry in defeat, bitterness and utter dejection. All of the above can be avoided by a simple reframing of the topic. Prosperity is not an issue of justice. It is an issue of power.

Wealth is generated by those who have the power to make wealth. Wealth is fundamentally given and created, not earned or deserved (Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV) "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who ***gives you power to get wealth***." As we shall see later "the power to get wealth" is given by God in a specific way that is - the righteous person receives wisdom from God then diligently implements it  and it is this diligent wise implementation of wisdom and knowledge that generates wealth.

**Prosperity Is Totally Under The Control Of The Sovereignty Of God**
This was Nebuchadnezzar's hardest lesson. On the rooftops of Babylon he cried out "Is this not might Babylon which I have made?" For his hubris he was punished by God after his sanity and his kingdom was restored he said:
> (Daniel 4:34-37 NKJV) ….and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. {35} All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?" …Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

God is sovereign over the most might of rulers and "does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth". God is able to influence both position in life and prosperity in life. The following five verses clearly testify to God's absolute control over the financial, social and political realms that influence prosperity: He gives them to whomever He wishes.
> **Riches , Honour, Greatness and Strength**

(1 Chronicles 29:11-12 NKJV) {11} Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. {12} Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.

**Political Position**
(Daniel 4:17 NKJV) ..In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'

**Riches, Wealth and The Ability To Enjoy Them**
(Ecclesiastes 5:19 NKJV)  As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.

**The Entire Financial Realm**
(Haggai 2:8 NKJV)  'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.

**An Abundance For Every Good Work**
(2 Corinthians 9:8 NKJV)  And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have ***an abundance for every good work***.

God is the totally sovereign giver of wealth and honour . He rules in the kingdom of men. His will prevails on Earth. He gives prosperity to whomever he pleases including the lowliest of men. He gives not only wealth but the power to enjoy it. For the urban worker He makes grace abound so the we may have "all sufficiency in all things" and "an abundance for every good work".

This is not a fatalistic but rather an optimistic view. Since God controls all wealth and honour and since God cares for the poor then we have a powerful ally in helping the urban poor! To take these verses to mean "well that is that then, the poor have an allotted station in life, its poverty, God has not given them wealth, so be it" is to deny God's bias to the poor so evident in the Scriptures.

If God loves the poor and is in control of the financial realm why is there still poverty? Because like as in many things God generally works through people and processes. In Scripture He has revealed ways to create wealth and shown people how to access the power to make wealth that He provides. We shall discuss that at length in part two. That is one factor. The other factor is that there is a spiritual realm that greatly influences our prosperity.

**Curses and Blessings Have Great Influence On Our Power To Generate Wealth**

In Genesis 1 we find God's initial blessings on mankind bestowed three things that greatly affect our prosperity: Fruitfulness, Multiplication and Authority to "rule over". Fruitfulness is the proper expression of our inner nature. Fruitfulness includes the crops in the field and the seven strong sons and enjoying the work of your hands. The opposite of fruitfulness is barrenness and sterility, dried up crops, a life that peters out and goes nowhere. Multiplication is exponential increase . It is seeing your abundance produce more abundance and then yet greater abundance. Its classic illustration is how Jacob got large herds even though his wages were "the spotted and the speckled". The exponential multiplication of his flocks was a clear sign that God was with him and that Laban was unrighteous. The opposite of multiplication is frustration and futility. By Authority to "rule over" we have dignity, headship, authority, the ability to be ascendant, to be the head not the tail, to be victorious and to maintain our boundaries in peace. Its opposite is being humbled, despised, invaded, to eat the dirt, to be crushed and humiliated, to be unable to rise.

Countering this in Genesis 3 we see the first curses in operation. The very opposite is brought to bear by God the woman is made unfruitful, the man is made to work in futility and the serpent is told he will eat the dirt and eventually be crushed in utter defeat. Prosperity was denied. The power to enjoy Shalom was taken away. Thus blessings are a spiritual influence that brings about fruitfulness, multiplication and authority. Curses are a spiritual influence that bring barrenness, futility and humiliation. Curses and blessings thus "tilt the playing field" and make it either easy or difficult to make wealth. Because the physical world is undergirded by the spiritual world a change in spiritual reality can profoundly affect human prosperity.

The close tie between cursing and blessing and national prosperity is clearly delineated in Deuteronomy 26-28 where the nation would be blessed and prosperous if it obeyed God and destroyed in futility if it served idols instead. The nation's power to make wealth thus depended on whether it was blessed or cursed by God. In the book of Haggai the curse on the nation (Haggai 1:5-11, 2:16,17 ) that was leading to economic ruin was removed when the people obeyed the prophets and laid the foundation on the Lord's temple (Haggai 2:18,19). Then prosperity was rapidly restored. God's claim in Haggai is that "the silver and gold are mine". The power to make wealth is thus contingent on a spiritual universe - which we know is in conflict.

**Prosperity Is Opposed by Evil - Including Satan Who Comes To Steal and Kill and Destroy**
Jesus defines the mission of Satan as "To steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10). In Scripture Satan is portrayed as destroying the prosperity of God's servants such as Job, unleashing persecution and afflicting people with various diseases including mental illness. Satan also lays claim to the commercial and political realms falsely boasting to Jesus that he could give them to whoever he wished (Luke 4:5,6). In the "King of Tyre" discourse Satan is seen as "wise in trade" (Ezekiel 28:5). Indeed there is a kind of demonic and godless prosperity that is purely financial and does not participate in God's Shalom. At the end of history the choice will be between entering a Satanic world of trade and investment and maintaining faith in God (Revelation 13:16-18). For expansions on this theme see the article "The Market and The Kingdom" later in this

book. The reality of these principalities and powers can be readily seen in that some of the fiercest and most irrational persecution these days is directed at Christians who help the poor successfully and thus break some of Satan's society-wide strongholds. (Proverbs 31:8,9). Thus success in urban ministry means that the principalities and powers behind social evils need to be addressed as these powers can greatly afflict the power to make wealth of a city or nation. The battle is not only political but spiritual. In fact there are two spiritual battles here, Firstly is the battle to stop the Satanic destruction of the bodies, minds and prosperity of the urban poor - opposing the "steal, kill and destroy" aspect of Satanic rule. This requires a strong commitment to pastoral care, healing and vigorous intercession by urban workers. The second and more sophisticated battle is against the Prince of Tyre aspects . Against the power of trade turned evil. Systemic injustices, drug trafficking, piracy, the effects of globalization and currency trading and usurious rates of interest can be seen as based in a power greater then mere human ingenuity. This requires a strong prophetic and political stance by urban workers. Success is possible. Many of the Scripture passages that most vividly picture success and prosperity start with the phrase "a new heavens and a new earth".(Isaiah 65:17, 66:2, 2Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). This implies the heavens have been cleansed of demonic influence. Under the new purified heavens demons no longer torment people's minds or afflict their bodies. The principalities and powers in the heavenly realms have been totally defeated and are now bound so that the heavens are "new" and the blessing of God to mankind can flow freely and without let or hindrance. The power to make wealth is unleashed under the new heavens and great length of life and material wealth is promised in Isaiah 65. It is notable that during times of revival, when the heavens are renewed, there quickly flows correction of systemic injustices (e.g. slavery was corrected by Wilberforce during the time of John Wesley) as well as a correction of social evils. National prosperity quickly follows.

## PART TWO  - HOW THE POWER TO MAKE WEALTH AND ENJOY PROSPERITY WORKS

### Prosperity Flows To Those Who Fear God and Keep His Commandments

The relationship to God is primary as it is He who causes the blessings to flow and grants the power to make wealth. Shalom includes relational peace as well as financial prosperity for "he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them" (Proverbs 16:7). The prosperity of the righteous is stable and develops continually (Psalm 1) continuing even into old age when the normal power to make wealth has departed. (Psalm 92:12-14) and is a total prosperity unalloyed by evil. (Proverbs 10:22 NIV) "The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it." The life course or "paths" of God-fearing and the righteous are "made smooth" and directed by God (Proverbs 3:5,6 16:1-3) and the fear of the Lord and humility bring wealth and honour (Proverbs 22:4). The urban church should become the centre of economic renewal as the place where people find righteousness and the blessing of God to change their circumstances. Introduction to the transforming power of Christ and right relationship to God is the very basis of Shalom. See also *Proverbs 3:5,6; 33; 4:22; 5:21; 10:6,7,11,16,1722; 27; 11:16; 12:20,28; 13:21; 16:7;22:4, 28:10; 29:18*

**Prosperity Comes To Those Who Seek Wisdom and Understanding**

It is said of Wisdom -"in her right hand are riches and honour". Wisdom results in righteousness (tsedek) and peace (shalom). Wisdom is characterised by accepting instruction from God and from the righteous and by a readiness to be disciplined for one's good. Wisdom acts wisely in all aspects of life and the outcome is wealth, honour and a long life. The opposite is folly which is our own proud, stubborn and angry way of acting, independent of the wisdom of others or of God. The result of this folly is sin, trouble and turmoil. Wisdom comes from God but is not exclusively religious. The instruction of the Lord can include craftsmanship (Exodus 31:3-5), selection of the most appropriate technology (Isaiah 28:23-29) and Joseph's economic wisdom in rationing during the famine. (Genesis 41:29-38) was seen, even by Pharaoh as being from the Spirit of God. (Genesis 41:38). Wisdom comes at a human level through diligent inquiry and at a spiritual level through prayer so that great scientists such as Newton and Pascal were also men of prayer. In particular wisdom comes through the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:1,2; 28:23-29; 1 John 2:20,27; 1 Cor 2:9-16) and cannot be found in any earthly location like silver or gold can (Job 28). Wisdom and knowledge are vital to wealth creation especially as we enter an information economy. A patent, a technological edge, a better piece of software can be a powerful tool for wealth creation. Wisdom goes to those who seek her diligently and transformation of urban communities needs to involve assisting them in the search for the wisdom and knowledge they need to be able to create wealth. Other verses include: *Proverbs 3:1,2,6,13,16-18,22; 4:10,13,22,23,26; 8:18,32,34; 9:11; 11:14, 13:10,14; 14:30; 15:24; 16:20-22, 19:8; 20:15; 24:6.*

**Prosperity Comes To Those Who Are Diligent**

Wisdom needs implementation in order to produce wealth and prosperity. Proverbs 21:5 says "The plans of the diligent surely lead to abundance, but everyone who is hasty only comes to want." Diligence takes wisdom and carefully and energetically implements it to bring about prosperity. Diligence and God's blessing work together. Without diligence our blessings are not implemented and the person remains poor. God seems to believe in the saying "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." The main way God imparts the ability to prosper is by giving us the wisdom we need to succeed and encouraging us to work hard. It needs to be said that hard work and diligence on their own are insufficient. In the absence of God's blessing hard work will produce only frustration and vanity - seethe section on curses and blessings.. Part of diligence is using "the ox" to multiply your effort – using the powerful technology of the day. Other verses include: *Proverbs 8:17, 10:4, 11:27, 12:24, 12:27, 13:4, 14:4; 21:5,*

**Prosperity Comes Through Well Ordered Relationships And Appropriate Personal Boundaries.**

As John Donne wrote "No man is an island, do not send to ask for whom the bells tolls, it tolls for thee. Proverbs is explicit in the kinds of relationships we are to develop, the

kinds of realtionships we are to avoid and the how these relationships should be ordered.  Apart from the relationship with God, there are relationships of respect with "the King" representing government and with parents. Filial relationships include the brother and the neighbour and are to be carefully maintained. There are general social relationships such as with "the poor" who are to receive help and compassion. Among the most important relationships are family relationships with our wife/husband, children and parents which are to be ordered out of fear of God. They are to be characterised by a proper order and godly simplicity. Discipline, honour and respect are common themes in Proverbs. Our primary relationships are to be filled with teaching and the imparting of wisdom. Generosity and honesty are important qualities when dealing with brothers and neighbours. We also have relationships with the City  and the wise and righteous person is a blessing to their society and is generally in turn honoured by it. Wise communication is seen as a key to good relationships. The economic impact of these relationships and the importance of appropriate boundaries is illustrated over and over gain from a person ruined because they angered the King or were enticed by a harlot . Other people had reduced power to make wealth because they employed a fool or sluggard to their cost. In particular relationships with the wicked, the violent or the immoral are likely to cause a severe loss of Shalom. Personal relationships in the family have great impact on the power to produce wealth -or in more modern terms a divorce is expensive! The good wife however is an economic asset. (Proverbs 31). Going surety for a friend is cautioned against and maintaining good boundaries is seen as a path to prosperity. The power to make wealth can be greatly increased if gracious speech, high quality work and faithful service brings the person to the attention of the King and others with the power to help (Proverbs 14:35, 16:13, 22:11,29).

In urban ministry the building of empowered community and business relationships, access to government agencies and the restoration of primary family relationships all contribute to the power to generate wealth in the community. Teaching urban youth to maintain Christian boundaries and to avoid the violent street gangs and illicit sexual relationships is not just good health and morality - it is also good economics. While superficially attractive these gangs detract from the Shalom of the community and severely limit the economic prospects there especially of their members. Learning to communicate appropriately with authority is a major skill to be imparted in urban ministry and there is much good biblical teaching on it. In many communities the ordering of relationships to some degree of functionality is in fact the primary economic task. While these relationships are dysfunctional all other economic efforts will be dissipated and Shalom will not eventuate. Other verses include:  *Proverbs 1:10-15; 3;31; 3:28-32; 4:1; 5:1-11; 6:1-5, 20;10:1; 11:11,15,29;13:24; 14:21; 15:4,20; 16:7,21,28; 17:6,18, 19:9,13,18,26; 20:2,20; 21:9; 22:9,10;  22:6, 22-25; 23:13,15,22; 24:21,28; 25:6-9,18;26:18,19; 27:10,14; 28:7,20; 29:3,5,15,22-25; 30:17; 31:27.*

**Prosperity Is  Accumulated By Paying Attention To The Means of Production And By Cautious Expenditure**
The wise person pays attention to their ability to create wealth by 'knowing well the condition of their flocks" (Proverbs 27:23) and even making sure their fields are producing well before building their house. (Proverbs 24:27). Making sure you have the power to make wealth is a high priority for the person who lives wisely. The sluggard

pays little attention to his fields and means of production so his poverty "comes as an armed man" and despoils him. (Proverbs 24:30ff) The love of small luxuries and pleasures can fritter away wealth on a barely noticeable daily basis and prevent the accumulation of a powerful capital base. (Proverbs 21:17) Wealth can be squandered - especially by loose living (Proverbs 21:20, 29:3). Injustice can destroy the potential of the poor to create wealth and structural reform may be necessary to enable the poor to use their means of production efficiently. (Proverbs 13:23 NKJV) "Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor, And for lack of justice there is waste." Paying attention to one's ability to create wealth can be as simple as making sure that you are in a good job and that your skills are up to date or it may be as complex as running a major business. The urban worker needs to be able to help people find and retain jobs and help them see the things they can constructively do to make wealth. Wealth creation has to gradually become a higher priority than expending money on pleasures. Budgeting skills will help some to control expenditure. The urban minister should be prepared to demonstrate the economic consequences of fast food, smoking, the excessive consumption of alcohol and the cost of nightclubs, drugs and prostitution. One of the spiritual consequences of the Wesleyan revival was precisely this - the poor gained the ability to earn money, to save money and to control expenditure on alcohol. This is credited with staving off an economically-based revolution in England similar to the French revolution.

**Prosperity Is Retained By Righteous Living**
**(**Proverbs 13:22-23 NKJV)  "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous." Inter-generational wealth is based on righteous living and inherited blessing while the wealth of the wicked is transitory at best, in fact the wealth of the wicked is stored up for the righteous.(Proverbs 13:11,22). Habitual righteousness and wisdom protect the possessor from the foolish acts that destroy wealth such as giving into the temptation to be involved in a shady business deal. Furthermore righteousness brings God's favour and the three-fold blessing of fruitfulness, multiplication and authority discussed earlier. The wealth of the righteous grows steadily and is still with them in old age while the wealth of the wicked has "taken wings" and flown away. (Proverbs 23:5). By making wealth a secondary concern to obeying God the wise and righteous person actually ends up better off. Any study of wealthy families in Europe will show this to be true time and time again.

**PART THREE  - KINGDOM PERSPECTIVES ON PROSPERITY**
With the New Testament the power to make material wealth is superseded in importance by gaining the power to have treasure in heaven. The pathway to economic prosperity is the same and still involves blessing from God. However blessing is different from salvation. Today the Jews are still blessed, however they are not saved. The emphasis moves to obtaining "every spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:3) and to rewards such as "the crown of life". Even in the Old Testament wealth was secondary and temporary and it is often repeated that wealth would not save on the Day of Judgment but that righteousness preserved its possessor. (Proverbs 11:4) . However this was not prominent and it took some very firm teaching to shift the emphasis of the newly formed Christian church from pursuing material wealth to

pursuing spiritual wealth. The change in emphasis was drastic - see article "The Rich and The Poor In The New Testament" ;later in this book.

**Prosperity Is Increased By Being Content With What We Have**
In the NT we have the counter-cultural proposition that prosperity is not increased through selfish ambition but through contentment. (Hebrews 13, James 3:13-18, 1 Timothy 6:5-10). Jesus warns his listeners against "every form of greed" (Luke 12:15) and said that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24); Paul twice calls greed idolatry (Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5) and maintains that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and causes us to wander away from the faith and "be pierced with many a pang" (1 Timothy 6:5-10). On the other hand contentment is the grateful acceptance of God's good gifts and prompts Him to give even more because we have received His gifts with faith and joy and not despised His goodness by grumbling. (Matthew 13:12, 25:29; Luke 6:38, Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 13:5)


**Character Has Priority Over Prosperity**

Proverbs makes it clear that while prosperity is important the real goal of life is a godly character. (Proverbs 16:19, 19:1,22 28:6; 30:8,9) Thus character takes priority over prosperity e.g. "it is better to be poor than a liar". Even in the Old Testament there were some circumstances where it was better not to prosper such as when Abraham refused the spoils from the King of Sodom saying "lest it be said that Sodom made me rich..". Character and riches are not mutually exclusive. Many on both testaments were wealthy e.g. Job, Abraham, David, Barnabas and Philemon but each of these people put Christ before their wealth. In the New Testament the priority of character over prosperity is absolute and part of the calling of each of the disciples involved a renunciation of wealth. The rich young ruler walked away after being asked to sell all and Peter complained " But what about us Lord - we have left all to follow you. What then will there be for us?".(Matthew 19:27). In the New Testament prosperity is allowable but very much secondary and renunciation is seen as normative.


**Prosperity May Be Temporarily Set Aside For A Higher (Redemptive) Purpose**

Timothy is told "to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" and not to get entangled in the things of this world. (2 Timothy 2:3,4). This is typical of those who set aside "normal" levels of prosperity in order to pursue the things of the Kingdom. Paul continues to Timothy: *(2 Tim 2:9,10 NRSV) for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.* Jesus Himself set aside His heavenly glory in order to minister to us*. (2 Cor 8:9 NRSV) For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.* However such setting aside of prosperity is for a "short time" only. Just as Job had his prosperity restored and Jesus rose from the dead to sit

at the right hand of the Father so the servant of God receives a "crown of righteousness" plus his or her previously foregone prosperity (I think in the Millennium) (*Mat 19:28,29 NKJV) So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life*.

Those called by Christ to urban ministry must undergo a "giving up of all things" especially the comfort and safety of the suburbs. The urban worker may never enjoy the same level of prosperity as the cohort she graduated with. Urban churches pay less and incarnation into neighbourhood networks can be costly in every way. They have given up their power to make wealth in order to serve Christ. When Peter left his fishing nets he left the thing that made him rich and his earthly power to make wealth. Even after Pentecost he would say to the lame man "silver and gold have I none but such as I have give I thee..". Paul described himself and the other apostles as "dishonored., the scum of the earth, the off-scouring of all things, like men condemned to die.." ( 1 Cor 4:10-14). The writer to the Hebrews describes the "urban workers" of faith as not seeking a city here but a city that God has prepared for them! (Hebrews 11).

**If That's The Case Should We Just Let Them Be "Poor and Spiritual?**
The New Testament demonstrates a deep concern for the poor and regards poverty as evil. God's great desire is to prosper people. The primary prosperity is the prosperity we enjoy in redemption. The secondary prosperity is wealth and the Shalom of the OT. In Heaven we will enjoy luxury as well as glory. Spiritual and material prosperity abound in the Kingdom. Jesus is honoured with BOTH riches and glory in Heaven. (Revelation 5:12).

It is not appropriate to ask the urban poor to renounce wealth. You can only renounce what you already have. Thus it was because Christ was rich that his renunciation and earthly poverty had significance. (2 Corinthians 8:9, Philippians 2:5-11). We are to help the urban poor inherit salvation. We are also to help them acquire the power to make wealth and defeat poverty - which may be an intense spiritual battle. If some among them wish to lay down their new found wealth in order to serve God sacrificially then we are to encourage that also. However that is the last phase - not the first.

**PART FOUR - APPLICATION TO URBAN MINISTRY**
What then is the proper balance in helping the urban poor? :
1. Shalom needs to be defined to include spiritual, relational and corporate aspects.
2. The urban poor should BOTH find riches in Christ through evangelism and discipleship and be given the power to make wealth and enjoy prosperity.
3. However wealth and prosperity is a secondary good. The end to be aimed at is Christ-likeness and New Testament Shalom.
4. Poverty must be reframed from being primarily an issue of injustice.
5. Instead poverty must be seen as an issue of lacking the power to make wealth.

6. Necessary structural reforms and issues of justice can be incorporated into this biblical framework..

7. The urban poor should be incorporated into networks of relationships that truly empower them.

8. Creation of Shalom in the way relationships are handled in the community should be seen as foundational to building true and lasting prosperity.

9. The urban poor should be instructed in managing their relational boundaries to avoid toxic and disempowering relationships including entanglement in crime.

10. The community should become a learning organisation that seeks and finds the practical wisdom and knowledge that most empowers them to create wealth.

11. This includes being exposed to and participating in models of education that are of the highest utility.

12. The community should actively seek access to wealth, wealth generating ideas and technology.

13. The urban worker should facilitate the efforts of the community in gaining access to markets, acquiring appropriate technology and finding loans at low interest rates.

14. It is not uncommon for communities to be inexperienced in business affairs and to initially lack the judgement, wisdom and prudence required for success. In extreme cases they do not even know they need these qualities. The Christian worker needs to make them familiar with the biblical teaching on these attributes and to put them in contact with those who do have them and have the desire to impart business wisdom to the urban poor

15. A caveat here - most Christian workers think they have more business wisdom than they actually possess. While the Christian worker can impart the biblical principles an experienced Christian businessman or CPA is often much better at helping with the actual running of the business.

16. Product excellence is one of the keys Proverbs gives to wealth creation. Community-based enterprises must only enter those markets where they can produce goods of reasonable quality. This principle of excellence is frequently neglected when hopeful urban workers encourage their communities to go into programming and computer based businesses in which the urban poor are at a hopeless disadvantage. Food, clothing and public transport are less glamorous but generally more realistic areas for commercial success.

17. There may be a need to develop an appropriate work ethic among the urban poor. See the article "Is There Any Such Thing As A Christian Work Ethic?" later in this book.

18. The urban worker needs to encourage diligence by creating small successes that show that hard work pays off slowly building faith in the utility of hard work and diligence. It is not necessary to create a false dichotomy between "working smart" and "working hard". That is not a biblical distinction. The biblical injunction is "Get smart - then work hard".

19. Attention should be given to the spiritual dimensions of their existence and to the powers, principalities, blessings and curses that affect their community and which also affect them as individuals.

20. Urban workers need to challenge the principalities and powers in two domains. Firstly the domain of despoiling the poor ("steal, kill and destroy) through pastoral care and intercession and local church based initiatives. Secondly in the domain of

unjust systems of trade through prophetic stances and economic and political initiatives generally as an expert individual, umbrella organisation or NGO.

# Christian Witness to the Urban Poor

Report of the Consultation of World Evangelization
Mini-Consultation on Reaching the Urban Poor

held in Pattaya, Thailand
from 16-27 June 1980
Sponsored by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

Prefatory Note

This report, Christian Witness to the Urban Poor, is one of a series of Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) emerging from the historic Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980. The report was drafted by members of the "MiniConsultation on Reaching the Urban Poor" under the Chairmanship of Rev. Jim Punton, who also served as International Co-ordinator of the pre-COWE study groups on Reaching the Urban Poor. Final editing was by Dr. Colin Marchant.

The major part of this report went through a draft and a revised draft, which involved all members of the mini-consultation. It was also submitted to a wider "sub-plenary" group for comment, but the responsibility for the final text rests with the mini-consultation, its chairman and editor.

The report is released with the prayer and hope that it will stimulate the church and individual members in reaching this large segment of the population.

## 1. Description of the People

### A. Overview Worldwide

In 20 years from now, the world's population will have increased by 2 billion people. In 20 years, 80% of the world's population will live in the Third World countries. In 20 years, 12 of the 15 largest cities will be in the Third World, and 60 cities will have populations exceeding 5 million. These figures were released by the United Nations on the very day COWE began.

Forty-five percent of the world's population already live in cities; of these, the majority are the URBAN POOR. They constitute the largest world empire unreached for Christ. They have not seen or heard the Good News. HOW SHALL THEY HEAR?

### B. Poverty Worldwide

The World Bank reported in 1978 that "the past quarter of a century has been a period of unprecedented change and progress in the developing world. And yet, despite this

impressive record, some 800 million individuals continue to be trapped in absolute poverty: a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency " (World Development Report, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1978).

These figures give only the extent of absolute poverty. If we add those in the Third World whose poverty is not absolute, and those within the developed world who are poor in relation to others in their own societies, we will recognise this as a growing tragedy of gigantic proportions within God's family. It will surprise many to know the extent of poverty in developed countries. The most recent survey of poverty in the United Kingdom concludes that 5 million (that is, 9 in every 100) are living beneath the state poverty line, and 14 million (that is, 26 in every 100) are living in "relative poverty" (Poverty in the U.K., Peter Townsend, 1980).

The disparity between nations and within them was dramatically brought home to us within the consultation itself. Western minds faced the fact that the ever-helpful waiters who served us in the hotel received for one month's pay less than we were paying for one day's stay.

## C. Urban Poor

In the northern hemisphere, the urban poor live predominantly within inner cities. In the southern hemisphere, they cluster mainly around the cities. Most of those in the northern hemisphere would be classified as relatively poor, whereas almost all in the southern hemisphere are absolutely poor. Despite many differences in the groupings of the poor, the Brandt Report and research by UNA and the WHO clearly indicate that urban poor worldwide have in common:

- feelings of powerlessness, insignificance, frustration, and despair
- fearfulness of the future
- low health expectation
- inadequate housing
- unemployment or underemployment
- insufficient money
- poor provision for education
- a higher rate of crime
- political turmoil

There are large, long-established reservoirs of the poor in the inner cities of Europe and North America; floods of work-seeking rural dwellers pouring into the cities of Latin America, Asia, and Africa; increasing streams of refugees from natural disaster and political repression. The urban poor are to be found in the CALLAMPAS (mushroom cities) of Chile, the BUSTEES of India, the GOURBEVILLES of Tunisia, the SECEKINDU (built after dusk and before dawn) of Turkey, the GHETTOS of the U.S.A., and the SLUMS of Australia. Such settlements are often a third to a half of the urban population.

The urban poor are a fast-growing, harsh reality. Despite political initiatives and concerned social action, urban poverty appears to be intractable. The situation has not been helped by the relief policies, in which so much hope has been placed. The gap between the rich northern hemisphere and the poor southern hemisphere is widening— while 25% live in unprecedented affluence, 75% are trapped in poverty. The disparity between the rich and the poor within the countries of the northern hemisphere exists and is widening. There is an apparent determinism of economic laws which perpetuates the problems of the urban poor.

The church as a whole is trapped in an ignorance about the urban poor, the causes and consequences of their poverty, and the extent and gravity of our complicity in it.

## D. Urban Poor in Two Places

Statistics and documents can distance us from the stark reality of human poverty. From reports prepared for COWE, we present two contrasting cameos written from pastoral experience:

From India:

The migrants who have come in from the village are easily exploited, live in the worst housing slums, are unorganised, and, if they find work, provide the dirty services from which others benefit. They have no skills because of the break, made by coming to the city, with their traditional rural skills. For these people, everything is determined by their rural and feudal background. They come to their own relatives, their own caste and language groups, with which they have ties. These provide no security for them. Unless they can find a job in a few days, they are thrown out of their homes. The major concern is survival. They have little time for anything else. However horrific the national figures for deprivation in India are, they will be higher among this group. So while illiteracy nationally stands at 90%, among this group it will be 90-100%. They lack everything.

From Northern Ireland:

Those who inhabit the slums and twilight zones of Belfast are the less adequate who, because of their inability to cope, become more and more deprived. They have the less well rewarded jobs—if they have jobs at all. They see life in terms of immediate gratification and lack long-term goals. Not knowing how to budget their wages or their social welfare benefit, they spend unwisely and so their living conditions deteriorate. Those who have any will or spirit left may break out of the scene. The wounds are clearly visible. That some are self-inflicted does not make the festering any less easy to behold, or the pain any less real. Thus, the more deprived and 'beat-up' a community becomes, the more it deteriorates and the harder it is to bring new life.

## E. The Urban Poor in Each Continent

The Urban Poor are everywhere. Each continent was represented in the mini-consultation and gave us notes.

In LATIN AMERICA, rural dwellers have been pushing into metropolitan areas since the 1930s. Fifty-five percent of the population live around the cities in great urban conglomerations. Whole families come with expectations of work and money, but their hope soon becomes despair. Cities are unable to provide basic facilities, and employment is menial and often supplemented by begging and prostitution. Mere subsistence (10 in a one-room house) brings resignation or revolution.

In AFRICA, the peoples of central and eastern Africa are drawn to the cities by the lure of higher pay. They become de-tribalised and lose the taboos and constraints as their sense of belonging is eroded. Their numbers are being augmented by refugees fleeing oppression or driven by famine. In South Africa, urban blacks provide the labour force. Huge townships like Soweto part husband from wife. Voiceless and powerless, they neither belong to the white-dominated cities nor the homesteads they occupy. In African cities there are 60 million unemployed male adults and many others under-employed.

In ASIA, people are driven to cities for survival. With no available housing, they congregate with friends or families in the slums. Suffering from malnutrition, lacking education, ignorant of their rights, lapsing into fatalism, they become trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. So we have the exploited migrants in Calcutta without skills or organisation, and the families of Hong Kong requiring two or three incomes for survival, and the young people of Bangkok drawing money from prostitution.

In AUSTRALIA, unexpected poverty juts out. Lacking the deep-rooted industrial history of Europe, or the mass rural migration of Asia, this new continent of 14 million people has "over 2 million Australians living in various degrees of poverty . . . powerless . . . voiceless and unorganised" (Australians in Poverty,Peter Hollingsworth, 1979). Here the poor are identified as pensioners, unemployed, broken families, single parents, migrant families from Eastern Europe and refugees from Asia—added to the dispossessed aboriginals.

In EUROPE, beneath the obvious poverty of the very old, the chronically unemployed, and inadequate people—lies the deeper victimisation of redundancy, and a pervading sense of powerlessness. France has three million North African migrant workers drawn from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. They are part of Europe's 10 million "guest workers" imported in the 1960s from the poorer part of the Mediterranean, from Black Africa, and former colonies in Asia and the Caribbean. They live alongside the long-established working classes. Groups of prostitutes, drug-dependents, vagrants, and delinquents tend to gather in the areas of the urban poor.

In NORTH AMERICA, one estimate indicates that 40/45 million Americans are within the ranks of the urban poor. Black people in the city centres, driven northwards by the revolution in Southern agriculture and lack of work opportunities, face discrimination and live in frustration. Migrant Hispanics suffer all the disadvantages of the black population with the added problem of language. Native Indians live alongside the undocumented

aliens seeking anonymity, the abandoned elderly, the incoming refugees (from Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Haiti, and Cuba) and the transients (alcoholics, single men, and seasonal workers). The lack of jobs, the collapse of the low-rent housing market and the cutback of public welfare services lead to a culture of despair.

F. Another Side

Over against the overwhelming statistics and often appalling suffering of the urban poor, we have to set another side. Enormous reserves of creative energy are to be found among the oppressed poor. Social organisation, use of personal abilities, family togetherness, and industry are often combined to create a strong inter-dependency of living. Cultural values are carried and maintained and distinctive notes of dialect, music and beliefs characterise many urban poor groups. Within them there is an impetus for change which has powerful roots, and searches for the political machinery to effect structural revolution.

## 2. The Bible and the Poor

### A. Old Testament and New Testament

Through our ministry and mission in urban areas across the world, we know the reality of poverty and its debilitating, dehumanising consequences. We have known, too, the problem of riches, the great gap between rich and poor; and the often ruthless exercise of power which reduces people to poverty and keeps them in it. What we had not known, and we have been shaken to see, is the amount of space devoted in Scripture to the poor and to God's dealings with them and for them. That is why, for us, one of the most important sections of this report is the detailed concordance of Bible references to the poor (see Appendix).

In the Old Testament, "poor" can be translated by six major and three other terms—totalling about 300 references, and revealing a broad understanding of the causes, reality, and consequences of poverty. The poor person is the downtrodden, humiliated, oppressed; the man pleading and crying out for justice; the weak or helpless; the destitute; the needy, dependent person; and the one forcibly subjected to the powerful oppressor. The wide range of terms shows that "the poor" must be seen from many perspectives. Clustering around "the poor" are linked words like "the widow," "the fatherless" and "the stranger."

The New Testament uses a number of terms to describe the poor: the manual worker who struggles to survive on a day-to-day basis, the destitute cowering as a beggar, the one reduced to "meekness," the one brought low. We must include those weak and exhausted by heavy burdens and the leper, the widows and "the common people."

Throughout the Bible the majority of references indicate that the poor are the mercilessly oppressed, the powerless, the destitute, and the downtrodden. Nor is their poverty taken for granted in Scripture. It causes concern, anger, and protest. It is challenged and opposed. And its source is seen as injustice and oppression by the powerful. God's words about the poor have been to us like rocks in an avalanche. It is possible to duck the first few, but the massive thrust is inescapable. We urge others to study for themselves, using the concordances in the appendix, or reading some of the recent books on the subject.

We have discovered that when Jesus said, "The poor you always have with you" (Mark 14:7), he was pointing out that we are sinful in permitting poverty. For his allusion is to Deut. 15:4, 5: "There will be no poor among you if only you will obey the voice of the Lord."

## B. Jesus and the Poor

Born in a stable of humble parents and a refugee in early childhood, Jesus grew up in the despised town of Nazareth. In middle life he abandoned his craft to begin the messianic mission of good news about the unbreaking of God's kingly reign, journeying throughout Palestine, often with no place to sleep. After a brief ministry, he was put to death by the power elite of the day, crucified among criminals.

The central feature of his teaching was that in him, in his words and works, the kingly reign of God had broken into human history. Demonstrating that God's absolute future was already breaking into the present, Jesus healed the sick and exorcised demons, challenged the Sabbath regulations and predicted the end of the Temple, abolished the rigid food laws and associated with the nobodies of society, pronounced God's blessing on the poor and demonstrated his presence with the persecuted, declared the forgiveness of sins, and invited the outcasts and notorious to the kingdom banquet. All, without exception, were invited, and all, without distinction, were welcome—for this was to be a festival of grace and joy, a festival celebrating God's reign of grace.

The ministry of Jesus was open to all. He accepted the invitation to eat with the Pharisees (Luke 11:37)—but sharply denounced them; healed the daughter of the president of the synagogue (Luke 8:41) and the son of a centurion (Matthew 8:5); was supported by wealthy women (Luke 8:2-3); and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:42-47). The distinctive feature of his ministry, however, was that, while it was open to all, it was directed primarily towards those whom the orthodox and powerful regarded as beyond the fringes of respectability, outside the realm of salvation according to the traditions of his day. These included lepers, who had to live outside the camp (Luke 17:11-19); Gentiles who had no share in the privileges of Israel (Matthew 8:5-13; John 4:45-54); women and children who had no rights or status within the community (Matthew 9:20-26); notorious sinners, despised tax-collectors, drunkards and prostitutes (Matthew 11:9; 21:32; Mark 2:16,17; Luke 7:33-50; 15:1,2; 19:1, 2).

Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus declared in the synagogue of Nazareth that the words of the ancient prophet had come to fulfilment:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people" (Luke 4:18-19).

In his teaching on hospitality, Jesus commanded a host to invite "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (Luke 14:13). In the parable of the great feast, the host orders his servants to go out and bring back "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (Luke 14:21) for all the invited guests had declined the invitation.

Many of his parables carried this free offer of salvation to despised outcasts and notorious sinners. They include the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1- 15); the two sons (Matthew 20:20-24); the two debtors (Luke 7:41-43); the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32); the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7); the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) and the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14).

When John the Baptist was imprisoned and wanted to be sure of the authenticity—of the messianic ministry of Jesus, he was told, "The blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the good news is preached to the poor" (Matthew 11:5, 6).

## C. The Kingdom-Community and the Poor

The whole of the teaching of Jesus about kingdom has been increasingly recognised to be closely related to the new Israel, which Jesus called into being. The twelve disciples and those around them were the nucleus of a kingdom community, which the Messiah was to raise up. The kingdom is embodied in a new social reality which lives in the power of the Spirit. The central theme of the new household of God which Jesus inaugurated was grace. Forgiveness and forgivingness, acceptance and openness, and an undiscriminating love like that of God were to be its hallmark (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36). Here the least would be the greatest, the servant the ruler of all, in startling contrast with a society conformed to this world.

At Pentecost, the New Testament church was empowered by the Spirit to witness to the kingdom (Luke 1:16-18), and to be an anticipation, a "first fruits" of the new creation, the sign of the final gathering together of all things into God. It was called to follow its Lord in living the kingdom in this present age, and thus to be a bridgehead of the advancing realm of God. In Acts, we see Luke's portrayal of this kingdom community in the making, a community of grace. From the outset, all are accepted equally into this fellowship—irrespective of where they come from, or what they bring. Through the conflict over the admission of Gentiles, grace continues to force its way out to the last

and the least. In Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, and 5:12-18, the koinonia (Acts 2:42) brings together all members in brotherly and sisterly sharing, prayer and table fellowship, shared suffering and common ownership of property. The believers "devoted themselves to fellowship" (Acts 2:42), "held everything in common" (Acts 2:44) and "not one of them considered anything his private property" (Acts 4:32). "There was not a needy person among them, for those who owned land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the sale and laid it at the apostles' feet; it was then distributed according to every individual's need" (Acts 4:34,35). It is not clear whether the first Christians resigned all the personal possessions to a common fund, or whether they retained personal use until it was needed to relieve the poverty of others.

The New Testament church sought to live out its life under the guidance of the Spirit in continuing the kingdom attitude towards material possessions. The service of God and the sharing of life in the fellowship took priority. Their security was in God's provision through his people and all property was at the disposal of the community. Social distinctions were abolished and poverty was overcome.

Paul's letters prescribe a way of life for a community living by grace. Though there is less explicit reference to the poor or to the sharing of this world's goods in Paul's writing, 1 Cor. 11 implies the emergence of status divisions and a consequent failure to share in the Lord's Supper. Paul calls for a society in which each looks to the good of the other, in which there is "distribution to the need of all," hospitality; and the weakest, the least, and the most deprived are given the greatest honour (1 Cor. 12).

The collection for Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8, and Gal. 2:10) had the special theological significance of a thank offering on the part of Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church. It was a reversal of the usual practice, as those who had received the good news of God's grace responded by sharing with the poorer church from which the mission had come. Paul took the opportunity to expound his own understanding of giving as the implementation of justice, "It is only fair that you should help those who are in need. Then, when you are in need and they have plenty, they will help you. In this way, both are treated equally" (2 Cor. 8:14). The source of our giving is the grace of Christ, to which our own generosity in sharing must be a response. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; rich as he was, he made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9). As we in turn continue the mutual interchange in a fellowship of joy and sorrow, gifts and needs, we realise the unity in Christ of a church founded on love.

The church, for Paul, is itself the living expression of a grace which chooses and uses what is weak, poor, and despised in this world (1 Cor. 1: 18-30). In this church, the members are to mediate the gifts of Christ in mutual interdependence (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12), in self-humiliation and selfgiving (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 8:9), and to live in anticipation of the kingdom of God. This involves the establishment of divine justice in love already correcting the distortions caused by men's sins (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Thess. 4:11,12; 2 Thess. 3:7-12). Whenever this pattern of community appeared to be breaking down, New Testament writers comment strongly. In James, there is an attack on the rich, and

a pleading for the cause of the poor (James 1:9-11; 2:2-4; 5:1-6). 1 John 3:16-18 points to a failure in sharing as the one concrete example in the epistle about love in action.

Overall, the New Testament presents an impressive picture of the church as the model of God's purpose for mankind. As this purpose was embodied and expressed in the life of Jesus Christ, so his followers, in the Body of Christ, continue to carry the Gospel to the world. This Gospel is proclaimed by word and deed, and the shared life of the church is the visual aid that illustrates and conveys the grace of Christ. Changed attitudes and relationships among Christians carry through into a fundamental sharing of life at all levels. This community of grace proclaims vividly the new order of the kingdom, transforming the lives of individuals and challenging the whole social order.

D. The Good News to the Poor

The proclamation of the "good news of the kingdom" and its embodiment in Jesus and in the community that fully shares his life comes as a judgement on the ingrained, distorted social patterns of this world. Its values are turned upside down and its structures are questioned. A new order, a new pattern is here, into which all are invited. All who hear, turn, and come in are accepted through the grace which opens up to all people this new life shared with God.

It is hard for the poor to accept this entirely unexpected invitation because of their previous exclusion from the good things of life and their relegation in the old order to the sidelines and margins. But now they find themselves accepted and invited in first of all (Luke 4:18-19). The invitation is addressed specifically to them, "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads" (Matt. 11:28). At last, the poor are able to see themselves as God created them, in their true dignity and worth. Now they are persons with something to contribute, something to share.

Just as they are inwardly healed and changed, so they are enabled to see the world through new eyes. They are no longer servants to the false structures that once threatened and trapped them. They see the central weaknesses, and know that the old patterns are already defeated and passing. In the new life of faith and the shared love of the believing community, they have fresh hope.

The rich also are summoned to discover themselves in God's sight and to recognise that they, too, are sinners in need of grace. For them it is much harder. They have so much they must lose (Matt. 19:16-21). It is hard for them to receive and respond to this invitation to live by grace, when security lies in wealth, power, and status. It is even harder to repent and, like Zacchaeus, to acknowledge that their wealth comes from a defrauding of the poor. Yet the same movement of grace can release the rich from their isolation and estrangement.

Both those who were poor and those who were rich, on entering into the death and risen life of Jesus Christ, find their place together in his kingdom community. Here those who know themselves accepted in him, can accept each other. Here the Magnificat is

made visible. The mighty are put down from their seats, the poor lifted up and the hungry fed.

But those who cling to their wealth must, like the rich young ruler, be sent away empty.

## 3. The Urban Poor and Evangelism

Despite the universal and growing presence of urban poor people in the world and the biblical mandate compelling concern for the poor, there is often a great gulf between the church and the poor. This emerges as we face four questions:

How do the poor view Jesus?
How do the poor view the church?
Why is our evangelism failing?
Where are the signs of hope?

### A. How Do the Poor View Jesus?

The dominant view which appears to be common to urban poor in both developed and developing countries is that the Jesus they have heard about is, at best, indifferent to the poor—at worst, he is seen as the God of their oppressors. The real Jesus has not been rejected by the urban poor; they simply have not heard of him.

To many of the poor urban black and other ethnic minorities of North America, he appears to be a white, blue-eyed, middle-class mystic who presides over the status quo and the establishment. Some, however, do distinguish between the Jesus of the church (who is the white man's Jesus) and the Jesus of the Bible (who is one with them). In Latin America, the poor are increasingly seeing Jesus as their liberator from oppression. In Europe, most urban poor who know of Jesus at all would see him as the Jesus of the ruling middle class. Many of the world's urban poor have not even heard of Jesus. A majority of them live in Asian cities. Some who have heard his name know him as the God of the Christians, one God among many.

### B. How Do the Poor View the Church?

The church which they see is often the urban middle-class church whose worship, style and structure is alien to them. Many of the black urban poor of North America find the church irrelevant to the social, economic, and political context of their lives. They often see the church associated with the system which they believe oppresses them. Recent events indicate anger at, and lack of respect for, the church. Vandalism in churches and scornful attitudes displayed towards leading black churches demonstrates this. In Latin America, many urban poor see the institutional church as being largely identified with the ruling powers, an ally of the military rulers, and partner of the powerful and the oppressors. There is, however, increasing evidence of church leadership in Latin America dissociating itself from that identification with oppressive regimes and taking up the cause of the poor. Such courageous identification with urban poor by Archbishop

Romero in San Salvador led to his assassination. The majority of urban churches in Asia are middle-class, although many owe their origin to evangelistic efforts among the poor. Their development in this direction has resulted in their alienation from the urban poor, who find little in common with them. They see them as Western-oriented and indifferent to involvement in political action for social change.

C. Why Is Our Evangelism Failing?

Most evangelistic efforts among the urban poor have borne little fruit. Despite heavy investment of people and plant, we are largely failing in the evangelistic task. During the mini-consultation, the reasons given for this failure clustered round the question of culture/class, the life of the church itself, our methods, the place of Scripture and theology, and the pressures of the urban poor setting.

Culture and class—The Christian church is seen to be trapped in a middle-class, establishment culture. There is an image of the church as aligned with the rich and powerful, which is confirmed by the social mobility drift of Christians from the urban poor to the middle-class areas and attitudes. This is often enhanced by incoming external evangelistic efforts exuding success and respectability, the imposition of the committee approach with its agendas, minutes, and accounts, and the control by professionals of church life.

The life of the church so often blocks the gospel. One national group said, "Within ourselves we discover an unwillingness to accept fully the pattern of the Incarnation. Even when we set out to work with the urban poor, we find that our institutions and organisations actually shield us from the painful realities of poverty and divide us from those who are poor." The long-established gulf between the church and the urban poor has often removed spiritual expectancy, and a fatalistic resignation has immobilised effort and prayer. Alongside this has gone Christian evasion of the corporate sins like racism and social injustice. Above all, we confess to a lack of love both within and from our congregations. All these factors contradict our words, and the gospel is neither seen nor heard.

Wrong methods—The church has neglected the contextualisation of its leadership, structure, forms of worship and ministry among the urban poor. Our evangelistic and service programmes tend to work for, rather than work with, the urban poor. This lack of identification and attitude of superiority has led to a paternalism which is quickly identified, resented, and rejected. Furthermore, our missionary methods have been too verbal and conceptual, and insufficiently experiential and concrete. Where individuals or groups have struggled to reach the urban poor with the Gospel, they often find that their methods receive little support from the historic congregations because of racial attitudes, inherent complicity with the status quo, and the inability to be open to change.

Inadequate Scriptural theology lies beneath our failures. The biblical message has been neglected or scaled down. Time and again, evangelical thought spiritualises or allegorises words like justice, salvation or covenant. We have not taken seriously the teaching of the Scriptures on "the poor" and we consider the appendix on biblical words

essential reading. Many of the urban poor cannot receive the biblical message for themselves because translation has not taken place, or illiteracy prevails. Theological thinking has been over-printed because it has not been done "from the underside," from the perspective of the poor. This has often led to a verbal, privatised approach—without a total theology spanning the whole of life.

External pressures bear down heavily upon the urban poor. Where there are totalitarian regimes of right or left, there is little freedom to share the gospel. In some areas of Africa and Asia, tribalism, caste, and ethnocentrism act as barriers to the open acceptance of the Gospel as strongly as class does in the West. Pre-occupation with survival, social struggle, political turmoil, inadequate resources, and unequal opportunities shape and blanket the people who know the pressures of urban poverty.

D. Where Are the Signs of Hope?

Alongside our acknowledged failure ran the recognition that "green shoots" or "signs of hope" can be discerned. Pre-COWE groups and the mini-consultation itself revealed that these were evident at two levels—within the total mission of the church, and in the specific evangelistic task. Again and again, we discovered that a recurring model, experienced on all six continents, was the vehicle of the gospel among the urban poor at both levels.

In the TOTAL MISSION of the church, a wide range of Christian groups and agencies now operate among the urban poor. These include:

1. Social action groups—often centred on issues like race, housing, poverty, or justice.
2. Support and sharing groups operating on a "care and share" basis, and drawing individuals into group life.
3. Development groups with a holistic emphasis.
4. Renewal programmes establishing locally controlled, often co-operative, services to maintain economic independence.
5. Cell-groups coming together to develop a deeper, indigenous, urban spirituality.
6. The spreading of the simple life-style movement.
7. New and imaginative forms of training for both professional and lay members of the church.
8. The entry of Christians into the worlds of labour, politics, and economics.

In the EVANGELISTIC TASK, signs of hope both in numerical growth and widening outreach were seen in:

1. The rapid growth of Pentecostal churches in places like Latin America.
2. The emergence of black-led churches in areas like the United Kingdom.
3. The rich diversity of para-denominational churches including house fellowships, springing up among the urban poor.
4. The over-all realisation and growing concern for the unreached millions of the urban poor increasingly known within the wider church.

The focal point of these signs of hope was found in one model. Despite our diverse background and experiences, there was a consistency in our agreement on the vital place of the "base community." Although there was no attempt to pre-determine our agenda, our excitement grew as our attention was centred again and again on this model.

4. The Basic Strategy

A. Statement

"We believe the basic strategy for the evangelization of the urban poor is the creation or renewal of communities in which Christians live and share equally with others. These communities function as a holistic redemptive presence among the poor, operate under indigenous leadership, demonstrate God's love, and invite men, women and children to repentance, faith and participation in God's kingdom."

That is the unanimous conclusion of the mini-consultation that grew from the contributions and debate of those engaged in several continents with the question of the evangelization of the urban poor. "Base Communities" are seen as the primary factor.

B. Reasons

Three reasons support the statement—current experience, social rightness, and biblical pattern.

Current experience It is clear from evidence and experience that evangelistic work has already begun with the building up of small communities, teams, or cells. In Brazil alone, there are more than 80,000 "base communities" with over 2,000,000 people, largely rooted in Catholicism. Evangelical experience came from Hong Kong where— through such communities—600 people within 10 years have been drawn to Christ from among the poorest workers. In the inner cities of Britain, small, newly planted churches are growing up to cover people of many cultures and ethnic origins. Established churches entered renewal through the new life springing from "base communities" emerging in many denominations and areas.

Social rightness These communities convey the possibility of caring, healing, integration, and purpose to those who have known harshness, hurt, division, and hopelessness. Where economic pressures have affected the capacity to make choices or decisions, an accepting, or affirming group will encourage the development of gifts and the confidence required to face responsibility. This can only take place within a nurturing environment. In such a caring community, the way of Christ as a lived and living reality will become a genuine option for the poor. Although the groups vary in form and style according to the context, source, and leadership, it will become a redemptive presence with indigenous leadership rooted in society, demonstrating God's love, and encouraging participation in God's kingdom.

Solidarity in standing alongside others in the struggle for justice, equality, and opportunity, over against wrongful imprisonment, racism, and exploitation.

Awareness-raising in the understanding of the needs of a neighbourhood and the reasons for its plight, in the gathering of resources to bring change, in the training of basic skill in community development, and in the unlocking of individual skills and confidence.

Creative festivity as street festivals and family celebrations draw on the gifts of music, song, dances, video, radio, and theatre.

Discipling through personal evangelism, Bible study, training, and the bridges of friendship.

Renewal as new vision, vitality, and direction were given to tired organisations and structures.

Biblical pattern In "base communities" the "word is made flesh." Faith, hope, and love are experienced in action. The groups embody and express the gospel. Within them, is found koinonia-fellowship, body-ministry, and personal dignity and destiny. Through them, the Good News is announced openly, visually, and internationally. Within them, relevant Bible study and corporate prayer tie in with the everyday realities of life. Through them, joyful participation in worship, new styles of living within simplicity and stewardship and directness in evangelism confront neighbours and friends.

C. Consequences

Through the flexibility and diversity of base communities, Christian presence emerges to confront individuals within urban society at many levels. During the mini- consultation, we shared in the discovery of base communities operating in:

Residential Involvement as Christians choose to live as one of the poor, sharing their lives and neighbourhoods, living in interdependence with them.

Residential Communities as households, networks, and varying communities learn to share lives, possessions, and commitment to each other and the neighbourhood.

Service to others as Christians share in the struggle for homes, food, medical treatment, employment, legal advice, counselling, literacy; operate necessary amenities such as launderettes, eating houses, crisis centres, etc.

D. Preparation and Training

Before basic Christian communities can emerge, there must be a clearing of the ground. We call for the creation of radical (in the sense of rooted) Christian communities set within the urban poor. We must also call for preparation and training that is rigorously biblical and culturally authentic. We recognise that no training outside of the actual

urban setting can begin to prepare or change Christians for effective ministry within the world of the urban poor. We acknowledge an urgent need for pastoral- evangelists who will incarnate the gospel in the cultures of the urban poor and from a position of servanthood proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

This preparation and training must include the following essential elements if ministry is to be incisive, effective, and lasting:

1. A rigorous understanding of Scripture which imposes no alien ideology upon the text, which is eager to discover the mind of Christ and place all thought and theology under the judgement of his Word.

2. An honest uncovering of deep-seated personal attitudes towards the poor which are unjust, ill-founded, and often prejudicial. These attitudes must be searched out in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

3. An acceptance of the poor as they are, and an understanding and appreciation of their culture so that entry may be made with minimum trauma.

4. A realisation of the structural forces that operate in areas of urban poverty. This will include a thorough understanding of urban sociology, economics, and the "principalities and powers" that overshadow the lives of the urban poor.

5. An appreciation of the skills of community development, especially those involved in co-operative ventures leading towards economic self-reliance and a gathering solidarity of purpose and strength.

6. A knowledge of social institutions within the urban setting that shape society. These will include hospitals, schools, prisons, social welfare and leisure facilities.

7. An understanding of cross-cultural communication that will include the dynamics of culture shock, culture change, and communication blocks and bridges.

8. Training in inter-personal communication and enabling/equipping skills to encourage personal and group development, growth and action.

9. An awareness of appropriate ways of learning, decision making, leadership, communicating, and working with people.

10. An openness to appropriate spirituality among particular groups of the urban poor that will include leadership styles, structures, ways of celebrating, and life-styles.

11. A readiness to encourage new forms of leadership whether that be by the emergence and training of indigenous leaders or the exploration of tentmaking ministers as worker-priests or priest-workers.

12. The use of fresh skills in using and applying the Bible to daily life, leading to the dynamic interaction of Scriptures and life. This must include the ability to communicate in story, drama or other ways which are appropriate to the local mind-set and style of learning.

13. The understanding of the centrality of the home and family which uses natural sharing, openness, and accepted gifts in communication.

14. Direct experience in witnessing and discipling others into Christian maturity and growth.

15. The use of different models of base communities in church planting.

16. A growing evidence of consistent agape love between Christians and for non-believers.

17. The use of availability to regain credibility as the process of incarnation puts Christians alongside of, and open to, the urban poor.

E. Recommendations

In the light of the basic strategy and the emerging experience that is carried in different models and alternative methods of ministry, and to ensure that all the essential components are carried through into our preparation and action, we ask evangelicals around the world to respond to the following recommendations:

1. High priority. We ask the churches and mission agencies to make the evangelization of urban poor a high priority in terms of personnel, financial support, and training. This priority will not only cover "incoming" missionaries but also the indigenous Christians, who will ultimately be the primary evangelists among the urban poor. This high priority is demanded by the accelerating scale of the opportunity and the paucity of our response.

2. Co-ordination. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, or some other body, needs to initiate and coordinate sharing and interchange among those actually engaged in the building of Christian communities among the poor. We recommend co-ordination that will link experience and resource-people through a switchboard operating across denominational lines. Groups such as the Evangelical Urban Training Project (EUTP) in the U.K.; the Inter-Seminary Theological Education (ISTEM) in New York; the Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) in Chicago; and the Hong Kong Industrial Committee could create a network that would facilitate the collection and development of a data basis for future planning and work.

3. Facing implications. The insights of the urban poor, and the gathered experience of those who work and live with them, will focus attention on the social, political, and economic ramifications. Christian committees among the poor must inevitably raise searching questions about the relationships with rich churches, people of other faiths and ideologies, and economic and political power. We, therefore, recommend service

and sustained study of the deeper implications behind the existence of so many urban poor people in our world, and the role the Christian church has played in this matter.

4. Theological training. Glaring oversights in curriculum and practical training for urban ministry have gone alongside blindness to the biblical teaching on the poor, justice, and the wholeness of salvation. We recommend that renewed or fresh attention be given to the overall teaching of Scripture which will result in increased research and a balanced, practical exposition in local congregations. We further recommend that all training include the non-formal, practical and tried methods emerging in many areas.

5. Prayer. We recommend that the whole church of Jesus Christ be called to a renewed emphasis of prayer for, and from, the urban poor. This must include the confession of our self-centredness and blindness, informed intercession for the needs of God's people and God's world, and thanksgiving for the presence and work of the Holy Spirit among the urban poor.

5. Therefore . . .

A. Three Models

The use of the basic Christian community as the primary agent of evangelism within the context of the urban poor will mean changed emphases at two levels. Within the actual situation, local Christians will work out for themselves authentic community patterns that will encourage indigenous leadership, allow all to use their gifts, and create living fellowships. These street centres will come together for "cathedral-events" but will remain the key-blocks in the life of each church. Those born outside the urban poor (who will be those reading this booklet!) will have to enter into an understanding of the situation and their own role through one of three models which are now emerging in different parts of the world.

Change in existing institutions of theological education is already evident. Seminaries, graduate schools, Bible colleges, and other Christian centres of education should be encouraged to develop courses in urban ministry with specialised faculty, either fulltime or visiting. The establishing of an information and resource linking network, the developments of in-situ training, the theological underpinning of urban ministry, and the opening of the doors of institutions to the realities of urban life will start concern and commitment towards the major mission fields of the urban poor.

Emergence of biblical discipleship methods: The majority of training opportunities for urban ministry exist outside of the formal educational institutions. This non-formal education tends to be more life-related, realistic, less expensive, and transferable to the actual setting. Biblical discipleship offers the model where, in an intensely personal manner, a group cluster around a person with experience and skills. In this way basic concepts, principles, and skills are not only shared but also developed through actual experience. Modelled on the incarnational life-style of Jesus with the twelve disciples, such a mode of preparation for ministry has many advantages. The message, style of

ministry, structures and forms of ministry are thoroughly contextualised. Spiritual disciplines like prayer, the application of the Scriptures, and personal counselling are learned through direct observation and participation. The growth and life of Christian communities is understood from within.

Training centres set among the urban poor offer a third model for Christians moving into urban areas. Current examples of effective ministry, existing community networks or service centres could link together the traditional institutions, the biblical discipleship cells, and the geographical setting of the urban poor. Inter-disciplinary, non-formal, professional and lay, participant-observer . . . these centres would offer a nexus for realistic training and preparation for long-term ministry.

B. A Personal Checklist

For those reading this book we commend an alphabetical checkup and application.

APPENDIX IS PRIORITY! The biblical words and their message will give both foundation and understanding. Study or skim, check or criticise—the exercise will convince you about the attitude and concern that God has for the poor. Deeper study can be carried out through the works listed at the end of the Appendix.

BIBLIOGRAPHY IS A SIGNPOST. Note the titles, the nationality of the writers, the accelerating rate of appearance and the number of evangelical writers. The books become signposts indicating the direction the people of God have taken and must face.

CONTEMPORARY NEWS ILLUSTRATES both the significance and extent of the urban poor situation. Geographically the internal struggles of El Salvador, riots in the U.K., victims of war in Lebanon, welfare cuts in the U.S.A., or the racial tensions of South Africa illustrate the universality of the dilemma. Socially, redundancy and unemployment in the Western nations, population increase in Africa and India, or political turmoil in Latin America illustrate the depth of the urban poor question.

DO SOMETHING! Response is demanded at many levels. The simple life-style movement, programme of study, political activism, financial support, church commitment, or denominational strategies, all offer options.

ENTER INTO UNDERSTANDING. Read this booklet alongside those on Secularism, Marxism, and the large cities. Live among, become part of, and hear the cry. The road of the incarnation is the only way into understanding, identification, and kingdom proclamation.

FACE THE UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS that the Scriptures and the human situation put together for Christians. These questions cover the very structuring of our society, the discrepancies in resources, the "suburban captivity of the churches," our disobedience to biblical mandate, and the very personal issue of our own life-style and commitment.

"He has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people." (Jesus Christ, in Luke 4:18,19)

"Christ is either neglected or honoured in the persons of those who need our assistance. So then, when we are reluctant to assist the poor, may the Son of God come before our eyes, to whom to refuse anything is a monstrous sacrilege." (John Calvin in his commentary on Matthew 24:45)

Appendix

Web Editor's Note: At this point the original LOP contained an Appendix presenting the Old Testament vocabulary for the poor. Due to transliteration issues, that Appendix is not accurately reproducible in .html format and has been omitted here. For the full Appendix in Adobe Acobat form, click here (note: the file is 604 KB). To get Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is necessary to view the form, click here.

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# How Economic Injustice Is Producing Angry People

People get angry for a perceived reason of some sort or another and people get angriest when this reason involves a threat  to property, dignity, and cherished values or even to life itself. These reasons we have for getting angry are also frequently culturally determined. The sight of someone eating a pork chop would not disturb most Christians but it would genuinely revolt an Orthodox Jew or a fundamentalist Muslim. People and cultures also have habitual ways of expressing anger. Some shout, some cry and others just get even.

There are two main reasons that the Taliban is angry at the USA and at Western civilization. Firstly they perceive us as unholy, immoral and idolatrous. This perception is not helped by what they may have seen at the movies or on TV. Secondly they are clearly being exploited economically by many of the multi-national forms that do business in developing countries such as Afghanistan. For instance the charging of interest is forbidden in both Judaism and Islam but practiced ruthlessly by "Christians" (we will explore this later). In their eyes they are poor but faithful to Allah while we are rich, wicked and idolatrous. A third and to my mind lesser reason is because the USA protects Israel.

The main two reasons are of course linked through various aspects of unjust trade. The sex trade, drug trade and export of pornography make the West appear licentious and immoral. Unjust interest rates and currency trading and exploitative trade agreements make us appear as powerful economic oppressors of the poor. The unfettered acquisition of huge amounts of weaponry that clearly are not intended to be used against other developed Western democracies countries makes them fearful as to the possible real targets.

Deep resentment is built up when they realize that the wages they are being paid in Karachi or Kabul are as low as a fiftieth of what they would receive for doing exactly the same work in the USA. What developing nations do not realize is that those Westerners that are powerful oppressors of the poor are a minority, and are largely operating outside of the control of Western governments and outside of the agreement of most of the population of Western countries.

I believe most decent people would be rightly appalled at the injustices inflicted by unjust trade in developing countries if they understood the issues. However such issues are too complex for 30-second sound bites, uncomfortable to hear about and have a steep learning curve for people unversed in basic economics so they rarely get much space in the media. So by the unjust trade of a small percentage of people, our own ignorance and our lack of control of rogue traders we have let the developing nations perceive the West as powerful, immoral and unjust. We have sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

### How Anger Develops

Conflict resolution counselors talk about "the 4 R's" in the development on anger. The 4 R's are – Resolve, Resent, Reject, and Revenge. If an issue is not *resolved* it turns into *resentment*, if the resentment is not dealt with it becomes *rejection* and the person starts to distance themselves in some way. If that fails then the rejection turns outward and becomes *revenge* and the person retaliates. We often see this pattern in mass killers angry at society. First repeated failures and disappointment give rise to

brooding resentment, this is then followed by rejection of society and withdrawal from society so that it is often said of them "he was such a quiet person and kept to himself", and finally revenge is enacted against the "cold cruel world" in the form of a burst of rage with a high-powered rifle. The same pattern occurs in troubled marriages as squabbles become resentments, followed by rejection and less sexual intimacy, a quite patch of living separate lives, then the all out war of divorce. Everywhere you turn you can see the 4 R's of Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge in operation. It is certainly evident in the less developed Islamic societies where the predation of world trade and the powerlessness of their situation have become gone from resentment in the early part of this century, to rejection such as nationalization of oil assets, the overthrow of Westernized regimes such as the Shah of Iran and finally a retreat into isolation and rejection of Western values. This long period of rejection of the West has finally culminated in the "revenge" phase, which, if it turns out to be like the revenge phase of a mass murderer, will be spectacular and eventually suicidal.

I think it is constructive to further develop this analogy between the terrorists and the crazed gunmen that suddenly start shooting into a crowd. Both are violent and ultimately suicidal acts by people who perceive themselves as having little or nothing to lose and who primary motive is one of self-aggrandizement. They want to feel significant before they die. Osama Bin Laden has told a Palestinian interviewer that he has lived too long, that he wished he had died in the campaign against Russia, and that he wishes to die a martyr. The Taliban are the war-hardened rulers of a country with nothing to lose. The 4R's indicate that at some point they will fight like holed up bandits who know this is their "last stand". For them this last battle will be their glory.

Thus the current conflict probably will slog on to its grim, terrible and inevitable conclusion and the annihilation of Afghanistan. So the questions for the future seem to be "Are there other similar situations which could develop in parallel ways?" and "Can we do anything to stop this?" The 1999 Human Development Report examined 177 nations ranking them in order of development (Canada came out number 1), of these 177 there were 35 nations listed as having "low human development". (Afghanistan was not listed, perhaps because of lack of data available in 1999 in the midst of the war at that time.) I cross-checked this list of least developed nations with religious data from the 1993 Operation World as a rough guide. It appears that Sudan, Yemen, and Mauritania, are a Muslim republics under full or partial *sharia* law. Bangladesh, Senegal, Djibouti, Guinea, Gambia, Mali, and Niger are overwhelmingly Muslim but are "secular". Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone are about half Muslim and among them Burkina Faso at least is highly radicalized. These 15 very poor nations with substantial Muslim sympathies are obvious possible seedbeds for terrorism. If we add Libya, Iran, Iraq, the Palestinian people and possibly Pakistan and some on the Central Asian Republics to the list we soon have over 20 potential trouble spots around the globe. This is not an exhaustive geo-political analysis in one paragraph! Rather it is just an indication that the combination of Islam and poverty is not confined to Afghanistan and that it may be worthwhile for the West to mend its ways with regard to trade before even greater waves of terror are unleashed from many of these smaller nations.

Even if the recruitment and development of terrorists were to stop today, angry radicalized people will still be out there for a long while. In these nations a youth is often highly radicalized with set radical opinions by the age of 15 and by 19 or 20 may be well and truly involved in terrorism. Few terrorists are over 55 though some like Osama Bin

Laden are well into their forties. This time from ages 15 to 55 gives a 40 year possible operational lifespan for a terrorist. The radicalized 15 year olds of today could still be plotting destruction in 2041! Assuming 25 billion spent per year combating these threats (and that is probably a fairly minimal amount) over 40 years that would cost the West 1 trillion dollars! Add to that the costs of fear, destabilization and infrastructure damage and the cost would be enormous. Obviously the easiest way to stop potentially enduring radicalism is to ensure the angry young men have good jobs and full stomachs. While abject poverty continues terrorism will seem glamorous and martyrdom a great way out of a miserable life.

How miserable is life in these countries? Is it really that bad? When your relatives die because they cannot afford basic medicines, when you live under sheets of rusty galvanized iron and broken packing cases are your walls, when your children cannot afford school fees or even the most basic books, when there is no clean, safe drinking water and very little food – then life is truly miserable and visibly and acutely miserable. The burdens borne by those in the less developed countries are immense, lifelong and painful.

Here are some statistics about what the 1997-8 Asian currency crisis did to the world's largest Muslim nation – Indonesia:

| Items | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inflation rate | 6.47% | 11.09% | 77.63% |
| Economic Growth | +7.8% | +4.7% | -13.01% |
| GDP per capita (USD) | 729.31 | 466.24 | 230.98 |
| Foreign Investment (millions USD) | 29,931.4 | 33,832.5 | 15,563.3 |
| Domestic Investment | 100,715.2 | 119,872.9 | 60,749.3 |
| Exchange Rate Rupiah to USD | 2500 | NA | 10,000+ |
| Population Under The Poverty Line (millions) | 34.5 | NA | 49.5 |

*Source – Indonesian Central bureau of Statistics 1990 and cited in the paper "How Indonesia Is Coping With Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: A Politico-Economic Perspective" presented at the 2001 Hanoi Conference on Globalization.*

In 1998 an Indonesian Muslim saw their GDP drop by a factor of three, their currency devalue by a factor of 4, inflation hit nearly 80% and 15 million extra people thrown into poverty. Korea, Malaysia and Thailand had similar shocks and Korea described it as a "national shame" in the deep pain it inflicted. A few wealthy people in the West got even wealthier out of the currency manipulation behind it. Does any amount of profit justify doing this to a nation and to its poorest people?

Thus we see that there are millions of very poor Muslims with nothing to lose by becoming terrorists and everything to gain. They are rapidly going down the road of Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge and have very good reasons for doing so. Since charging interest is one of the major bones of contention, and is forbidden in Islam it will help us to take a biblical look at the charging of interest. Tackling one specific issue in

depth can often give us a feel for how things operate better than a mass of statistics on many issues.

**Interest As Iniquity**

The Bible clearly sees charging interest on loans, particularly on loans to the poor, as wrong and Jewish bankers in NT times *paid* interest (Matthew 25:27, Luke 19:23) but did not charge it. They used money deposited with them to trade with and the profits from the trade paid the interest to the depositor. From a Christian perspective it is not wrong to receive interest on money invested or deposited but it is wrong to charge interest, especially to the poor. There are nine clear injunctions on this in Scripture and because they are so little preached on and yet of so great a consequence for world trade I am reproducing them in full here.

> (Exodus 22:25 NASB)  "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.
>
> (Leviticus 25:36-37 NKJV)  'Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. {37} 'You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit.
>
> (Deuteronomy 23:19-20 NASB)  "You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. {20} "You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countryman you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.
>
> (Psalms 15:5 NASB)  He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.
>
> (Proverbs 28:8 NASB)  He who increases his wealth by interest and usury, Gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor.
>
> (Ezekiel 18:5-9 NKJV)  But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right; ….{8} If he has not exacted usury Nor taken any increase, But has withdrawn his hand from iniquity And executed true judgment between man and man; {9} If he has walked in My statutes And kept My judgments faithfully; He is just; He shall surely live!" Says the Lord GOD.
>
> (Ezekiel 18:12-13 NKJV)  If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence, Not restored the pledge, Lifted his eyes to the idols, Or committed abomination; {13} If he has exacted usury Or taken increase; Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.
>
> (Ezekiel 18:17 NASB)  he keeps his hand from the poor, does not take interest or increase, but executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes; he will not die for his father's iniquity, he will surely live.
>
> (Ezekiel 22:6-13 NKJV)  "Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you. {7} …{12} "In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbors by extortion, and have forgotten Me," says the Lord GOD. {13} "Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst.

You cannot get clearer than that! God regards charging interest, especially to the poor as wicked and dishonest profiteering. This is well illustrated during the time of Nehemiah:

> (Nehemiah 5:1-13 NKJV)  And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. {2} For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat

and live." {3} There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." {4} There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. {5} "Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards." {6} And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. {7} After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. {8} And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?" Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. {9} Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?" {10} "I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! {11} "Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." {12} So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. {13} Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

Here the interest charge by the rich was forcing people into slavery and destitution and to the loss of houses and lands. They were foreclosing on their brethren! Nehemiah's response was fierce and unequivocal and sealed with a curse that the house of those who did not comply with the order to restore all that was taken would be shaken out and emptied by God. Also Nehemiah and all who followed him graciously and freely lent food and money to the poor.

If you have ever struggled to pay off a car, a credit card or a mortgage you will know how devastating interest can be. Frequently you end up paying double the original cost of the goods by the time the interest period is over. Biblically speaking, the only justifiable interest is a small charge to match the inflation rate as that preserves the real value of the money lent. Above that the lender is starting to exploit the poverty and desperation of the lender.

Charging interest deepens poverty and robs people of their power to make wealth. Unfortunately I have seen microfinance schemes designed to 'help the poor' that charge as much as 2 to 3 per cent per month - that is up to 40% plus per annum. Even Christian microfinance schemes are run on the most impractical idea that the poor will borrow the money, start a small business and then repay the capital in one year plus interest rates of 2-3% per month (equivalent to 25%-40% annual interest rates). This requires the small business, in its first year of operation, to make 140% on capital

invested - before the owner receives a single dollar in profit or wages from the enterprise. To ask this of the poor starting out in business is grossly unfair.

Lending to the poor can increase their power to make wealth if it is used to purchase a means of production of some sort. But the power to make wealth is in turn decreased by interest payments. The interest payments ensure that funds generated from the means of production simply return to the lender. At the end of 12 months the microfinance scheme has received their capital plus 40% back again but what has the poor person got "in hand" after a years work? Probably nothing, other than the means of production (such as a sewing machine), that they purchased. They are unlikely to have made a wage at all. The interest payments have entirely consumed their power to make wealth.

Some may ask "If the micro-finance schemes were stopped from charging interest to the poor how could the poor get access to capital?" In some senses that is a good question, in other ways it is a quite mistaken question. "Access to capital" implies that the poor are best off starting a small business, which needs capital.

Small business is not all its cracked up to be. Even in the West 85% of small businesses fail within five years and 95% of people who go into small business would have been better off financially if they had simply been in full-time employment. What I am saying is that the poor generally do not need funds to start small businesses – they need jobs that pay a fair wage. What the poor need is not access to capital but access to liquidity. They need to be able to borrow money to pay a medical bill when it is due and then repay that money without being charged interest. Basically they need an interest free overdraft facility and a decent job. Thus I believe that microfinance should rethink itself as an interest free overdraft facility for the poor.

If Christian micro-finance chooses to stay with starting small businesses I think they should not lend money to any enterprise, no matter how small or how well intentioned, that does not have a workable and thought-through business plan. To my mind there is a certain amount of glorious hopefulness among those who help the poor with financial schemes. Ideas that a bank manager or accountant would say are quite impractical and commercially non-viable are funded in the "hope" that they will work - and out of a genuine desire to be kind and gracious and to give people a chance. But what actually happens? The vast majority of such hopeful enterprises fail, leaving the person with a debt. The person is worse off than before. If the person cannot pay their debt and defaults on the loan the microfinance scheme loses capital and has to seek more funding. The "kindness' does not produce a winner, in fact it produces two losers. The hard reality of business life is that undercapitalized businesses frequently fail and microfinance is just that – micro. There is no spare capital and not much room for mistakes.  Unless the venture is very well thought through from the start the likelihood of failure is high. Thus if microfinance is to succeed in increasing the wealth of the poor  it must be interest free and it must insist on adequate level of capitalization and on sound business plans. [For an interesting read try Gina Neff's article "MicroThis, MicroThat Left Business Observer #74, October 1996 – just one quote: "For example, Grameen rules insist that its borrowers own their homes - not unlike the assumption that shoeless women have bootstraps. Evidently Bangladeshi homeless women don't count as the poorest of the poor. And unfortunately, Grameen borrowers are staying poor. After 8 years of borrowing, 55% of Grameen households still aren't able to meet their basic

nutritional needs - so many women are using their loans to buy food rather than invest in business."]

Even worse are the pawnbrokers that charge what is known as "5 – 6". That is for every 5 dollars loaned you pay back 6 dollars, generally three to six months later. That amounts to 4 per cent per month or over 50% per annum. Since the poor have regular financial crises when it comes to medical bills or school fees; they have little choice but to borrow money at outrageous interest rates. The alternative is to watch their family members die or their children drop out of school. Thus loans are a necessary part of survival. The pawnbrokers and other lenders are thus preying on the very vulnerability of the poor. When the poor pay 40%-50% annual interest on borrowed money their power to make wealth is not being increased but rather is being halved. Pawnbrokers also are "secured" creditors able to sell what has been deposited as collateral on the loan. They also lend money for any purpose, not just starting a small business. Thus the funds are simply used on household expenditure, the interest rates consume any power to make wealth and in the event of a default their goods are sold.

Interest has national and international implications as well. This has become known as the "International Debt Crisis" and is being addressed by a group known as the Jubilee 2000 coalition, which seeks relief from debt for a range of poor countries and especially a group known as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries such as Mozambique. In such countries the interest repayments alone outstrip GDP by a factor of three or four times. Because the obligation to pay back these loans is primary and onerous the money cannot be used for public infrastructure such as health or even for food. Some calculations estimate that 7 million children die each years simply as a result of the debt crisis. The six million who died during the Jewish Holocaust are remembered because the Nazis killed them. The 7 million who die each and every year from the greed of the world banking system, however are simply forgotten.

If poverty is to be solved interest in all its forms must be abolished as the Muslims have done and as Scriptures prescribe; or at least reduced to the level of the annual CPI increase. Can this be done? There is increasing attention being paid to "non-interest income" in the banking sector as interest rates are at their lowest levels for many years. Below is a diagram from a report produced by the Canadian Banking Commission. It shows that 51% of bank income came from non-interest sources.
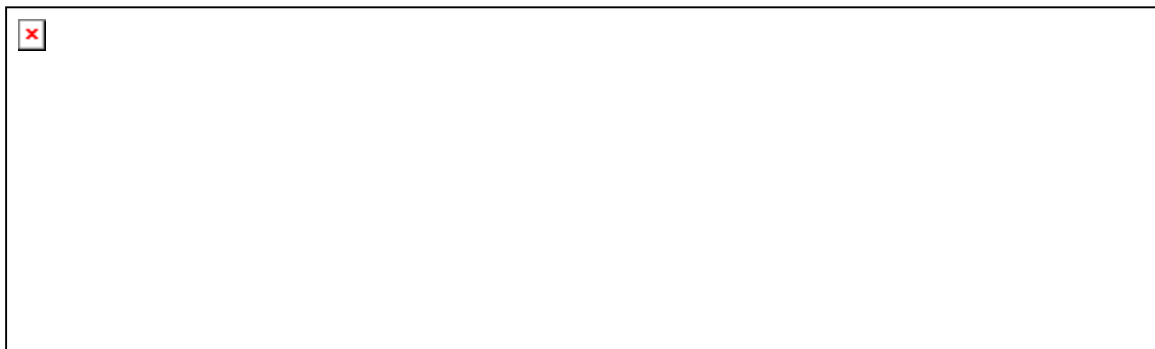


Note that 51% of bank revenue is obtained WITHOUT CHARGING INTEREST.

Could 100% of bank revenue be obtained without charging interest to the poor? Looking at the 49% that is designated as "Interest Income" we find it is broken down into

mortgages, personal loans, commercial loans and banks own investments. Commercial loans are in the millions of  dollar category and generally do not affect the poor. The banks own investments are in the tens of billions of dollars and are outside this category as well. That leaves mortgages and personal loans as being of concern. Exact figures for each of these segments are not given in the report so I have to take an "educated guess" that mortgages and personal loans would constitute say one-third of the 49% that would be about 16 to 17 per cent of the total bank revenue. Of these mortgages and personal loans the poorest 30% of the country would perhaps account for 5% of the mortgages and personal loans (by loan volume). Five percent of 17% is about 0.85%. If 0.85% of the revenue comes from charging interest to the poor - then 99.15% % does not come from charging interest to the poor. So we can see that banks in Canada now earn around 99% of their current revenue without charging interest to the poor. Even if my figures are a factor of five out that would still mean that banks would earn 95% of their revenue without charging interest to the poor. It does not seem impossible that they could make this 100%.

Obviously a much deeper analysis with the exact figures is necessary but this small example helps puncture the myth that banks would "go broke" if they did not charge interest to the poor. Banking is perfectly feasible without charging interest on loans to those in need. There are many other profitable sectors of financial activity for banks to engage in. Muslim banks that are strict about their adherence to *sharia* law go into partnership with the person much as a venture capitalist does in the West. A July 5th 2001 New York Times article discusses the emerging market for Muslim banking in the USA with its dual requirements of a) no interest b) the lender and borrower share risk equally (thus the bank cannot foreclose in most cases). Large banks such as HSBC and finance companies like Freddie Mac are trying to tailor products, mainly house and car loans, for the USA's 7 million Muslims. Up until now this kind of lending has mainly been the province of small co-operatives. The nature of the lending varies but seems to be mainly based on a partnership contract between the lender and the home-buyer. One institution is funding the lending by making a bond issue on the loans and promoting it overseas to wealthy and religiously correct Muslims.

Why is interest one of the factors that is radicalizing people and producing terrorists? In the USA Muslims feel deprived of a way to buy a house or a car according to their value system. They feel they are being forced into sin by an unjust system. Or as one US Muslim executive said "It's frustrating when you know there is a right way and a wrong way, and you're being driven toward the wrong,"

Outside of the USA, in the developing world interest is crushing them. Here in the Philippines, which is listed 77th out of 170 countries in the Human Development Report and is thus in the "upper half" of world nations, interest is a huge problem. Firstly government borrowings have the nation heavily indebted, secondly the peso is falling and it is harder to pay those obligations, thirdly the average person pays anywhere between 18% to 50% annual interest on personal borrowings. Repayment periods are short, and deposits are high, typically a car is purchased on 50% deposit - "half down, the rest in two years".

The ability to earn decent interest on savings and investments is almost nil for the average person. Most are receiving only 1 or 2% return in real (after inflation) terms on their deposits in the banks. Many receive a negative real return. Banks routinely collapse taking depositors savings with them and corruption has eroded the major

government superannuation scheme with 8 billion pesos being siphoned off to a crony of former President Estrada

The repayment rate for most microfinance schemes is the reverse of the Grameen bank in Bangladesh where 95% do not default. Here 95% do not repay their funds and the micro-finance loan is seen as a handout. The vast majority of microfinance schemes fold and the only successful Christian microfinance scheme charges 3% per month interest (40% per year) and is highly commercially driven. Over 90% of co-operatives collapse due to corruption.  A prevailing culture of grasping immediacy has developed as exploitation has bred an equal and opposite reaction of opportunistic commercial shrewdness even amongst the poor.

The early colonial mentality of Spanish conquistadors, pirates and spice traders seems to live on in a national culture of piratical plundering and holding people to ransom. Interestingly "national plunder" is a capital crime, and much is made of this in the media, but no-one has ever been successfully convicted of it! (The "national plunder" trial of former President Estrada is continuing as I write). Here, exorbitant rates of interest are the institutionalized and acceptable method of plunder. While it may be officially sanctioned it is still deeply resented. People who are scammed at every turn by financial institutions become angry much as you may have done at times when dealing with banks or credit card companies. When a whole nation is being done over systematically then you get millions of people crying out "economic injustice" and fighting back in ways that are both fair and unfair, legitimate and illegitimate. This backlash in the Philippines includes kidnapping and terrorism particularly on the extremely poverty-stricken southern island of Mindanao where three major Muslim insurgent groups operate and the Abu Sayaf regularly kidnap Western hostages for ransom.

When people are being economically oppressed by a practice their religion condemns they will react strongly and they will feel justified in that reaction. Charging interest is one of many economic practices that are creating deep resentment and breeding terrorists who believe they are fully justified in what they are doing.

# The Equal And Opposite Reaction

Newton's Third Law of Motion states that "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". So it you push on a wall, the wall pushes back on you. This natural principle of the balance of forces seems to apply in the human and economic spheres in a somewhat modified form. If someone yells at you it is not uncommon for the equal and opposite reaction to be that you tell back at them. And similarly if someone smiles at you, normally we smile back at them. However unlike brick walls we have choices and so this is only approximate. We can turn the other cheek if someone insults us or yells at us, or we can be grumpy and not smile back when we are met with a cheery hello. However it generally costs us some energy to do this. So if equal and opposite reactions are standard even in human conduct we should expect them to show up regularly in economic and political life and with some degree of predictability. When the USA was attacked by terrorists, few expected it to simply turn the other cheek on one hand, or nuke Afghanistan on the other. Rather an equal and opposite reaction was expected and was more or less achieved (the Northern Alliance has captured Kabul as I write).

The equal and opposite reaction can be delayed. I was a late developer at school and for a long while I was the smallest boy in my entire grade and was bullied by the larger boys. When I did finally grow six inches over one summer holiday I came back as mad as a hornet and spent a term or two getting even with the bullies. I even broke chairs over their heads! (I was not yet a Christian). If you have been oppressed, when you finally get the power to get even, you do! My teenage personal fury will pale into insignificance compared to the fury of the poorer Islamic nations if they get hold of the means to get even. These means of getting even may include weapons of mass destruction.

Islam is a religion of justice rather than a religion of forgiveness. In a search of the Koran I could find no mention of humans being obliged to forgive one another though mechanisms for peace-making do exist. Islam tends to be about scrupulous fairness and exact retribution. Thus it has enormous appeal to the economically oppressed because it does not ask them to forgive their oppressors and promises a God who will wreak vengeance upon those who exploit them. It also is intellectually less baffling than Christianity. Islam has a simple monotheistic God, a total prohibition on idolatry and no cross or any necessity for blood sacrifice. Islam is fair, logical, simple and straightforward. However it fails to bring eternal life, emotional renewal or personal grace and knows nothing of the Holy Spirit. Islam takes much of the inner complexity out of spirituality and avoids the mysteries of grace. However it is these mysteries of grace that contain the truth and power of Christianity.

This lack of grace and emphasis on justice and retribution make Islam a religion on contention in an unjust world. Every injustice must be compensated for and compensated completely and fairly. In Jerusalem every Palestinian that is shot but must be avenged and so the war goes on eye for eye and tooth for tooth until everyone is blind and toothless. It can also work as a form of restraint. Thus Osama Bin Laden claims to have nuclear weapons but says he is only willing to use them if the USA uses such weapons against him. His Islamic sense of justice will only allow him to deploy nuclear weapons in an equal and opposite reaction. This moderating influence is less common and is at best fragile.

The desire for a balanced sheet is much stronger and fuels Muslim hatred in Indonesia against Chinese , in  Africa against Christians, in Bosnia against Serbs and so on. With the notable exception of Northern Ireland nearly every major conflict in the world today is being fuelled by this Islamic desire for exact retribution. While logical it is also illogical and dysfunctional. The cost of achieving justice is far greater than the cost of ignoring the original offense. Despite its intellectual rigor, sound logic and deep fervor fundamentalist Islam simply does not work in the real world that is full of sinful people and unjust situations. Grace, though puzzling at first, makes for a far better world.

When God says "For my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" the context of the passage (Isaiah 55:7-9) is the replacement of the ethic of exact retribution with one of pardon and of grace. Christianity is a higher, better, and more spiritual philosophy than Islam although Islam seems simpler and fairer in many ways. Christianity offers forgiveness as a way out of conflict, even conflict with God.

Unjust trade has plundered the developing nations and those that are Islamic have a very negative balance sheet when it comes to economic justice. For them there will be a tremendous psychological need to redress this. The obvious way to address the lack of justice is through jihad and in some cases through terrorism as a form of jihad. The problem is that jihad is not working. Iraq was defeated, Afghanistan is crumbling, the Muslims always lose. The deep logic of Islam (which invented algebra and Arabic numerals) will create and has created a deep crisis about this lack of victory in achieving justice. The logical inconsistency of poor Islamic nations and rich "Christian" ones is being explained in many mosques as being due to a lack of proper Islamic worship. The mosques teach that if Muslims get more and more fervent and fundamentalist then they will prevail. The collapse of the Taliban will put a partial end to that line of logic. The Taliban were as fundamentalist as it is possible to be and died martyrs and still lost. People of perception in Islam will note that every attempt to press Islam to its logical conclusions has failed to deliver results.  Allah has not showed up even for his faithful. Perhaps the failure of Islam will be so evident that some will abandon it. More likely is a sustained round of re-interpretation much as cults indulge in when an end time prophecy fails. Islam is set for a time of deep religious crisis and such turbulent times can also easily become violent ones.

**Cheap Weapons**

Violence is cheap. Its as cheap as a $2 box cutter in New York or a $40 used automatic rifle in Africa that you can rent by the day, a $3 Chinese landmine that can blow up a tank, or a dollars worth of petrol in a old Coke bottle, and as cheap as $5 machete that hacks a hundred people to death in Rwanda. Apparently you can get an anthrax starter kit for $50. Never before in the history of mankind has violence been so cheap and major systems so centralized and vulnerable. Even the poorest of nations can develop biological weapons or support armed terrorists. While the expensive weapons still win in conventional military maneuvers and a person with an M-16 is no match for tank, who says the tanks is going to be anywhere near the terrorist with the M-16? When the IRA lobbed mortar rounds onto Heathrow airport a few years ago – where were the F-16's and the tanks? Fortunately it was little more than nuisance value.

Far more people are killed by cheap violence like mortars, handguns and machetes than are killed by high tech violence like cruise missiles. And because cheap violence can still be very deadly and spectacular it can have just as much psychological impact. When the Abu Sayaf beheads a captive with a bolo and sends the decapitated head to the President of the Philippines that has huge impact. A few hundred media savvy terrorists who carry out strategic violence and random bombings can paralyze entire nations.

The equal and opposite reaction, when it arrives, will be very hard to contain, and very expensive to contain. We have already seen how $20 worth of box-cutters required a $40 billion response! While such a high ratio may not always hold it will be hundreds and thousands of times more expensive to contain terrorism than to commit it. Nations without sophisticated surveillance equipment will be easy targets for cheap violence. Even if such equipment is installed in airports, convention centers and strategic buildings it may be bypassed, or the terrorists may simply bomb churches instead.

The cost of continuing with economic injustice will spiral out of control once the backlash begins. Unfortunately it may take entire societies with it. It is far better to begin the process of just trade and fair and equal business relations so that the developed nations can put more hope in business and industry than in terrorists and bombs.

## The Process Of Radicalization

We will  move on to consider some of the ways in which radical terrorists are being produced and how the equal and opposite reaction is developing.

## How  "Peaceful" Jihad Became Radicalized And Militarized By The Wahhabi Sect.

The equal and opposite reaction of Muslims to Western economic trade will come first from those most offended – the "Muslim fundamentalists". Those that the media calls "Muslim fundamentalists" are often Wahhabi's, an informal grouping (not actually a true sect of Islam)  that follow the strict pietism of the Hanbali school of Islamic law. The name Wahhabi comes from the name of the founder Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, a reformer influenced by the writings of the 13th-14th century pietist theologian Ibn Taymiyah (of the strict Hanbali school).  Wahhabism is quite similar in many respects to many Christian fundamentalist groups. The Wahhabi doctrine espouses a return to simple, pure Islam untainted by idolatry and the world. It takes perhaps the most literal interpretation of the Koran and seeks its application to all aspects of daily life. The Wahhabis strive to create the perfect Theo-centric and just society that is perfectly obedient to the Koran.  It does not accommodate easily to modern life and is steadfastly opposed to pornography or indecency of any sort. Tending to legalism and insularity they set up special schools called *madrasas* that teach mainly the Koran plus basic Science and a few other subjects. These schools provide free education to many poor Muslims that could not otherwise afford it. Wahhabism is most evident in Saudi Arabia and has been allied with the Saud dynasty since its inception. It is also strong in Oman and Yemen. Osama Bin Laden is from Saudi Arabia and is a Wahhabi as were many of the hijackers in the September 11th attacks. The Abu Sayaf are trained by Osama Bin Laden's brother and other Al-Qaeda members and are largely Wahhabi in orientation.

The original purpose of the Wahhabi's was the capture of the Holy Cities such as Mecca and Medina from the Turks and in this they were eventually successful. To justify this they redefined the Muslim doctrine of jihad from what we might call evangelism and apologetics to a much more aggressive and militarized version that espoused ejecting the (to their mind) worldly and compromised Turkish Muslims from Mecca. [The Turkish armies were noted for commercial shrewdness, bribery, corruption, drunkenness, rape and pillage] With a strong belief in Judgment Day and a deep contempt for worldliness the Wahhabi's now tend to see the Western world and in particular the USA as the Great Satan that will be brought to judgment while the piety of the righteous Wahhabi's delivers them on the Day of Wrath. Jihad is thus the military expression of the wrath of Allah against the Great Satan and an assertion of God's Will and perhaps an extension of the "realm of submission" to Allah, or as we would say "growing the Kingdom". Jihad in this context is not so different from John Calvin's use of military force in Geneva or the Anabaptist armies of the early Reformation. This missionary zeal has great appeal to those who want to know where right and wrong lie and who wish to find some explanation for their poverty and oppression. While their logic is a severe logic it is appealing and consistent and not unlike that of some Christian groups.

Extreme pietism always tends to produce a dysfunctional triumph of doctrine and vision over common sense and logic. It truly believes in Excalibur and the Holy Grail and that the virtue of Galahad will make him stronger than a thousand sinners. This is simply untrue, but it has huge appeal. Unfortunately Galahad on his charger is no match for a machine gun wielded by a drunken sinner. The romantic dream of pietism is constantly shattered by brutal reality. As one cynic has observed "God tends to be on the side of the big battalions". Pietism makes the massive error of thinking that God governs the world on the basis of virtue alone and allots His resources and blessings (including military victories) to those who are most righteous. This is codswallop. If God allocated resources according to our virtue we would all be up to our necks in mud. None of us is sufficiently virtuous to earn a single cent from God - for we are all sinners (Romans 2 and 3). God's governance of the Universe is primarily based on His own sovereign will not on our personal piety. He has plans for us before we were born and before we have done anything right or wrong (Romans 9). Beyond this God tends to govern through justice and wisdom, which are very different from fervor and piety. The Pharisees were fervent and pious, but they were not just or wise with the wisdom of God, or they would not have crucified Jesus Christ. Having a zeal for the holy is good and is commended in Scripture, but it is insufficient in itself.

The Wahhabis are like the Jews of Romans 10 who "have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge" and are thus lost in their piety. We need to pray that they will find Christ and be filled with the love of God and of their neighbor and that they will go on to live lives of deep wisdom, discernment, justice, mercy and truth.

**When Nothing Is Sacred Any More.**
How does an extreme pietist react when the Great Satan is violating that which he or she considers holy? When American bases are in Saudi Arabia the land of the Holy Cities and when Jerusalem (the second most Holy City) is under control of the Jews backed by the USA? Think of how you would react, as an evangelical, if a gigantic pornographic billboard was put up just across the road from your church. That intense

anger that you might feel, that sense of personal affront and violation, is just how many Muslims feel about American cinema and lifestyle and about Western cultural imperialism. Combine this sense of personal affront and violation with the militarized doctrine of jihad and hat would you do? Burn down the billboard? Probably. Well some Muslim fundamentalists would not mind burning down the USA.

**When Your Culture, Companies and Institutions Are Not Valued.**

In developing nations there is the strong feeling that world trade and foreign investors are not valuing their culture, companies and institutions. This applies especially to the IMF and the WTO. After the Asian economic crisis the IMF imposed strict measures that forbad government bailouts of major companies. There was to be no preserving of sacred cows. Yet in the wake of September 11th there is little comment about the government bailouts of the airline industries in the West, bailouts that would not have been permitted to Indonesia, Korea or Thailand. To Asians the dichotomy is clear. Third World institutions must be allowed to go under while First World institutions and culture must be preserved. Even the incredibly right wing and pro-globalization Far Eastern Economic Review fired a shot across the bows on this issue in its Nov. 8 2001 editorial about the SwissAir rescue saying "But today, the principle of managing risk appears to have been stood on its head, arguably by some of the same commentators who had lectured Asia not too long ago about economic prudence. Now it seems there really are companies too big and too important to let fail".

Thus the economic rationalism of neo-liberal schools of economics are being applied ruthlessly to the weaker nations but inconsistently in the developed nations. The IMF ignores the multi-trillion dollar public indebtedness of the USA while the economies of heavily indebted developing nations are being brutally restructured with policies in Russia that Academician Oleg Bogomolov has described as "simply ruinous" in his recent paper *The Global Economy At Serious Risk: Looking For Solutions.*

Economic inconsistency is compounded with vast cultural ignorance. Even the right-wing media have admitted, "the USA has lost the propaganda war". The truth is the USA tends to devalue non-European cultures and that American business in particular is blithely ignorant and culturally insensitive when it comes to Islam. Being culturally sensitive is just being polite and well mannered to the other person. Respecting someone does not imply that you necessarily agree with them or subscribe to their doctrines. I will never be anything except a born-again Christian however I would not offer a Muslim a pork chop or a glass of alcohol. That is just decent human behavior. Now cultural sensitivity and understanding is a lot deeper than pork chops and Sabbaths. It means trying to grasp the other person's perspective. It also means not automatically discounting their practices as inefficient, primitive or sub-standard. However the ultimate form of being discounted is to be seen as having less value as a human being.

**When Your Life And Labor Is Cheap.**

The impression is repeatedly given in the media that American lives are more valuable than other lives. That one American is worth perhaps 10,000 Iraqis. That Americans must not be allowed to die in war but rather the enemy should be wiped out, in large numbers, as mechanically and efficiently as possible because Third World people, particularly Muslims and Africans are quite disposable. This impression rankles

those of other nations very deeply indeed. It is also given substance by wages and conditions they know that no Westerner would endure. Educated professionals with Ph.D's are paid $10 or $20 a day while Americans with the same skills and education, and sometimes even in the same organization, are paid $200 a day. It does not take a genius to see where this will lead. In terms of equal and opposite reactions if you devalue my life, then I will devalue yours. Recently one Muslim cleric in Afghanistan said that "one Muslim was worth more than all sinners and especially Americans".

## When Your Country Is Made Unstable, Corrupt And Unjust.

IMF interventions, in most cases have made the country at least temporarily unstable and in Indonesia led to widespread rioting and starvation. US intelligence intervention tends to support corrupt governments and dictatorships that are amenable to US interests. Finally the more ruthless and exploitative multi-nationals such as Nike and some agribusiness firms such as Monsanto are manifestly unjust. Little distinction is made in the mind of the citizens of the developing world between these three flavors of exploitation. They are all Western are all bad, are making their society unstable, corrupt and unjust. The US dollar is so strong compared to most Third World currencies that it becomes a corrupting influence. Any way to "get dollars" – that is UD dollars, become legitimized. In fact you can fairly accurately pin-point the more corrupt sectors in a developing nation by simply asking "which sectors come most in contact with US dollars". The economic power of the USA is so overwhelming that it twists and distorts the economies of small nations – often into quite unhealthy configurations. Non-one likes living in chaos and corruption, no-one likes an unpredictable economy and riots and starvation. When this comes from without, from foreigners who impose their wills, it is deeply resented and becomes a factor in the equal and opposite reaction.

## When There Is A Huge Gap Between The Rich And The Poor.

Developing nations typically have a very wealthy elite and a huge poverty stricken underclass. This gap is growing both within nations and between nations. Globally the top 20% of people control 86% of the wealth while the bottom 20% control just 1% of the wealth. That's a ratio of 86:1 between the rich and the poor. Within a single developing country the ratio tends to be around 30:1 between the top 20% or so and the bottom 20%. The ratios between the generals, politicians and businessmen and the destitute beggars is even greater. Jim Wallis, in his book "The Soul of Politics" comments on the way poor and rich seem to live side by side and how the poor black neighborhood where he works is only 6 blocks from the White House. Where I live in Manila I am five minutes walk from two senators, and five minutes walk from shanty towns made of corrugated iron that are without water or basic sanitation, ten minutes walk in the other direction is the Muslim settlement of Culiat which is deemed to be so unsafe that taxi drivers will not go there. This proximity of rich and poor has an immense psychological impact on many people. It shocks Western visitors to Third World nations and in those nations makes the poor resentful and envious and tends to contribute to their feeling trapped and helpless.

## When Earthly Hope Seems Impossible.

This combination of chaos and inequality make a mockery of any earthly hopes held by the poor. Even if they had a little success the economic instability would soon

see it dissipated or injustice would sweep it away. As Scripture says: *(Proverbs 13:23 NRSV)  The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.* This smashing of earthly hopes leaves one hope intact – entering Paradise as a martyr by dying in battle in a jihad.


**When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You An Explanation.**

Fundamentalist religions of all shapes and sizes have very consistent and virtually identical explanations of why their adherents are suffering or poor. It is the fault of the Great Satan who controls the Big System that crushes the good little people who are devoted to God. The people "out there" are all bad and the people "in here' are all good. If you are faithful the Holy God will crush the Great Satan and the Big System will go up in flames like Sodom and Gomorrah. Now I DO believe something very like that - but the difference between what I believe, and what Muslim fundamentalists believe, is crucial. I do not believe that the good people are of a certain race or color or are easily identified by national or even by organizational or denominational boundaries.

Viktor Frankl the Jewish psychiatrist who spent many years in Nazi concentration camps had this to *say "From all this we may learn that there are only two races of men in the world, but only these two – the "race" of the decent man and the "race" of the indecent man. Both are found everywhere; they interpenetrate into all groups of society. No group is of "pure race" and therefore one occasionally found a decent fellow among the camp guards."* Somewhere else he says *"thus the line between good and evil does not go between this group or that group, but straight through the middle of the human heart"*

The good people theologically speaking are primarily born-again Christians who show the fruit of repentance in good deeds. They are not defined by Anglican or Baptist boundaries but are characterized by the life of God being present in the person. Some of the wickedest people on earth have been good churchgoers and some of the best such as John the Baptist have lived largely outside of the conventional ecclesiastical system. Whether one belongs to this system or that or do not belong to any system at all is of no great importance. What matters is the knowledge of Christ, the love of God, the life of God and the doing of good deeds.

The love of God and the love of a religious system are different. The love of a religious system can trap people. I call this the "Russian Doll Trap" because it is like those Russian dolls where the big doll contains a smaller doll that contains a yet smaller doll and so forth. In this trap the believer thinks God is the large doll, then his religion as the next doll down, then within that layer lies his denomination or sect, then the next doll is his church with its hierarchy and his pastor, priest or imam, then finally, in the center, as the smallest doll of all, is himself. If he obeys the church and loves that then, his logic tells him, his church belongs to the right denomination, in the right religion, which in turn serves God. By being "in the right place" all the problems are solved. He serves the right church in the right denomination in the right religion of the righteous God. He is OK. (The problem is that righteousness is not so easily allocated, it is personal, not a product of where we belong.) So the difficult task of loving an invisible God with clear and high demands is turned into the somewhat more tangible task of loving a church, denomination, holy book or religious system. These things should still be loved, but as secondary loves not primary loves. The primary loves are to be God, neighbor and self.

It is easy to lose out on one of these primary forms of love. It is easy to neglect God, despise our neighbor and hate ourselves. For people caught up in fundamentalist Islam the love of self is lost almost totally so that suicide missions are contemplated. Religion without proper self-respect becomes not saintly but bizarre. I will explore this further later on.

Without getting too lost in theology the point is this – that fundamentalist Muslims have a well–defined enemy, it is external to their religion, and it is us. It may be just an error in logic but it may well prove to be a very deadly error in logic. People who are suffering are given an enemy that has a face – our faces. They have an easy enemy that has a geographical location and meets in certain sorts of buildings. This fanatical and erroneous explanation lacks sophistication and truth but makes up for it with intensity and believability. Especially when unjust trade gives them every reason to believe it.

## When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You A Caring Community.

The mosque is the center of Islamic community and is frequently a caring community that is absolutely essential to the personal survival of the poor. Your friends in the mosque will bring you food, help you, lend interest free short-term loans to you and so on. The times of joy and feasting, celebrations, marriages and deaths all tend to involve the mosque. Five times a day the Muslim hears from the imam calling him or her to pray towards Mecca. The connection between mosque and Muslim is close and personal as is the concept of Muslim brotherhood.

Place yourself in the position of a poor Muslim in Afghanistan. Islam and the mosque provide food, shelter, friendship and finance. The "Christians" (and to them all Westerners are Christians) provide bombs, poverty and pornography. What would any sane person choose? Those involved in Muslim evangelism say that the claims of Christ will not be deeply heard by Muslims until we can provide them with a community equal to or better than the community that they currently belong to. Since Christians have failed to provide Muslims with viable Christian communities of practical love and friendship that demonstrate the gospel like the church in Acts the Muslims are staying in the mosque. And the mosque, when controlled by fundamentalist Imams is a place where the Great Satan is identified, Judgment Day is preached and terrorists are recruited. The mosque is the place where they are taught to kill.

## When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You A Free Education.

Next to the mosque in importance in the radicalization of Muslims is the *maddarissa* or Islamic school. Here is what Benazir Bhutto, former Prime Minister of Pakistan, had to say about these Islamic schools in her essay "The Radicalisation of Pakistani Civil Society":

*The great religion of Islam is done a disservice by rulers like Mullah Omar (head of the Taliban). He, apparently, studied in a Karachi Maddarissa. Pakistani madarissas have a doctrinaire curriculum. Their graduates are singularly focussed on the sectarian nature of their studies. Independent thinking is prohibited. This prevents students' access to a varied body of research and denies them the ability to assimilate knowledge beyond what is taught as rote.*

*This education by rote, obediently accepted without question, is a form of brainwashing. The graduates are incapable of independent thinking or decision-making. They are pre-programmed.* [Just to be confusing there are numerous English spellings of the Arabic word.  spellings that I have come across madarissa, maddarissa, and madrassa.]

These madarissas are free and this is an important factor for the poor. They are also strict, responsible, and unworldly. They are only taught things that agree with a conservative interpretation of the Muslim faith and they are taught by rote and by memorization. They are not taught to think deeply or critically about life or religion. Conformity takes precedence over truth. Of course this can happen in any type of school, secular, Marxist, Christian or Muslim. It is not necessarily a function of a particular religion but of an approach to socialization of youth. However it is an approach that suits fundamentalism of all types very well and produces serviceable recruits for further radicalization, and in extreme cases for becoming suicide bombers or terrorists.

**When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You A New Self That Feels Good.**
    Steve Hassan, in his illuminating book "*Combating Cult Mind Control*" shows how cults impose a second "cult self" over the person's true self. On the surface is the adapted self, the conformed and regimented and controlled cult self. Deep down and often buried is the true self.  The cult self is derived, it does not have life of its own and so tends to be wooden, or fake or "plastic" or rigid, a sort of imitation self that looks like everyone else in the cult but which lacks deep authenticity and true life. The true self is still there and from time to time erupts as when two terrorists went to strip club and got drunk (both forbidden in Islam) the night before their hijacking mission. The desire for 'some life" was there and the thought that their martyrdom would send them straight to Paradise and make their sin forgivable was probably factored in.
    The "cult self" initially feels very good because it lacks complexity, mystery or doubt. It is unambiguous and gets a great deal on initial reinforcement from the group as it is formed. On the other hand assertion of the "real self" is uniformly seen as sin or rebellion and punished severely. Rebellion can be something as simple as listening to music or a woman showing her face in public. In extreme cases the cult self is also a survival mechanism. If the penalty for listening to music is death – then you turn off the radio! Gradually you learn to adapt to a life without the radio and a music-less life becomes part of you, or at least part of your cult self.
    The "cult self" controls the person through a complex set of fears and prohibitions. Some of these include: "The world is evil, only in here is safe."  "The other denominations are all compromised and of the Devil and will only tell you lies." "This is the only place with the truth." "We are the cutting edge of God's work and our leader is specially anointed by God." And "If you do X God will punish you and you will go mad/die/lose your salvation." The gradual expansion of X from biblical categories (such as murder or adultery) to cult categories such as reading a newspaper goes unnoticed by many people until it is too late. The cult self is very real and very powerful and people under its influence can become missionaries or even become terrorists.

**When A Fundamentalist Religion Says The Enemy Is Without Human Value.**

Because fundamentalist Islam says all good is within their group, and all evil is outside the group, and by corollary all that is outside is evil - then that which is outside has no redeeming features. Those outside Islam are perceived as children of the Devil to be destroyed mercilessly for their oppression of Muslims. The motto of the Inquisition regarding heretics was "kill them all and let God sort them out" and some of this medieval mentality permeates the more extreme sectors of fundamentalist Islam.

Strangely this is the equal and opposite reaction to the devaluing of human life by global corporations – that I wrote of earlier in this chapter. If we want Muslims to stop killing non-Muslims then we need to get the extremists to see that non-Muslims can be decent human beings of value and worth. If our firms, that represent us overseas, do not behave decently, then the job is made doubly difficult and the stereotype is reinforced.

## When A Fundamentalist Religion Selects You To Strike At The Enemy.

Hassan lives in poverty in Saudi Arabia, and is educated in a maddarissa, at the age of 19 he loses his job and later his girlfriend. He turns to his fundamentalist imam for counsel. What should he do with his life? He receives the advice "This was all part of the will of Allah whose plans are inscrutable, perhaps he is pruning your life so that you can serve him more fully." Many conversations later Hassan is told: "There is a great need for warriors to be involved in jihad, I know you are specially chosen for this, would you like to go into training? Hassan travels overseas for the first time in his life; he is treated as a person of some worth, and enters a tough but fairly boring training regime in Afghanistan. He is free to leave if he wants. This is not that important. He is just being watched and given basic military training and lessons in memorizing the Koran. He has, for the first time in years, a sense of mission and a feeling of significance. "This is good" he says to himself "I made the right choice in serving Allah, I am glad I was fired from that boring job and lost my girlfriend, now I have real meaning in life, I don't want to go back to living for material things like buying a motorbike ever again."

After a while Hassan becomes involved in real missions, perhaps first as a courier and then later in more important roles. Finally Hassan is sent along the network to a Hamas training camp for suicide bombers and is shown how to be calm and cool, to shave his beard, to be perfectly normal until he is at the target and can activate the button that detonates 10kg of high explosive. He is told that when the bomb explodes he will feel no pain but go instantly to Paradise as a martyr.

## When You Die Killing The Enemy You Go To Paradise.

Why does a Muslim terrorist want to kill us? Because he wants to go to Heaven, or more correctly - to Paradise. Getting to heaven by killing your enemies is not a very Christian concept and so I will explain it a little.

In the Koran in "The Chapter of Mohamed, Also Called Fight (XLVII Medina) it says "*When you meet those who misbelieve then strike off their heads and bind fast their bonds!…and Allah may try some of you by the others (those not conquered). And those who are slain in Allah's cause, their works shall not go wrong; He will guide them and set right their mind; and will make them enter into Paradise which He has told them of.*" (I am using a rather old English translation of the Koran.) Elsewhere Paradise is described as a place of perfect peace - "the land beneath which rivers flow", full of fruits, rivers of pure water, milk and wine, with silver and gold plates, thrones, luxury and

wives. Contrary to the popular media I have found many references in the Koran to both men and women entering Paradise though it does seem a rather male idyll.

Martyrdom is thus a short-cut to sanctification, a way of instant perfection and the fastest route to comfort and luxury for those denied such things all their life. This is not a Christian concept. The Bible does not say anything like "martyred Christians go straight to heaven". Martyrs do indeed have a special place of sorts and a special reward; and precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints. That much is true. But absolution for sins comes only through faith in the cross of Christ, not by attaching 10kgs of C4 high explosive to your body and detonating it in a crowded shopping mall in Jerusalem. Forgiveness comes through faith not through works; works are the fruit of repentance, and they come later – after justification. For Christians, works are the predestined expression of the indwelling new life in Christ and His work of grace in us through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10).

In contrast to Christianity, Muslim martyrdom is a certain promise of otherwise uncertain forgiveness and a sure road to Paradise, luxury and bliss. Thus it is very appealing to the poor and the wretched.

## When A Greedy System Oppresses A Crazy Religion Then War Is Inevitable

This process of radicalization that we have examined in the past four chapters boils down to this – when a ruthless and greedy market system oppresses a coldly logical but crazy religious system then war is inevitable. Both the market and the terrorists must be brought to see the errors of their ways. I believe only the Kingdom can do that. Only the Kingdom can preach Christ to the Muslims and justice and restraint to the Market. Only the Kingdom has the values, power and perspective to change the situation for the good.

Both the internal logic of neo-liberal economics and the internal logic of Islam are seriously flawed, inconsistent and self-reinforcing. Both are producing death and injustice. Only the truth of Kingdom logic can bring the world back into balance and it is imperative that it does.

Prosperity has not shown up for Muslims as a result of fanatically following Allah. Neither has it showed up for the market by fanatically following "simply ruinous" IMF prescriptions. Prosperity will flow from God through wisdom and the Protestant work ethic. If the world wants real prosperity it will not find it in Islam neither will it find it in ruthless free market practices and lawless trade. It will only be found by following God's kingdom prescriptions and building peace. That leads us to the next section.

# Refugees, the City, and Missions
By Harvie Conn

Currently an estimated 125 million people live outside the countries of their birth. According to 1995 official UN figures, 13.2 million people of that total are refugees.

That is only the official tip of the iceberg. The statistics do not include those who have sought unofficial asylum in other countries or have been displaced within their own national borders (UNFPA 1997:14-15). Accurate head counts are hard to take as Bosnians and Kurds take to the world's roads.

Some are driven by environmental problems-the loss of farmland, forests, and pasture. Others move in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Political conflict fuels migration within countries as well as across borders.

Africa may represent the bleakest picture. As a continent it has become itself a "huge refugee camp" (Mieth and Cahill 1993:15). Displacement created by ethnic and political conflicts, by drought and disaster, finds Eritreans in Sudan, Angolans in Zaire, Liberians and Chadians in Nigeria, Hutu and Tutsi struggling in Rwanda. In Mozambique a seventeen-year civil war (1975-1992) has displaced more than four million within the country. And nearly two million more have fled across their border to Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

Across the globe the same pattern of displacement and migration shift repeats itself-Afghanis to Pakistan, Khmers to Thailand and Malaysia, Albanians to Italy. During the Nicaraguan repression under Somoza, 100,000 were sent into exile in 1978. "Since the end of the Vietnam war in 1975, over two million people have fled from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia" (Mieth and Cahill 1993:9). Since 1991 some 40,000 Haitians have attempted passage to the United States. Refugees are on the move by the millions.

## Migration and Urbanization
"Where do all the uprooted go, with or without their families? Millions head for the big town, adding to the chaos of the ever-expanding suburbs, creating more and more 'favellas'" (Jacques 1986:44). Migration patterns, whether internal or international, are often toward the cities. By the year 2005, estimates the United Nations, urban areas are expected to be home to more than half of the world's people. And migration will be a significant reason for that growth.

Bearing the major brunt of today's refugee problem are the Third World countries and cities. "Today's refugee populations are most heavily in the world of poor nations" (Cogswell 1983:27-28). Tightly controlled quota systems in the West process entrances individual by individual; in developing countries they come in waves. Squatter settlements spring up and cling to the hillsides of Rio de Janeiro and Lima. The tombs of Cairo's City of the Dead become homes for thousands of dispossessed. A World Vision report estimates "the number of urban squatters across the Philippines reached 18 million in 1992" (Power 1996:19). And forming the largest part of this refugee population are women and children (UNFPA 1997:15).

Living on land they do not own, thousands of refugee households are displaced every year by demolitions and eviction notices. Where they exist, federal and city development programs, already stretched by limited budgets, are swamped by the

needs of the new arrivals-jobs, housing, health, basic human services. Poverty becomes the dominant social problem for the host city.

## Global Fatigue

Against these pressures, compassion in the developing countries becomes jaded by economic realities. One day's solution becomes the next day's problem. Where does one begin in a place like Calcutta, India? It "has survived two successive waves of three million refugees each. The result is a city of 16 million-equal to the entire urban population of Australia-in which there are 500,000 people who live their entire lives on the street" (Linthicum 1994:2).

There are signs that western compassion is also drying up in the face of these massive needs. Europe's countries are repeating a slogan heard often after World War II: "the boat is full." The number of refugees admitted to the United States has declined since 1992 by forty percent (Gedda 1997:A4). Even our western vocabulary is beginning to sound to some like a negative echo. The United States talks about "wetbacks," "boat people," "illegals," "the Palestinian problem." Canada speaks abut the "plane people," the principal port of refugee entry for her being the airport.

## Biblical Reminders

The people of God have tasted the plight of refugees before. Abraham's flight to Egypt from drought (Gen. 12:10) and his life-long dwelling in tents was copied in the life of Isaac (Gen. 26:1-6) and in Joseph's sojourn in Egypt as a slave. Four hundred years in Egypt marked Israel as "strangers in a country not their own.... enslaved and mistreated" (Acts 7:6).

And against this experience of rejection and exploitation, God made their own treatment of strangers and exiles a criterion of fidelity to God's covenant: "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33-34; Zech. 7:10). God's curse awaited his own children who "withheld justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow" (Deut. 27:19), his blessing for those who shared (Deut. 24:19-20; 26:12-13).

Jesus was the stranger par excellence. He was the refugee child who went to Egypt in flight (Matt. 2:13-22) and returned as the last Moses for his exodus departure at Calvary (Luke 9:31). To the broken and abused he was the promised good news of jubilee redemption (Luke 4:18-19); to the leftovers of society-prostitutes, the poor, and publicans-he brought invitations to the heavenly banquet of God (Luke 5:30-31; 15:1-2).

Now his disciples, like him "aliens and strangers in the world" (I Pet. 2:11). follow him in ministry. As refugees they wander "among the nations" (Luke 24:47), carrying the good news of his salvation and healing (Matt. 28:18-20). They are to reach out in compassion to the stranger (Matt. 25:36, 40). And in caring for strangers they care for Jesus. Like "good Samaritans" (a contradiction in terms for any first century Israelite), they are to define neighbor as "anyone in need" (Luke 10:36-38).

**Today's Christian Challenge**

Across the boundaries of today's world that Samaritan call still rings. Organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the TEAR fund, World Relief and World Vision are speaking in compassion by word and deed to wide global needs.

And closer to the grassroots level, Christians are networking together with their neighbors to combine Bible stud and community action. Wells are dug in African slums neglected by the city. In Russia the International Church of St. Petersburg sends teams to the city's four main metro stops, looking for the homeless "children at risk." Tijuana's Unidad Cristiana Church, started in 1982 with four people, has grown now to over 4,000 members. It uses its seventy-three home Bible study centers to reach out to community needs through a ministry called "Mercy." When heavy rains left a large number of people without shelter or food, the church provided food, clothing and materials for housing construction. Church members contributed voluntary labor. Says its pastor, Fermin Garcia, "We want to teach people to give and not receive . . . . The church should be where the need is the greatest" (Valencia 1994:26).

What makes the church different from any other social agency offering cups of cold water to refugees? We offer them in the name of Jesus. What does the church give to the struggle between Croats and Serbs that cannot be duplicated elsewhere? Reconciliation in Christ as the beginning of healing. Where can the church appeal in the conflict between the powerful and the powerless? To the justice and compassion of the Father.

What do we see when we see the refugees among us? Overpowering problems? Ann Judson, wife of the famous pioneer to Burma, saw the "bridges of God" among the Siamese displaced there. She studied Siamese for eighteen months and translated a catechism and Matthew's Gospel for their use. Melinda Rankin, a school teacher, saw those same "bridges." She became burdened over the Mexican braceros and their families who worked the summer-harvests near Brownsville, Texas, and then returned to their homes across the border. In 1852 she started a school for the workers' children. After the reform of Juarez she moved across the border and worked in Monterrey. Ten years later she returned in broken health to her home. She left behind fourteen congregations and the beginning of the Presbyterian Church in Mexico.

What do you see when you see refugees?

Harvie M. Conn

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# Leddy of Cartolandia

I know from the very beginning of our afternoon together in Cartolandia that Leddy is a woman of dignity and strength. It also becomes clear to me that her strength has been born of adversity.

"All my life has been the same as it is now," she says, relaxing in the corner of her small, dusty shop where she sells soap, rice, eggs, vegetable oil, soy nuts, corn meal and candy. She's been in business for eight days and it's been "more or less" good. Though she smiles as we speak Leddy seems older than her thirty years of age.

She describes for me the childhood she shared with eleven siblings in the southern state of Oaxaca where, "My family was so poor, some days we had food, some days we didn't have food," though nagging her mother about her hunger was never an option for Leddy. Their family simply didn't have the income and it did no good to complain. Until the age of fifteen Leddy studied in school, but then her Dad said she could attend school no longer, that they couldn't afford to support her studies.

So at fifteen Leddy left for Mexico City and lived with her cousin in the State of Mexico, on the outskirts of the Federal District where she resumed her studies through government subsidies until the school authorities apparently "lost her papers." Leddy then began working in a factory making cinder blocks and sending money back to her family in Oaxaca as she was able. Here she met her husband, Leonardo. Ten years later, they now have three children and live in Cartolandia.

As Leddy shares, her daughter, Neyvi crawls up and down her lap while intermittently making eye-contact with me. She's curious yet seems unsure of me and seems unconscious of the sucker in her mouth.

Cartolandia, literally "Land of Cartons," is a colonia in the municipality of Chicoloapan in the State of Mexico. This hillside of lean-tos and cinderblock structures, formally known as Lomas de San Isidro, has earned the nickname "Cartolandia" because most of the homes utilize corrugated cardboard, a relatively cheap material that's readily available to people like Leddy. The ground that Leddy lives upon was once a strip-mine but the original landowner began selling a select amount of plots for house building. Then, sensing a potential opportunity for land and security, hundreds and then thousands of migrants arrived as paracaidistas, or squatters - literally "parachuters," those who drop-in to claim the land seemingly out of nowhere. As one neighbor informed me, "When they sold the land a few people came at first, then the rest came like bees." Leddy and her family squatted upon their particular 150 meters/squared plot of land eleven years ago.

Leddy has no formal deed to her land. The ownership of Cartolandia remains in dispute. Though the people of Cartolandia have little knowledge on the status or workings of such processes, the original owner is pursuing the eviction of Cartolandia's paracaidistas through judicial means. To complicate matters, some people have squatted, like Leddy, but many have unwittingly bought their land from original squatters, an illegal transaction for which the seller is culpable and the buyer is left without formal ownership.

For it's part, the government regulating agency of the region, CRESEM, has issued simple stickers to all dwellers of Cartolandia and, according to Leddy, has told people to await the results of the court cases, that the people may one day have the land if the government is able to broker a deal with the owner. In some cases, informal neighborhoods like Cartolandia are politically organized and are able to tackle these issues as a unified front. But there seems to be little leadership here and, as one woman put it, "We don't have ideas."

In the meantime, Leddy and people like her make few improvements to their homes for fear that such investments will be for naught. They have no sewage systems, no sense of legal security, no water except what occasional tanker trucks ship in from the city. Residents run their own electrical lines eight-hundred meters from the valley to divert electricity to their colonia.

In hopes of changing their fortune, Leddy's husband wants to travel to the United States to find work. He plans on raveling to Piedras Negras, a city in the northern state of Coahuila, from which he'll walk for six days through the desert before illegally crossing the border into the United States. "I'll feel good if my husband has the money of course," Leddy says, "but I'll feel bad for there's no security." Leddy has made plans for recourse in the event that something goes wrong and she doesn't hear from him. "If you aren't able to send money," she told him, "I will sell this and move to Oaxaca and live with my parents."

When I ask Leddy if she's afraid for her family's security, she admits that she does feel fear. Living without secure land ownership, without utilities in the arid Mexican highland heat, squabbling amongst neighborhood leadership and the original land owner, finding work and feeding her children: life if hard in Cartolandia. But as she's done repeatedly in our conversation, Leddy again claims her personal strength and determination to overcome. "I've told myself, I wont lose my land . . . I am stronger now, I have my business, and I have my land."

In Mexico's Federal District over 300,000 plots of land were considered "irregular" - without a formal land title - in 1994; as of 1992 the urban peripheral municipalities such as Cartolandia, part of the same urban metropolis as Mexico City but belonging to the State of Mexico, contained an estimated 110,000 more irregular plots.(1) Many informal settlements around the world are similar to Cartolandia: impoverished, without regular water or electricity, without formal land ownership which provides security, order and even collateral for a much needed loan that could bring true economic and personal development.

Securing legal tenure of land is a complicated process that, in some countries, can take literally hundreds of bureaucratic steps and years to complete. With hundreds of thousands migrating daily into our world's urban centers, the legal and land tenure systems in place are terribly inadequate. As Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto has written, "The failure of the legal order to keep pace with this astonishing economic and

social upheaval has forced the new migrants to invent extralegal substitutes for established law."(2)

Thus stories like Leddy's pose some intriguing  questions: Does not the original owner have a right to his land? And in turn do squatters have true "rights" to the land? What is the best, most streamlined process for "regularizing" informal settlements when they exist on such a large scale in different and complicated contexts all over the world? What, if anything, does the Bible have to say about these issues? How have colonial policies of the past affected contemporary land tenure systems and what can we learn from this history as we pursue answers for today?

Stories of the Dispossessed is exploring these and other pertinent concerns in Mexico City and in other cities around the world including Bangkok, Cairo, Manila, Calcutta and Nairobi. Our aim is to express the dignity of the people we meet, empower them to tell their tales, explore the issues they face and consider potential remedies. Surely God has created Leddy, her children, and others living in Cartolandia with an innate dignity. Their stories demand our attention.

- Mark Kramer


Brandon, Leddy's son




Cartolandia


Leddy and her daughter Neyvi

Notes
1. Azuela, Antonio and Emilio Duhau, "Tenure Regularization, Private Property and Public Order in Mexico," in Illegal Cities: Law and Urban Change in Developing Countries, (London, New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1998) p. 162.

2. De Soto, Hernando, The Mystery of Capital, (New York: Basic Books, 2000) p. 71.

# Muslim Cities
*by J. Dudley Woodberry*

Scholars such as Joseph Ernest Renan and William Marcais have argued that Islam is essentially an urban religion (Abu-Lughod 1993:12). However, the institutions of Muslim society - such as the community, the state, the mosque, and the mystical (Sufi) brotherhoods - are not specifically urban. Nor is a majority of Muslims urban.

Nevertheless, cities have played a formative role in Islam since its inception. Muhammad began his preaching in the commercial and pilgrimage city of Mecca, and built the community in Medina. Cities with central mosques, courts, and schools created the Islamic ambiance that facilitated the conversion of conquered peoples in West Asia and North Africa. Military cities like Qairawan were built to launch territorial expansion. And Islam was further spread by traders and Sufi preachers through port and caravan cities in Africa and southeast and east Asia.

We shall consider three questions. First, to what extent may we speak of an "Islamic city"? Second, what are the major cities in the Muslim world, and what are their social problems? Finally, what are the missiological implications of the above?

**The "Islamic City": Fiction and Fact**
Based on his reading of the philosopher of history Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), Arab geographers, and legal works, William Mar ais in 1928 described the Islamic city as essentially a city clustered around a congregational mosque, a chief market (suq), and a public bath. Subsequently, Georges Mar ais in the 1940s adds the residential quarters, often differentiated from others by ethnicity, and then describes the suq based on his knowledge of Fez and Marrakech. Robert Brunschvig then quotes North African jurists and references to the physical structure of Fez to argue that the physical pattern of Islamic cities was based on customary law as applied by these jurists. Other characteristics were added from the studies of the Syrian cities of Damascus and Aleppo by Jean Sauvaget and Ira Lapidus of Berkeley (Abu-Lughod 1993:12-17).

Generalizations concerning Muslim cities were made from these studies and passed on by scholars, but they are based on too few cases. Many Muslim cities do not fit the stereotypes. Nevertheless, there are characteristics that, though not unique to Muslim cities, are quite common in traditional ones whose origins predate the colonial period. They are based on social forces that have impacted the spatial patterns.

First is a division into neighborhoods. This was partly a result of clustering around mosques which should not be farther apart than the muezzin's call to prayer could reach, and the need for defensible space when there was little centralized government care and control. It was influenced by people's relationship to the Muslim community (umma). Thus the traditional cities were divided into quarters for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. This segregation was often voluntary and not exclusive as in "Muslim" west Beirut and "Christian" east Beirut. In colonial North Africa where "European" and "Christian" were considered synonymous, an enclave for "Europeans" was automatically a "Christian" quarter. In the Indian cities with Muslims and Hindus, neighborhoods could

be identified by such means as butcher shops in Muslim areas and by more women in public in Hindu areas. Even cities with non-Muslim majorities frequently have Muslim neighborhoods - for example, the Hui on Oxen Street in Beijing (Gladney 1991:171-227).

A second characteristic is gender segregation outside the extended family, which influences architectural and spatial design. This is essentially a visual separation, since a veil or shawl allows women to have personal contact with vendors in the bazaar without being observed by them. Architecture meets the requirement by lattice work on windows, introverted houses, and private doors and passageways. In densely populated poor neighborhoods (haras) in places like Cairo, the neighborhood becomes semi-private space.

Thirdly, educational, health, and religious institutions were supported by private religious endowments (waqfs), while property laws were left to customary law on the local level. Hence there was little need for central planning and administrative centers.

Modernity as expressed in the new nation states has challenged all these social forces that have been expressed in the spatial patterns of traditional Islamic cities. First, neighborhoods get broken up by wide streets for cars and by land cleared for office buildings or factories. Second, capitalism links production to world markets rather than the exchange of goods and services locally in the bazaar. Oil production and military needs lead to migration and the building of new cities. Third, cities are centrally planned with foreign designers on western models.

In summary, the concept of the "Islamic city" is largely a myth, though traditional cities in the Muslim world display many physical characteristics that reflect Islamic social values. These values, however, are sorely challenged by the demands of modernity.

**Major Muslim Cities and Their Problems**
Five of the twenty-five largest cities have Muslim majorities - Jakarta, Karachi, Cairo, Dhaka, and Istanbul. Three others have a very large Muslim presence - Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi. Five others have significant numbers of Muslims - New York, Los Angeles, Lagos, Paris, and Metro Manila. Furthermore, the average growth rate of the Muslim cities is significantly above the average of the other cities (United Nations 1995:132-39, 143-50). By the year 2015, two other cities with Muslim concentrations are expected to have populations of over 10 million - Lahore and Hyderabad (Myers 1996:46).

In the previous section, reference was made to the clash of social forces that modernity has brought to traditional Muslim cities. Here we shall explore the resultant social problems. First, we have seen the dislocation that the imposition of centralized planning can cause cities organized around decentralized neighborhoods - especially when there is normally little consultation by the planners with the local neighborhoods. This disruption includes the clearing of urban property to make room for roads, railroads, factories and office buildings.

Secondly, there is tremendous population growth. For example, the population of the Middle East and North Africa (which is predominantly Muslim) is expected to increase from 4.6 percent of the world in 1980 to 10.4 percent of the world by the year 2000. That is approximately twice the relative increase of the rest of the world (El-Shakhs and Amirahmadi 1993:234). This leads, thirdly, to housing shortages and overcrowding. Initially the older sections of town become overcrowded in cities like Cairo, Alexandria, and Casablanca. Then squatter quarters grow up on the edges of town - even in cities with a significant financial base like Riyadh. The growth of the population has meant that an increasing percentage of people are children and teenagers, hence dependent. The crowding has led, fourthly, to environmental damage.

In many countries - including OPEC nations because of the drop in oil prices - the economy has slowed. The population growth coupled with declining economics has led, fifthly, to unemployment or underemployment by the expanding labor force. This trend has, sixthly, increased the urban poor who are in a vicious cycle of little access to employment, education, health resources, and family planning, resulting in continued poverty. The increasing gulf between themselves and the rich leads, seventhly, to class conflict. This conflict feeds into the militant fundamentalists resurgence since lower class and lower middle class traditionalist Muslims make up much of the rank and file of the resurgence.

**Missiological Implications**
The question arises whether urban or rural Muslims are more receptive to the gospel. The large movements to Christ in Java and Bangladesh have been among rural, more animistic Muslims. There are only scattered cities between Casablanca and Jakarta that have congregations of baptized believers of Muslim background. In a few cases, groups of converts from rural movements have moved to the city for work, but we have yet to see major movements to Christ in the cities or a significant utilization of the potential for reaching rural people groups through their members in the city.

The overview of Muslim cities, however, suggests a number of missiological implications. First, the fact that the major institutions of Muslim society - the community, the state, the mosque, and the Sufi brotherhoods - are common to city and country alike indicates that the specifically Islamic barriers and bridges to gospel communication are similar. Secondly, the observation that Muslim cities are often divided by their ethnicity suggests the church growth principle that the gospel spreads most easily among the natural web of family and friends and raises the challenge of how best to express that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.

Further, the fact that migrants to the city normally keep contact with their relatives in the country underlines the potential for reaching most people groups through their members in the city. When one Muslim ethnic group has felt suppressed by another - as the Kabyles in Algeria and the Kurds in Iraq - experience has demonstrated the heightened receptivity of the suppressed group.

Thirdly, the emphasis on gender separation poses the challenge of sensitivity to their mores while communicating that in Christ there is neither male nor female. Fourthly,

while the impact of modernity leads to some Muslims grasping more tenaciously to their religious roots - as in the fundamentalist resurgence - it has led others to re-evaluate their roots and be open to new ideas as expressed in the gospel.

Fifthly, the observation has been made that large numbers of Muslims are migrating to the cities, and many are settling in growing shanty towns on the edge of the city. When these observations are coupled with Evertt Huffard's research, which noted that a majority of converts in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt were new migrants to the city (Matheny 1981:5), we may conclude with him that these transitionals will be most receptive, and the places where they are settling would have increased potential for church planting.

The growth of the urban poor highlights, sixthly, the need for holistic ministries of compassion among them. The stimulating of cottage industries among Kurdish converts in Iraq was a means of self help and social uplift and allowed converts to benefit their families rather than be pariahs to them.

Finally, the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism and conflict in urban society has actually increased receptivity to the gospel, as has been borne out in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Sudan, and Nigeria (Larson 1996). Therefore, the urban missionary can look for people and groups who have become disillusioned with these expressions of their faith. By this path our Lord is once again entering the cities of the east as he entered Jerusalem many years ago.

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# St Francis, The Wolf And The City

## St. Francis And The Wolf

The town of Gubbio was being afflicted by a ravenous wolf that tore apart both beasts and men and which nobody could withstand; so that the people of the city either went about heavily armed or stayed inside the gate. As the wolf ate even those who were heavily armed, eventually they all stayed inside the city gate. St Francis of Assisi was in their midst at the time and decided to deliver them from the wolf. He went outside the gate and, when the wolf charged he withstood in the name and authority of Jesus Christ and commanded it to be meek by making the sign of the cross. To the astonishment of all but St. Francis, the wolf stopped its charge, closed its mouth, bowed low and obeyed St. Francis. The saint then informed the wolf that in the normal course of justice it should be horribly hacked to pieces but that if it was prepared to attack neither man nor beast and be fed by the people of the city that he would spare it. The wolf indicated his agreement by appropriate and humble movements. That day St. Francis preached and a covenant of peace was drawn up between the wolf and the people of the city, the wolf pledging his agreement by raising his right paw at the appropriate moment. The city raised a tremendous cheer and thanked both God and St. Francis for their deliverance from the ravenous wolf. As for the wolf, it kept its part of the bargain and begged its food from house to house, becoming a part of the city and a constant reminder of the mercy of God and the blessedness of St. Francis. This went on as related for around two years until old age claimed the wolf and it died.

[Summarized from "The Little Flowers of St. Francis, trans. E.M. Blaiklock and A.C.Keys]

The legend of St. Francis and the Wolf at left is a metaphor for the saintly Christian response to urban problems

The wolf can be any problem that presses the people into a fight or flight response. A problem which the city consistently fails to solve and which tears them apart day and night without mercy. Whatever is "tearing a community apart" – that is its Wolf.

The Wolf killed to satisfy its hunger, but it did so in a lawless and uncontrolled way bringing judgment on itself and fear to the city. Similarly the Wolf that afflicts a given urban community is generally the lawless meeting of an out of control need.

St. Francis represents the Christian exercising God's mandated authority in the name of Jesus Christ and working with the cross in view. The Wolf is made both lawful and peaceful through the exercise of spiritual authority and its needs are met through creative problem solving.

St. Francis demonstrates personal mastery and an approach to the Wolf that is entirely different from that of the townsfolk of Gubbio. Francis neither fights nor flees. He has no fear and does not resort to a fight or flight based solution. He faces and confronts the Wolf in order to peacefully master it.

St. Francis demonstrates that even the worst and most lethal of problems have an imaginative solution and that Christian peace-making can guide us

to a truly beautiful solution. There is a meeting of mutual needs in a climate of mercy. The wolf if he is to change needs food. Indeed we are to feed our enemies!  The city if it is to be merciful needs a guarantee of peace. Just covenants are central to peace-making and one is forged here. Finally the story tells us that once a problem is tamed it can even be a friend and more than that it can give glory to God.

The St. Francis and The Wolf parable leads us to consider actively engaging in Christian peace-making in the urban environment. If we seek to love others in the name of Christ and seek a just peace the answer to the problem will be given to us by God. The very act of seeking to be a peace-maker is creative. Therefore we seek to find peaceful, just, Christian, creative, mastery based and solution-focused answers to the problems that tear cities apart.

# A Biblical Perspective on Politics

**Introduction**

Christian involvement in politics is a controversial area and is often avoided because we do not wish to be seen taking sides for one party or another or because we say that "politics is dirty and is not for Christians". The following is a summary of what I see Scripture saying about politics plus some observations from my own involvement in political life in Australia.

**Jesus The Politician?**

Jesus is the ultimate example of a servant leader who sacrifices Himself for His people and becomes the King of Kings ruling over the nations of the world.

***Jesus got involved with the real world:*** He stepped out of the safety and glory of heaven to become involved with and to die for an imperfect and sinful world. He came to an oppressed, politically corrupt nation on the edges of the Roman Empire dominated by the world power of the day and "bent"" local politicians.  He did not enter a perfect society or just stay where it was clean and tidy and nice and comfortable and where He was honoured. He went where it was sinful and where He would be criticised and crucified because that was His calling and mission ..

***Jesus was subject to temptation but He did not sin:*** Although He was "tempted in every way as we are" (Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 4:15) He did not sin.  Part of this temptation was political temptation - for instance being offered "all the kingdoms of this world and their glory" if He would bow down to Satan. (Matthew 4:8,9) and again when people came by force to make Him King. (John 6:15). Thus it is not a sin to be subject to political temptation -as long as you do not bow down to Satan or to the pressure of mob rule.

***Jesus commented vigorously on cultural issues:*** While Jesus did not run for public office He did take a prophetic stance against the social issues of the day to the point where He was regarded as a major threat to be done away with. He did not just "stick to religion and values" but talked about fair wages, unjust trade, oppression of widows and the economic injustices and corruption of his day even overturning the tables of the moneylenders.(Matthew 12:40 etc)

***Jesus did have a "political agenda" but not one that this world understood:***  When Pilate asked if Jesus was a King it ended up with him scratching his head and saying "what is Truth?".(John 18:36-39) The rulers of this world completely misread Jesus. (1 Corinthians 2:8) . The political agenda of Jesus is a very interesting topic that would take far too long to discuss here. His proclamation "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" would have been interpreted by many people as "cleanse yourself for a holy war which will restore the Kingship to Israel." - as that was the current Messianic interpretation. The last question the disciples asked was "when will the Kingdom be restored to Israel" just before He ascended into Heaven. Only after Pentecost did the spiritual nature of the Kingdom become completely obvious.

***Jesus will eventually govern the whole world:*** Jesus saw Himself as a King whose Kingdom was not of this world (John18:36,37). Revelation gives Him the title "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5) . His Kingdom would eventually crush all the kingdoms that are of this world (Daniel 2:44, Revelation 2:26,27) which are passing away. ( 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, 7:31, 1 John 2:17). His Kingdom however will last forever.

(Daniel 2:44). We will be co-rulers with Him in this Kingdom (Revelation 2:26,27, Romans 8;17) and will have "cities" to govern. (Luke 19:17-19). So ultimately some faithful Christians will be mayors and politicians in the Kingdom of God! Well the point is that its not wrong to rule. David ruled well as did Hezekiah and Josiah and of course Daniel and Joseph. Government is Ok for some now and eventually will be part of our ultimate destiny in Christ. The precise nature of our governing is however not revealed.

## Is God Political?

God is not corrupt or unrighteous but He does govern and He does carry out political activities for instance He makes laws and covenants, has an immense administration of angels, has heavenly courts and books and dispenses justice. He is impartial and exalts some and demotes others. God also acts to ensure that He stays in power and that the kingdom of darkness will be defeated. He governs in wise and subtle ways as Psalm 18 indicates. *Psalms 18:25-30 NKJV)  With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; {26} With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. {27} For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks. {28} For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. {29} For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall. {30} As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him*. Thus the skills of discerning people and situations and responding to them with justice and good government is one of God's main activities and a very fit activity for human beings. Another way of looking at this is that God's will is to be done on earth - as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10) For this to happen his standards must be enacted in laws and encoded deeply into the cultures of the earth. This means involvement by Christians in law, politics and culture. In fact John Calvin, the reformer saw government as the highest calling of the Christian. Politics can even affect evangelism. Generally countries that are "closed' with governments hostile to the gospel see few people saved while countries open to the gospel see many people saved. Thus the eternal destiny of nations to a large degree depends on their governments ( 1 Timothy 2:1-4) so Christians should pray for their governments and even, where wise, participate in them.

## The Basics

(1 Timothy 2:1-4 NIV)  I urge, then, **first of all**, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- {2} for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. {3} This is good, and pleases God our Savior, {4} who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
(Micah 6:6-8 NIV)  With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? {7} Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? {8} He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
**The basic involvement of every Christian is to pray for good government and to act justly. This is not negotiable.**

**Further Involvement**

How should you personally be involved/ And to what depth? And in what manner? These are complex questions and to greatly simplify matters I will say that it depends on two factors:

A) Your calling, gifting, ministry, abilities and passions - the good works God has assigned for you to do. (Ephesians 2:10).
B) The nature of the government and how open it is to involvement. Also some governments have one response from God (e.g. judgement) while others get another (support or blessing). We need to discern how God is responding to that administration.

Thus effective advocacy is not the explosive expression of raw passion but a calculated reasoning with the people who have the power to make decisions - according to your ability to do so. As such it requires deep research and real discernment. (Poor preparation can cause a good case to get a bad name.) In a way you are like a lawyer preparing a brief for an important client – the poor. Discerning the nature of the organization or government you are dealing with and knowing your place in dealing with it is critical. There are many, many people tackling the issues of globalization and human injustice. You do not have to solve it all – but you have to do your bit to the best of your ability in the place that God has put you in.

**Your Calling**

Each of us is called to a life of good works - in fact we are designed for them! (Ephesians 2:10 NKJV)  For we are His workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand* that we should walk in them.

- Has God called you to be a prophet and to speak out about social conditions like Amos?
- Has God called you to be an administrator like Joseph or Daniel? (Daniel 1 and 2)
- Has God called you to be a "king" - like David  ?
- Has He called you to be a priest to the powerful - giving guidance and ministering grace like Abiathar did for David? ( 1 Samuel 23:9)
- Has God called you to be a "witness before Caesar" like Paul?

Each of us has different personalities and gifts and belong to different "worlds". Some of you may be naturally "prophetic" while others are much more comfortable ministering grace. Each has its place.


**Nature of The Government**

We find in Scripture a wide range of responses to different kinds of government. God says different things to different kinds of administration and calls His Church to react in a wide variety of ways to the prevailing political climate.:

- Is the government generally **seeking righteousness** like that of Solomon so you can BLESS it like God did? (1 Kings 3:5-15)
- Has it committed a **wrong act** so that it needs to be REBUKED like Nathan did to David? (2 Samuel 12:1-14)

- Is it **idolatrous and wicked** like that of Ahab and Jezebel so you can OVERTHROW it like Elisha did? (2 Kings 9:1-37)
- Is it **stubborn and cruel** so that you must LIBERATE people from it like Moses did? (Exodus chapters 1-15)
- Is it a **"good pagan"** government like that of Nebuchadnezzar so that like Daniel you PARTICIPATE in the government and DEMONSTRATE the power of God to the ruler so he is converted (Daniel 4)?
- Is it an **efficient but unrighteous** pagan government like Rome - with good law and order but hostile to God so you RESPECT the government but SEPARATE yourself from its wicked ways? (Romans 13:1-8)
- If a government is **corrupt** we must never ally ourselves with it but rather EXPOSE it.. (Psalms 94:20, Ephesians 5:11)
- Is it **crafty and dangerous** like the government of Herod so that you SAY NOTHING AT ALL and keep your distance like Jesus did? (Luke 23:8-9)

To sum up this section: There is no "one right way" to respond to all types of government. We have to discern the nature of the government and then react appropriately. The way to do this is to find a parallel situation in Scripture and how God spoke to it.

## Issue By Issue VS Party Politics

There are two main approaches to politics by Christians in open democratic countries: The first is the "prophetic" stance where the Christian stands outside of political life and independent of party politics and comments on an issue by issue basis say tackling abortion or economic injustices. The focus is on what God says to that nation and its government about one particular issue. The advantage is that it is "clean" and rarely corrupt, that it is focussed, and that many Christians will line up behind and issue that will not line up behind a political party. The disadvantage is that it is easily dismissed by those in power - except perhaps during a very close election or in a marginal seat. Secondly there is the "princely" stance of actually running and participating in party politics. The Christian must chose a party where his or her Christian beliefs are at least allowed some room for expression and which is large enough and influential enough to have some impact on government. It is my experience that small idealistic Christian political parties are unsuccessful in influencing policy. When a significant number of Christians form a bible study groups within a major political party and work together then this method can have a lot of impact on public policy. However its weakness is that it is hard to be fully prophetic and outspoken on issues when a member of a party. A certain amount of compromise is needed.

My personal method combines both. Basically my personality is outspoken and uncompromising thus I am much more happy being a "prophet" on the outside and leading marches and rallies however I have belonged to and run as a candidate for political parties. The result is that now I am a "prophet" who understands the world of politicians and can relate to them and thus influence them better that I could before.

## Responding Appropriately In Politics

1. The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (James 1:20) Involvement in politics should be wise, intelligent and from deep conviction not from

anger or hostility. Inappropriate political responses from Christians are a poor witness.

2. Where possible find the appropriate person and procedure for the matter. (Ecclesiastes 8:5,6)

3. Be discreet in all you say, even in private -especially regarding powerful people. (Eccl 10:20, many verses in Proverbs).

4. Expect opposition but let God deal with it. See how David responds to opposition in the Psalms - not by taking personal revenge but by taking his case to God for action. Never take revenge (Romans 12;19).

5. Build unity through demonstrating love for your enemies. Make them friends. This was David's tactic - see 1 & 2 Samuel.

6. Do not give into fear and especially to conspiracy theories. The Lord alone shall be your fear and your dread. (Isaiah 8:11-13)

7. "Kings" are supposed to be wise and to seek counsel. Have many advisors and take their advice. (Proverbs 15:22)

8. Neither be surprised and upset at corruption (Eccl 5:8,9) or so comfortable with it that you take bribes. (Ex 23:8).

9. Settle your priorities before you go into the battle. Know what you truly stand for. "Set your face like flint.." Ezekiel 3:9

10. Pursue peace with all people but always remember that holiness is the top priority. (Hebrews 12:14)

**Conclusion** Combating the injustices of globalization and advocating for the poor and for fair trade will mean Christian political involvement of one sort or the other. Not every Christian will take the same approach or be called to the same political stance or even the same political conclusions. Some will write letters to politicians, while others might teach business ethics at Harvard, others will chain themselves to a tree in prophetic protest while yet others may sit on the board of a multi-national and try to "be a Daniel". Others will march around the city in spiritual warfare and intercession for the sins of the city while yet others may run for mayor. However all are called to seek justice and mercy and truth, all are called to be wise, and discreet and professional in their approach so no disgrace is brought to God's name. All are called to carry a cross and to suffer shame and persecution for the cause of Christ and of His rule in the world. All are called to holiness and purity of life and not to engage in dishonesty or overly pragmatic practices even for a noble cause.

# Why Ecology is a Christian Issue

**A historical review of the ecological path not taken**
*by Fred Krueger, reprinted from Green Cross, with permission*

"We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road - the one "less traveled by" - offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth."

Rachel Carson in Silent Spring, 1962

When Rachel Carson penned these lines, the environmental movement was just dawning. The issues seemed simpler; the horizon more optimistic.

Those concerned about ecology issues rolled up their sleeves and began to clean up streams, plant trees, beautify highways and set aside parks. Legislation was passed. It seemed as though a mass movement would be born and we would solve the problem of pollution. But it didn't happen.

Instead, ecological problems have become more serious. In 1993, a collection of scientists from around the world, including a majority of the world's living Nobel Laureates, issues a warning to humanity:

Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society ... and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about.

How could scientists make a stronger statement about the urgency of our predicament? This report followed a similarly strong statement by the most prestigious body of scientists in this country, the National Academy of Sciences. In a report on energy, the National Academy declared:

We are exhausting fossil fuels, ruining soil fertility, unbalancing ecosystems and distorting human values and institutions in the greatest energy-spending spree of all time.

To any reasonable person, the handwriting is on the wall. We need to change our way of life - or inherit a catastrophe of our own making.

The years since Rachel Carson have shown that environmental organizations never addressed fundamental questions involving the causes of ecological degradation and the moral choices which underlie human action.

One reason is that environmentalists in the 1960s wrongheadedly blamed Christian belief as the cause of ecological pollution. They said that Christians had a "huge burden of guilt" and were responsible for the crisis of the environment. A consequence is that a

generation of young people were taught an erroneous view of history. As captives to this error, those concerned with ecology missed an opportunity which would have galvanized environmental concern into a movement. Instead of enlisting church support - as every successful movement in the history of this country has done - environmentalists emphasized legal, juridical and technological approaches to the environment. This banded approach worked with some problems, but it delayed confrontation with the spiritual core of pollution problems. These lie in human attitudes, values and the vision of human purpose in creation.

A basic lesson of history is that vision is an outgrowth of religion. It unites the spiritual and the physical and provides compelling and integrative direction into the future. The material perception of environmentalism never had sufficient clarity to see into the spiritual sore of the problem. Because the vision was not whole, environmental activism never became a widespread movement. It did not encompass blue collar workers; it did not embrace minorities; instead the environmental movement acquired an elitist reputation because its ecological vision never translated into goals which all society could understand.

If there is any clear lesson from over two decades of environmental activism it is that technological and legislative approaches by themselves are not adequate to the task of healing creation. There must be an ethical and moral dimension. In fact, there must be a religious approach.

In fairness, it should be pointed out that some environmentalists intuited this missing ethical link and sought a religious dimension, which was called "deep ecology." Incredible, while more than five out of six Americans identify with Christianity, these environmentalists launched a futile search into Eastern and Native American beliefs to find a solution to our ecological predicament. Some arrogantly sought to construct a new religion around pseudo-religious values as if a religion could be constructed through human insight.

This detour will go down in environmental history as an example of the myopia that emerges when there is no faith in God. The secular values of environmental leaders misdirected ecological focus and pointed people away from a Christian faith which would have supported a much more substantial approach to ecological problems. In the process they pointed thousands of well-intentioned people toward the smooth superhighway which Rachel Carson described.


Yet Christianity is supremely ecological. Christians would be the most ecological of all religious believers - if its basic premises were followed. From the first chapter of Genesis through the last book of Revelation, humans are called to care for creation. God accounts them responsible for the state of the earth and will judge them for the quality of their stewardship.

The Bible is so detailed in its description of attitudes which should inform care for the earth that it has been likened to a "manufacturer's handbook." With this "handbook" for operators, we have the instructions for smooth operation - but we have to follow them. No knowledgeable equipment operator has the audacity to make up a new set of operating rules, but this is precisely what many people try to do with God's operating guidelines for the planet. This ecological role in Scripture is so important that the Book of Revelation lists this as a criterion for how God will judge each person -by how he or she has treated the earth (Rev. 11:18).

The Catholic economist E. F. Schumacher provides a masterful insight about the biblical version when he tells us that the environment is a mirror for social attitudes. "Our outer world," he says, "is a reflection of inner attitudes." If our environment is showing us an outwardly degraded condition (pollution, exhaustion and breakdown in nature; violence, terrorism, drug addiction and lawlessness in human nature), this is only the visible face of the invisible qualities within people. The mobilization of more resources or different applications of technology can never eliminate these problems because they emerge out of the heart and soul. What has to change is the human heart. This is admittedly a tall order, at times a seemingly impossible task. Yet this is precisely what must be part of any comprehensive environmental reform.

**Repent now**

To heal the earth, the attitudes within humans which have spawned the present plague of socio-environmental abuses must be confronted. A right approach to ecological issues must go deep into the psychological and spiritual roots of our predicament to heal the very heart and soul of our culture.

The message from creation is that human society is in desperate need of repentance. This is not your ordinary garden variety of repentance. This is a repentance which requires a massive shift in attitudes about livelihood, about concepts of success and about the way we interact with one another and the biological system which supports human life.

Yet we should not be intimidated by the magnitude of the task. Society can change. History is replete with examples of drastic changes made without great difficulty, as in wartime when a nation's existence is threatened. Our best scientists tell us that such a threat exists now in our environmental predicament.

The churches have an opportunity to lead the way in this effort to heal the earth. But part of the problem is that too many churches are captive to political and economic assumptions about society and the good life. This cultural capacity has provided an unwitting foundation for complicity in destroying creation rather than for healing, which is the scriptural mandate.

Another part of the problem is that most Christians no longer have a clear vision of how they should relate to the natural world. The majority of church-goers have a woefully weak or even nonexistent theological understanding of creation. The clergy in particular have "catch-up" work to do. This means that the task on the one hand is to reacquaint ourselves with the biblical vision of how the human integrates into creation, and on the other to make those personal changes which will integrate our lives into that vision.

However the issue is examined, the Church has a clear responsibility - and a historic opportunity - to teach its reforming and transforming message of repentance and renewal. This is precisely what our predicament calls for.

Here is the road not traveled: To reform the world, we must be willing to reform ourselves. To have industry exercise self-restraint, we must begin by demonstrating self-restraint in our own actions. For government to pass the necessary laws, we must show an ability to govern ourselves. For Christ's action to heal the earth, we much let Christ's action heal us.

This is why ecology is a Christian issue: it is a call to faithfulness. It is a call to fulfill

the ecological mandates of Scripture. In our day, when the earth groans in particularly discernible travail, we need a clear ethical foundation to inform our relationships to creation. We need biblical faith plus careful environmental analysis.

For Christians, the issues of ecology are not just an occasion to get to work; there is historic opportunity here. It is a call to discern what Christ is telling us now and to take those actions which will extend his healing to all about us. The Church can fulfill her rightful place in our post-Christian society by taking the lead in this crisis. No institution is as well equipped to deal with the ecological problem as the Christian Church.

This task begins with the individual. One person who will pray and deliberately set an example of Christ's commands about creation can change a church; a church can change a neighborhood. Together we can change the world.

**The Creation is marvelous in its order, complexity and beauty. And, Creation's care and keeping has been entrusted to us ordinary people!**

**While debates on how God made the world and whether things are better or worse may divert people here and there, most who are serious about Creation want to participate in the work - and the joy - of Creation stewardship.**

**After all is said, Creation still is here with us, we are a part of it, we are entrusted with its care and keeping by its Creator, and we remain grateful to God for Creation's blessings.**

**Calvin B. DeWitt**

# Globalization, the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching and Hollywood: a Media Literacy Response

Rose Pacatte, FSP

At least twenty-eight major Hollywood films came to my mind when studying and thinking about the phenomenon of globalization and the principles of Catholic Social teaching this past summer. I wanted to take a course in globalization because I thought it would bring me up to speed regarding the role of information communications and social justice issues in the context of this phenomenon of globalization. And while I am now much more aware of the economic nature of globalization and its impact on the earth and food-sources and therefore all dimensions of human life, the reason for thinking about movies (entertainment communication) are not so obvious perhaps to the non-movie-goer. Worse yet (?), my field of expertise is media literacy education and once you have been introduced to media literacy, you can never look at a movie (or any media text) the same way again.

Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the following questions: What is globalization and how has this process impacted world ecology and therefore social justice and culture? What is culture, how is it transmitted and what does this have to do with globalization and eco-social justice? How has Hollywood contributed to and commented upon globalization and its effects? What commentary do the principles of Catholic Social Teaching offer and what response can media literacy provide in a world that is "just ten years old"?

**Globalization**

According to Christian economist Rob van Drimmelen,

> "… Globalization refers to the process of growing and intensifying interaction of all levels of society in world trade, foreign investment and capital markets. It is abetted by technological advances in transport and communications, and a rapid liberalization and deregulation of trade and capital flows, both nationally and internationally, leading to one global market."

Friedman agrees when he says that, "… the essence of globalization is economics."

Sociologist Anthony Giddens, however, sees globalization in much broader terms and thinks it is a mistake to limit the process only to economics. "Globalization is political, technological and cultural as well as economic. It has been influenced above all by developments if systems of communication dating back to the late 1960's."

Pope John Paul II essentially agreed with Giddens about globalization when he visited North America in 1999 and issued the Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in America.* The

pope also articulated clearly the ethical implications of this phenomenon when he wrote that they

> "can be positive or negative. There is an economic globalization which brings some positive consequences such as efficiency and increased production and which… can help to bring greater unity among peoples and make possible a better service to the human family. However, if globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot butbe negative. These are, for example, the absolutizing of the economy, unemployment, the reduction and deteriorization of public services, *the destruction of the environment and* natural resources (my emphasis), the growing distance between the rich and the poor, unfair competition which puts the poor nations in a situation of ever increasing inferiority."

## Culture

The Pope and observers of globalization all recognize its downside and offer responses that range from encouragement to play the game to a Christian personalist view that implicitly and explicitly encourages the maintenance of the delicate balance between human freedom and responsibility in all areas of human activity.

In a particular way, Giddens and John Paul II articulate the role of communications technology in advancing globalization. The Pope, however, speaks of 'values'. This emphasis seem to indicate he is referring specifically to the cultural hegemony of entertainment media (though not exclusively to be sure) produced in the United States (though his remarks are addressed to the Church is 'America') as an important factor in globalization:

> "And what should we say about the cultural globalization
>
> produced by the power of the media? Everywhere the media impose new scales of values which are often arbitrary and basically materialistic, in the face of which it is difficult to maintain a lively commitment to the values of the Gospel."

Culture can be defined as a system of beliefs and values, passed on from one generation to another through language and action, that guides human behavior. In 1984 (and earlier in 1980, ten years before the end of the Cold War that Friedman uses as the mark of demarcation between pre and post globalization), John Paul II defined culture as:

> "… a specific dimension of the existence and being of man. It creates among persons within each community a complex of bonds, determining the interpersonal and social character of human existence. Man is both subject and creator of culture in which he expresses himself and finds his equilibrium…"… culture in itself is communication: communication not only and not so much of man with the environment that he is called to dominate as of man with other men. Indeed, culture is a relational and social dimension of human existence…"

**Hollywood**

In the context of this examination then, it is easy to ask: What has "Hollywood", as a culture creating industry, contributed to and commented upon globalization and its effects?

The dominance of Hollywood in film (and later television) entertainment was established and guaranteed when the successful film industries of France, England, Germany, Russia and Italy in particular, were all but destroyed by World War I and the rise of communism. The "Great War" was fought on European soil and along with the lack of raw materials to produce movies, the inability of the audience to pay for tickets or even safely gather to view films, the (free market) economic and political infrastructure that permitted film production all but died. If not for government support of the arts, the cinema might not be in existence in many countries today.

Film production in the United States however, moved from the East coast to California in the 19-teens and flourished (and film and cinema became "movies" in the U.S., denoting a certain loss of their status as "art" which Europe has supposedly maintained.) The export of U.S. made films filled a vacuum that has only continued to grow over the decades because movies are a commercial product. No other film/television industry in the world can compete with U.S. movies and television, though China/Hong Kong, India and Brazil are getting closer and even finding an audience in the United States at times – sometimes the result of globalization and the language of image which needs fewer words for comprehension (not to say the growing Spanish-speaking population and their love for "telenovellas".)

But what has Hollywood had to say about the very globalization of which it not only is a part but in which it also plays a significant role? In the chart that follows at the end of this paper, I have listed my twenty-nine films, and have attempted to cross-reference them with the principles of Catholic social teaching and media literacy. At a later time I will add reviews and make the connections more explicit.

Can movies contribute to a frank discussion about what matters to humanity? Theresa Sanders, an associate professor of theology at Georgetown University, suggests that they can:

"Movies do more than entertain, though they surely do that.

> They also shape our hopes and desires. They tell us who we are and who we ought to be. They give us a language to express our loves and our fears and the full scope of our messy, complicated humanity. That humanity is contemptible and noble, craven and courageous, pitiable and dignified. As members of it, we share one thing in common: *a desire that something matter*..." (my emphasis.)

I would like to note the films *The Burning Season*, *Erin Brockovich (2000)*, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, *Medicine Man*, *Romero (1989)*, *Matewan*, *The Matrix (1999)* and most recently, *Minority Report (2002)* and even *Citizen Kane* (*1941)* as films that

highlight and question one or more negative elements of globalization, beginning with the lack of respect for the integrity and dignity of the human person. On the other hand, Hollywood films with story lines that question or critique the status quo and then resolve the dilemma by re-establishing it, can tend to be more popular and profitable, such as the 1983 John Hugh's film *Mr. Mom.*

Also to be noted are the four consequences of modernity that Giddens identifies as contributing to globalization: Surveillance, capitalism, industrialism and military power. There is not enough space to go into these dimensions here, but each of the twenty-eight films I list in the table reflect one or more, and often all of these points.

**Principles of Catholic Social Teaching**

John Paul II mentions each of the seven principles of Catholic Social teaching identified by Christian sociologists and theologians in his 1999 Apostolic Exhortation already referred to, *Ecclesia in America.* Each of these principles has their basis in Scripture, including the newest one that concerns the care of the earth. 1) The inherent dignity of the human person, 2) subsidiarity: that no higher level community should strip another community of their capacity to see, judge and act on their own behalf, 3) that the common good be the determinant of economic social organization, 4) the universal destination (or distribution) of goods because ownership of property is not an absolute right, 5) solidarity, the alternative to globalization based on empathy for others, 6) an option for the poor from the social, economic and cultural vantage point of the least among us and finally 7) the integrity of creation. This latter "principle" has been developed and articulated more recently by the Church but it is a theme that in recent years Pope John Paul II has returned to over and over again (most noteworthy are his January 1$^{st}$ World Day of Peace messages.)

For example, a news article about John Paul's June 24, 2002 message for the World Day of Tourism stated that the Pope talked about "eco-tourism" and the balance between human and land rights:

> "… But if caring for the environment becomes an end in itself it runs the risk of leading to new forms of 'colonialism,' which could damage the traditional rights of local communities that live in specific territorial areas. In this case, the development, and even the survival, of these local communities can be at risk. The Pope asked that attention be paid to the human environment of local peoples, and not just to the protection of animals and plants."

Like Giddens' four specific consequences of modernity, the principles of Catholic social teaching are evoked, implicitly and/or explicitly referred to or the need for their application "cried out for" in the twenty-nine films in the table below, several of which which deal directly or less directly with the earth's ecological, and therefore, human welfare.

**Conclusion: A Media Literacy (Education) Response**

Media literacy education is a relatively new academic and school subject with origins in British film studies and popular culture criticism of the 1930's by F.R. Leavis. Len Masterman's 1985 book *Teaching the Media* launched the subject with a philosophical, theoretical and pedagogical basis rooted in a Marxian criticism of culture, government and society balanced by the educational theory of empowerment proposed by Paulo Freire.

Media literacy education, despite the continual debates about it that are going on in various countries, has the freedom and dignity of the human person at its essential core. Its five basic principles (see chart; some countries have developed as many as ten principles) are important because they all deal with "representation" of the human person in one way or anther. Because media literacy views all education as a political activity, it has the opportunity to influence all areas of human living as a life skill.

Media literacy education is defined as the development of skills to empower persons to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using language, image and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages and the media institutions that enable them and which they in turn enable.

Because information and entertainment communications media form an essential part of the web of globalization, media literacy, especially if informed by Catholic social teaching, can be a consciousness-raising activity leading to positive personal and social change. Freire's dynamic paradigm for social change through education works well when applied to media literacy (as well as theological reflection): dialogue (rather than discussion), reflection, action.

As a person of faith, it will be worth the effort to pursue and test this line of inquiry further. My intention is to use this paper as a point of departure for developing further the media literacy education workshops I am already doing. In this way I can include the principles of Catholic social teaching as they interface with communications and globalization.

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2. Faith in a Global Economy: A Primer for Christians, 1998. WCC Publications: :London, pp. 7-8
3. Op. cit. Page 11
4. Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives. 2000. Routledge: New York, Page 28
5. February 4, 1999. Source: Origins: CNS Documentary Service, Washington, DC, Vol. 28, No. 33; paragraph 20
6. Loc. sit.
7. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997 edition, Editrice Libreria Vaticana, Part III, paragraph 1731 ff.
8. Op cit.
9. Loc. sit.

10. Eilers, F.J., The Church and Social Communications: Basic Documents. 1997, Logos Publications: Manila, page 269
11. Celluloid Saints: Images of Sanctity in Film, 2002, Mercer University Press: Macon, GA, Page ix
12. The Consequences of Modernity, 1990, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, Chapter II
13. A.I.: Artificial Intelligence (2001); At Play in the Fields of the Lord (1991); Beautiful Mind, A (2001) Burning Season, The (1994, TV); Cast Away (2000); Citizen Kane (1941); Civil Action, A (1998); Clueless (1995) Cry Freedom (1987) Erin Brockovich (2000); Full Metal Jacket; Gallipoli (1981); Ghandi (1982); Glen Garry Glen Ross (1992); Jerry Maguire (1996); Killing Fields, The (1984); Kundun (1997); Life as a House (2001); Magnificent Seven, The (1960); Matewan (1989); Matrix, The (1999); Medicine Man (1992); Men with Guns (1997); Minority Report (2002); Mission, The (1986); Romero (1989); Truman Show, The (1998)
Wall Street (1987)
14. Op cit.
15. Catholic social teaching, and the history of its development, is covered in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part III.
16. Zenit News Service, July 6, 2002, Weekly News Analysis
17. Routledge: London and New York

Based on the definition proposed by the Alliance for a Media Literate America, 2001, ***www.amlainfo.org***

# The Churches' Role in Media Education and Communication Advocacy

by National Council of Churches

A Policy Statement Approved by the General Board
November 11, 1993
A Policy Statement Approved by the General Board
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## Introduction

Communication is a key thread in the fabric of life. It shapes us mentally, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Communication — including the Word made flesh and Holy Scripture — is the way in which God is made known to us, and the way we respond.

Communication forms and sustains society and at the same time develops and maintains our individuality. It is the nervous system of the social and political body.

As communication is central to any culture, so the tools of communication are essential to our highly technological culture. This policy statement addresses two areas of mediated communication in society in which our churches need to play a role:

**Media Education**: Promoting understanding of how media work, how media affect our lives and how to use media wisely. This includes differentiating among the values, messages and meaning of life as espoused by faith groups and as interpreted by media; and

**Communication Advocacy**: Influencing the goals, structure and policies of communication by advocating positions and actions based upon Christian faith and conviction.

This paper should be read in the context of other NCC policy statements, such as *Global Communication for Justice* and *Violence in Electronic Media and Film*.

## Our Faith Perspective

We are churches gathered in communicating the story that is the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, God makes the ultimate communicative act toward us and the whole creation. We affirm that forgiveness takes place through a communicative process of confession and absolution, pointing to the death and resurrection of Jesus as the source of power for that process. We are empowered by God's love to share this message of good news and grace.

Several Christian doctrines derived from the witness of Scripture, Christian tradition, and the reflection of Christians today bear directly on the social role of communication. They include: Creation and stewardship

- Sin and redemption
- The newness of life
- Good news and proclamation
- Christian witness

## Creation and Stewardship

To us, God is creator of "all things visible and invisible." By this we understand that all things are interrelated, that the eternal order of things is revealed in history, and that we humans are not the creators but rather are bound together in mutuality and community as part of creation along with all other parts of creation.

Among God's more recent gifts are advanced communication systems involving satellites, cellular phones and computers. These gifts make possible new communication experiences — from interactive video games and "virtual reality" to "smart" homes, on-line shopping and high speed data transmission around the globe. They also make possible new forms and speeds of communication between and among people who are able to take advantage of these new technologies, including the Internet. These technologies will bring changes at least as dramatic as the changes brought to society by radio, television and film.

> *. . stewardship is a necessary corollary of creation.*

Without many of the new technologies, humankind would be unable to live in the complex social structure we now enjoy. But since all elements of social communication are first of all God's creation, and not our creation, they must be considered as being held in trust for the community by those who control them. Therefore, *stewardship* is a *necessary* corollary of creation.

Media are powerful forces. The importance of exercising stewardship in their use means educating others about their power and their limitations. It also involves making wise use of media.

God, in giving humankind stewardship over creation, demands accountability and justice. As communication industries participate in establishing power and control over people's lives, they may be tempted to yield to the baser instincts of greed, conflict and domination and, therefore, must be called to judgment when they succumb to these temptations. The church can be prophetic on communication justice issues only out of a recognition that "all (including the church) have sinned and fallen short" — and that all are in need of repentance.

## Sin and Redemption

People are not thrust into sin by events; rather, they sin as they do not live up to God's expectations and their God-given potential. We humans constantly misuse the power that God has given us over creation. Instead of using our gifts to bring about harmony in all creation and its interrelatedness, we misuse power for selfish purposes, to further self at the expense of others.

The communication media are major sources of power with great potential for good as well as evil. Because we depend upon them for information, media hold key elements for many other forms of power: economic, social, and political. To the degree that they represent concentrations of power, media are increasingly likely to become a locus for sin. The primary manifestation of sin within mass media is based on their ability to manipulate persons, treating them as objects and turning them into passive recipients rather than helping them become active participants in society. In addition, mass media have the power to reinforce the dark side of our personalities as well as to support the positive, creative side.

> *Taking something that is a gift of God and treating it as if it were God, is the sin of idolatry.*

As Christians, we confess that we not only have permitted this concentration of power but we have also participated in the manipulation of persons. Either as shareholders in media industries or as consumers of their products, we, too, have succumbed to some of the questionable techniques of the marketplace. As shareholders and as consumers, we, too, may have encouraged profiteering at the expense of human welfare. Our enthusiastic encouragement of technological development is generally uninformed, uncritical and, not infrequently, a form of idol worship. Taking something that is a gift of God — money, power, prestige, technology — and treating it as if it were God, is the sin of idolatry.

## The Newness of Life

Christians take seriously the concept that God makes all things new and that novelty and creativity are essential elements of God's world. Therefore, we resist attempts to constrict communication, which might limit the choices that an individual can make. New relationships, new ideas, new values, new understandings can be essential to growth and to development of human potential.

> *Censorship must be avoided, since it allows one person or group to determine the information available to all others.*

Christian doctrine insists on remaining open to newness while submitting it to critical analysis. It rejects attempts to restrain the way newness comes into the world. It advocates openness, not only to novelty, but also to that which is not yet completely understood, since God works in mysterious ways that can never be fully grasped, predicted, or controlled. For these reasons, censorship must be avoided, since it allows one person or group to determine the information available to all others.

## Good News and Proclamation

Christians testify to the good news that Christ came to set us free from personal sin, from systemic bondage, and from all kinds of oppression — spiritual, mental, social, physical, economic and political.

In the Bible, God's promise of a new future for the people is central and must be

communicated effectively. This vision is deeply rooted in the Exodus, the story of the liberation of the Hebrew people in ancient Egypt. And Jesus' message about the Realm of God is the good news that God restores, reconciles and heals us and delivers us from oppression. Communication — a genuine, open give-and-take of ideas and feelings — is what connects and binds people together in community.

So communication is more than technology, more than gadgets and machines. We must understand technology as an interrelated system that has its own laws of development and in some ways even a life of its own. Technology includes management, corporate structures, psychological approaches and marketing strategies. Part of technology's power is that it has enabled men and women to control nature and, in doing so, has created a new environment for humankind.

> *Christians must use every communication medium to help people understand the good news.*

The illusion persists that technological progress necessarily brings freedom and happiness. But it also can enslave us. If we worship technology, we elevate it to the realm of the sacred, making it an object of humanity's awe and veneration. It is only when we realize how this can happen that we are able to liberate ourselves from the demands of technology. Therefore, Christians must use every communication medium to help people understand the good news, which opposes any such enslavement by the technology worldview.

## Christian Witness

Christians challenge falsehood. Christianity is not evenhanded. It has a bias toward truth and liberation through the Gospel and a bias away from untruth and bondage. We eagerly proclaim this understanding of the Gospel and explain our worldview in theological terms. However, since this is a pluralistic society, we Christians must witness to the truth as we perceive it and still be open to hear the truth as it is perceived by others. The church acknowledges that women, racial/ethnic minorities, lesbian and gay persons, and people with disabilities historically have been excluded from or negatively stereotyped in the media. Consistent with our values as Christians living in a pluralistic society, we must work to insure that media reflect, in a balanced fashion, the views, opinions and cultures of all segments of society.

> *Churches have a responsibility to educate us to understand media symbols, images and language from a faith perspective.*

Media influence the way we look at everything. Subtle and not-so-subtle messages with symbols, sounds and metaphor push our society toward a market-driven, violence-prone, self-centered lifestyle that challenges our Christian values. Therefore, our churches have a responsibility to educate us to understand media symbols, images and language from a faith perspective.

Media play a major role in setting the agenda of what in society will be discussed or ignored. Therefore, we have a responsibility to learn how media operate and to

challenge that which we believe to be false.

### The Churches' Response In A Media Saturated World

Telling stories, the most effective communication method, remains the same as it has been throughout human history. Today's media-savvy storytellers' techniques have so improved the impact of images and so amplified their presence through broadcast, cable, satellite, VCRs, video games, fiber optics, interactive television and CD-ROM, that the traditional face-to-face storytellers — parents, pastors, and teachers — frequently feel replaced and powerless.

We invented these media, using the gifts of God's creation. We spend more of our discretionary time with them than with anything else. They are woven so thoroughly into the economic fabric that they are indispensable for marketing goods, services and ideas. We are all part of creating the problems we seek to correct. We can also be part of the solution.

*We must become media literate.*

If we are to make and influence choices that better represent the values for which the Gospel stands, then we must greatly expand our understanding and utilization of media. We must become media literate.

### Media Education

Media education is needed in the church and in society to help people:

- **Recognize** and understand the role of media in using metaphor and symbol to shape our understanding of who we are, individually and relationally;
- **Learn** how interactive communication can shape and influence the emerging social fabric of human life and society;
- **Demonstrate** responsible use of technology; and
- **Use** media as tools by which the church shares the good news.

Media literate consumers will recognize the complexity and subtlety of the issues. Unfortunately, poorly informed media consumers some-times have created more problems than solutions. Misinformation and confusion have resulted in ineffective boycotts and letter-writing campaigns, often organized by Christian groups, which have furthered defensiveness rather than dialogue and productive problem-solving.

Problems most often associated with the electronic media, such as gratuitous sex and violence, insufficient or inappropriate programming for children, a flood of sameness in entertainment programming, superficial news coverage of politics, inadequate attention to religion and its influence in society, and the trivialization of news and information require media-literate persons committed to making their religious perspective relevant to these complex issues.

### The Church As Advocate For Responsible Media

Media have a tremendous potential for good, often underutilized. They add exciting new

symbols to our culture. They provide chances for people to witness events as they happen. They have great democratic potential and can extend knowledge to all people, providing a global perspective. They provide diversion as well as entertainment, information and education.

Media today reach virtually every member of society with messages that reinforce a worldview that says technology can solve all problems. These media have been so woven into the economic fabric of our culture that to question the underlying implications of the system appears destructive, perhaps, for Americans, even unpatriotic. In this environment, the churches can be a voice for greater responsibility in the use of technology to solve our world's problems.

During the past five decades, economic criteria increasingly have come to dominate decisions about the messages and means of communication, until today nearly every element of what was once thought of as "public discourse" has been commercialized. At the same time, most of what is seen on television, in books, newspapers, magazines and movies is controlled by a handful of media conglomerates. Local owners of media outlets find it expensive to rely on locally produced material. Much of the syndicated material for television, radio and newspapers is distressingly similar. Neither as citizens nor as Christians can we continue to support strictly market-structured media, which reinforce a limited worldview and provide enormous profit to a privileged few. Instead, we must advocate for open media channels with a genuine free flow of communication to enhance and broaden public discourse.

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA believes that communication problems are systemic. Thus, communication advocacy must deal with the media as an enormous power base — social, economic and political — both as a producer and definer of culture. As advocates for change, we must recognize our complicity as ordinary citizens and church-goers, media consumers without whom the problems being addressed would not exist. Without a demand for particular media products, neither good nor bad will flourish.

> *Communication advocacy must deal with the media...both as a producer and definer of culture.*

Within media, authority and responsibility rest with many participants: actors, writers, directors, publishers, technicians, producers, executives, station managers, sponsors and viewers. But no one individual feels responsible or can be held responsible for the cumulative effects of media because so many participate in the creative process. Therefore, social, political and economic structures must be created which provide a framework in which individuals can act responsibly while simultaneously working in a highly competitive marketplace.

Communication advocacy must deal with the power realities of the system while recognizing that many individuals within that system already are deeply concerned about the problems being addressed. There are persons throughout the industry who are as much a part of the solution as part of the problem; they need our encouragement

and constructive criticism. Communication advocacy is therefore both important and difficult.

## Summary

Home, church and school traditionally have shaped and maintained values, worldviews and the meaning of life in our society. These functions rapidly are being assumed by media and the commercial interests that control them. That shift will continue and worsen unless the church, the school and the family take their roles more seriously.

Media education and communication advocacy present the churches with significant opportunities. The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA challenges church members to recognize our complicity in media's negative impact on society. We challenge church leaders to question publicly the distortions and failures of media. We encourage openness and diversity in programming, and support for media industry people who share our concerns. The Council challenges all people of faith to strive for some measure of localism and local control, so that the media may better meet the needs of every segment of society.

Historically, Christians have understood that government must play a role in regulating the abuse of power. We understand government can be a strong force for expressing the public will. Responsive and responsible government could limit the exercise of power by the strong at the expense of the weak. We, therefore, recognize and support the necessity for advocating for governmental regulation of any mass media that could become a monopoly. Media self-regulation does not work by itself. On the other hand, the same media are called to be vigilant against the unjust use of power by government. Christians should encourage this positive role of media.

*The church, the school and the family [must] take their roles more seriously.*

The family is where the most effective education about media can take place. When children are using media, parents and caregivers should plan to participate with them. Modeling by parents of responsible media consumption is the most powerful teacher. Churches must develop and distribute material to assist parents and caregivers in this educational task.

Congregations should encourage media education in public and parochial schools and engage in it systematically in their own churches. National denominational support for the development of media literacy and education resources will strengthen this local activity. All Christian educational agencies should demonstrate their support for development of curricular materials for use in local churches. Media education in schools of theology also is essential since that is where future church leaders are taught to make the Gospel relevant to the people and their culture.

## Call to Action

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA calls upon its member

communions to work together through the Communication Commission and other appropriate groups to implement, and encourage their congregations and members to undertake, as many of the following strategies as they can:

1. **Challenge** the communication industries, government, the general public and NCC member communions each to take active responsibility for the impact which the structure of communication technology has on society.
2. **Work to preserve** or secure legal processes that will ensure public accountability by those who control media. Encourage citizens to evaluate, at franchise or license renewal time, whether cable and television outlets in local communities are servicing the community interest, convenience and necessity.
3. **Prepare church leadership** and members for informed citizen action in relation to media in their communities. Publicize and facilitate strategies for citizen involvement that could include visits with program directors, station managers, and newspaper editors; writing to program sponsors and the local media; organizing boycotts or taking other actions available to citizens seeking redress.
4. **Affirm freedom of speech** and oppose censorship within a framework of social responsibility.
5. **Support the concept of "universal access"** to all media, including the Information Highway; work with government and industry at local, state and national levels to ensure public access to a broad diversity of viewpoints in all media.
6. **Advocate for a "public lane"** on the Information Highway and for set-asides (reserved space on the spectrum for broadcasting and newer communication services). Work to preserve current public access channels on cable, funding for public radio and television, and the restoration of public service requirements for broadcasters.
7. **Engage in and/or promote stockholder actions** designed to encourage programming and practices that are clearly in the public interest.
8. **Affirm, encourage and support** all who undertake vocations within the media industry. Christians are called to witness and minister within a pluralistic culture and to work with persons who serve in secular arenas.
9. **Work to advance the interests** of women, minorities, and people with disabilities to ensure that they are authentically presented in TV imaging so as to avoid the promotion of stereotyping. Further, work to advance the interests of such groups to ensure that they are proportionately represented in the workforce and ownership ranks of industry, and within those media work forces of religious communities.
10. **Encourage the importation of programming** that provides genuine insight into other cultures.
11. **Create centers for media literacy training** within churches, church schools, and schools of theology. Develop and implement the use of media education materials to reinforce faith values.
12. **Encourage concerned parents** and public interest advocates to be part of citizen advisory panels and to initiate dialogue with the owners and managers of media outlets in their own communities. This will allow Christians to conduct a ministry of concern and constructive response so that fundamental moral values

can be preserved, perpetuated and shared with others.

13. **Develop and encourage** the use of critical viewing skills in the home.

14. **Encourage parents to take responsibility** for what their children and youth watch in the home by monitoring use of the Information Highway, movie and video rentals; to make use of lock-box or other technologies; to stay current on advertising for film, video, and computer game materials, so as to make informed decisions about permissable viewing; and, above all, to help young people develop their own standards of taste and appropriate viewing behavior.

15. **Encourage and support inclusion** by the public schools of media education curriculum from an early age.

16. **Support voluntary rating systems** appropriate for each medium based upon product appropriateness for children, for films, television, cable, pay-per-view TV, and video and arcade games. Further, request that ratings be prominently displayed in all program promotion, in newspaper and other media advertising, and on video cassettes and video games, and that all previews at the beginning and ending of a program be appropriate to the rating of that program.

17. **Support the 1968 Supreme Court ruling** that children may legally be barred from theater showings of films considered unsuitable.

18. **Continue public recognition and awards** for writers, producers, and programmers who meet or exceed public interest standards. Publicize and support excellence whenever the public is served through the media.

# Missions In Cyberspace: The Strategic Front-Line Use Of The Internet In Missions

**By John Edmiston**

## Introduction

Frontier mission is always an adventure and a calling, in the words of William Carey, to "use means" for the completion of the Great Commission. One of these means is the use of the Internet. And one of the most exhilarating frontiers of mission today is cyber-missions, the frontline use of IT to evangelize and disciple the nations. In this article we will keep the focus on cross-cultural mission web sites and strategic approaches to ministry online such as web-evangelism, email discipleship, web-based TEE and icafes as a church-planting strategy. This paper will review the potential, the actual uses and the successful implementation of Internet-based missionary outreach and put the case for missionary societies to have an Internet evangelism department headed by a Field Director – Cyberspace. I have intentionally excluded the traditional uses of computing in missions or the use of the Internet for mono-cultural ministry as this has already been extensively reviewed elsewhere (for instance in the work of Leonard Sweet).

## Some Statistics

***Worldwide Internet Population***:
445.9 million (eMarketer)
533 million (Computer Industry Almanac)
***Projection for 2004***:
709.1 million (eMarketer)
945 million (Computer Industry Almanac)
***Online Language Populations (September 2002***)
English 36.5%; Chinese 10.9%, Japanese 9.7%, Spanish 7.2%, German 6.7%, Korean 4.5%,
Italian 3.8%, French 3.5%, Portuguese 3.0%, Russian 2.9%, Dutch 2.0% (Source: Global Reach)
From the above statistics it is clear that the Internet is no longer predominantly an English speaking medium and that Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean now occupy a significant portion of cyber-space along with major European languages such as Spanish., Portuguese and French.

There are over 275 million Internet searches each day and 80% of all Internet session begin at a search engine. (Internetstatistics.com) Religion is one of the main topics people search for. Pew Internet surveys found that 28 million Americans get religion information online, that 3 million do so daily, and that 25 % of net users search for religion-related topics. Barna Research estimates that up to 50 million Americans may worship solely over the Internet by 2010. There is every indication that the Internet is a major source of religious information where people of many cultures and languages collect their spiritual facts and opinions in private. It's a place where missionaries must be.

**Part One - The Concept, Opportunities And Strategic Use of Cyber-Missions**
Despite the obvious potential for online evangelism mission computing is still largely seen as mission databases, accounting, fund-raising, email and publicity. Large "computing in missions" conferences debate security issues and networking but do not touch on how the IT staff can plant churches and reach unreached people groups for Jesus. That is left to "real missionaries" ! This paper is about how geeks can spread the gospel and how cyber-missionaries can go places where conventional missionaries cannot. It will cover how the Internet is being used for theological education by extension, how chat rooms are being used for online evangelism in creative access countries, and how Internet cafes are proving a useful strategy in reaching unreached people groups. This paper presents the radical idea of IT as a frontline pioneer church-planting and evangelistic ministry.

**Personal Involvement**

My personal involvement with computers and mission began in 1988 with an ancient Microbee personal computer that did not even have a hard drive! By 1991 I had helped start Australian BibleNet, which was part of the old FidoNet bulletin board groups. In early 1994 as the web was just starting, I set up one of the first Christian websites "The Prayer Page", the first site to allow people to put their prayer points online and give lessons on how to pray. This eventually developed (in mid 1994) into Eternity Online Magazine, which ran until the end of 1998 when funding ceased. At its peak in 1997 Eternity Online Magazine had over one million readers and around five hundred people per year wrote in reporting they had found Christ through its pages. In late 2001 I took up the challenge of the Asian Internet Bible Institute (www.aibi.ph), which runs twelve free online courses including the 21 module Harvestime church-planting course, in an effort to equip (via icafes and church computers) the 70% of Asian pastors who have no formal ministry training. In combination with key missionaries to Muslims I am currently also working on a strategy of planting internet cafes, staffed by Filipino missionaries, in unreached people groups in Asia.

**The Word In Cyber-Space**
Cyber-surfers mainly do just two things, read words and write words. Despite the graphics and sound bites of the WWW, the Internet is still mainly a text-based medium, and this is especially so in the developing world. But is this adequate? Can text transform the world? The answer is yes, people can be, and are often, changed by the written word addressing a real spiritual or personal need. The Internet simply places such material in an environment where people, who are interested in it, can easily access it through hyper-links and search engines. As I sleep or work, people read an article and are changed, or they go to the "How To Become A Christian" page and make a real commitment to Christ while sitting at their computer. They are transformed by the written word quite apart from my presence, appearance or charm. Thus cyber-ministry is far less dependent on personality, location, buildings, clothing or cultural cues than most missionary activity. Cyber-ministry however is highly dependent on writing and counselling skills, extensive networking between sites and on clarity and ease of use.

The idea is to get the seeking person to the word that can transform their life (within three or four clicks of the mouse) and then to facilitate and follow up the encounter between the seeker and the Word of God and to build such people into encouraging online communities.

**Understanding The WWW**
Cyber-missionaries need to develop a deep and intimate knowledge of the nature of cyberspace and the following four foundational concepts need to be understood for effective cyber-ministry:
Firstly - the WWW is not a broadcast medium. When content is placed on the WWW it is not "sent out". The content stays where it is, on the computer it was put on and visitors arrive at that content via a vast web of interconnections. In fact the WWW can be private, semi-public or public. It is not like a radio station, which anyone can listen in on. Content can be restricted to people with passwords or put on obscure and unlisted pages that 'robots' and search engines are prevented from finding and web pages can even be encrypted. Thus the WWW is not designed to send out general information to a random audience, but to draw selected people to specific information. The difference is critical. There is no automatic audience, unless you understand how to draw people through the network of links to your website you can end up with zero visitors.
Secondly, in drawing people to the gospel on the Internet it is essential to understand how people navigate their way to a web site. The WWW is actually most like a vast library and generally surfers do not visit web pages by accident any more than they take out a library book by accident. They mainly arrive at a web page on the basis of a relevant, particular and specific interest, via a search engine or a link from a related web page or an email. The Internet is not passive like listening to radio, rather the surfer is always active, clicking, searching, reading, browsing and intentionally navigating through cyber-space. Thus the web surfer is a self-directed seeker driven by curiosity traveling through a community of hyper-links. So you have somehow to be connected to where that person is now if they are ever to reach you. The idea is to position your website within one or two clicks of millions of people. You need to be part of the network, woven into cyberspace so people "bump into" links to your site in all sorts of places. You also must be able to offer them a reason to go to your page. Surfers are mainly in search of two things: human contact and relevant information. Curiosity and community are the driving forces of the WWW and cyber-ministries need to harness the power of these forces if they are to succeed.
Thirdly the WWW was designed for scientists and military personnel to share data and is designed to share highly specific information with a widely dispersed audience. Thus, in a counter-intuitive way, the more specific your information, the more visitors your mission website will get! If your site is on a broad topic like "Christianity' or "the gospel" you will find that it is one among millions – and yours is number 34,218 in the search engine. So your site will get very few visitors. My most specific and unusual articles, such as articles on human cloning, Theophostic counselling, or blessings and curses attract more visitors than articles on general discipleship topics. You can also see this principle operating in the commercial websites. General shopping sites on the Internet have failed by the thousands - while rare booksellers; antique shops, vintage wine and art sales have flourished. The trick is to have up-to-date topics that are highly specific. So when Dolly the sheep was cloned – I immediately wrote a Christian view of human

cloning. It was about the only Christian article on the topic (in cyberspace) that week and was a huge success. Thus to draw people to a cyber-ministry it is important to build on your special knowledge and specific strengths. Forget about appealing to all, instead be relevant, be unique and be specific.

Fourthly the WWW is more about relevance to needs than it is about image. Content is King. So have good content that meets real needs. People will come even to a really ugly website if it offers free software that they want. The key "click factor" that causes people to decide to follow a link is the visitor's perception of the sites relevance to their immediate needs. Mainly these are relational and informational needs. Clicks are made "site unseen". Visitors have not seen your site when they click on a link to it. So your graphics don't matter a hoot. The decision (to click) is made, and can only be made, on the basis of information about the site's content – not its appearance. Thus cool is not as important as connection, content, and clarity. Yahoo is one of the largest Internet portals yet it is quite ordinary in its layout. Some of the most visited sites on the web are just plain text. However all successful web sites have great content, are fast, useful, clear and easy to use and navigate. Great websites "connect" with and meet the needs of their target audience. So an effective ministry web page is relevant, unique, clear, fast loading, useful, easily searched, interactive and full of highly specific information and resources that draw people in to use, re-use and explore the site.


**The Internet In Creative Access Countries**

A recent Chinese government decision to block access to Google shows that governments can and do censor the Internet and they generally block websites for political reasons. Governments generally seem to be less concerned about religious websites that are politically neutral. The AIBI has students in many creative access countries and there is no sign of interference so far. Though an Internet ministry will only reach a small percentage of people in creative access countries, these tend to be businessmen or leaders. These leaders can download training material that they can then share with others. This is what I call the "tunnel and blast" strategy in that you "tunnel into" a creative access country and find a person who is widely networked and who is enthusiastic, this person then organizes others and the ministry spreads. While of course caution needs to be exercised it is quite possible to minister effectively even in countries like Myanmar which has severe restrictions on the Internet. It is important for websites hoping to minister in creative access countries to be politically neutral, culturally sensitive, free of damaging information and cautious about the image that is presented and terms used. Also bandwidth needs to be conserved (as connections are frequently slow and sometimes people pay per MB for downloads and surfing) and the use of large graphics, sound or video needs to be carefully thought through. With these caveats the Internet is a great means of praying for, encouraging and training isolated Christian believers in creative access countries. The "how to" of this will unfold later in this paper.

**Internet Evangelism In The Missions Context**
Evangelism can effectively take place in chat rooms, by email, through friendship evangelism in email discussion groups, and through the gospel presented on web

pages and in dozens of other online avenues. Tony Whittaker of web-evangelism.com has extensive resources and his web-evangelism guide can be found at http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/webguide.htm. The use of anonymous or pseudonymous email addresses makes web evangelism possible even in creative access countries. Follow-up can be dome by sending lessons by email and enabling converts to download a bible and discipleship resources. (see http://www.aibi.ph/abi/gospel1.htm). As with all evangelism, integrity is a must. "Spamming", aggressive pop-ups, and other approaches are unappreciated by most visitors and should not be part of web-evangelism. The unique thing about web-evangelism is how specific and focussed it can be made to be. Years ago I heard a statistic that at any one moment in time generally two-percent of any audience is at the point of conversion and 'ready" to receive Jesus. I have found this true in my own evangelistic preaching and recently found that same two percent holds for Billy Graham crusades as well. Now two-percent of the Internet is a LOT of people. That means that on any given day ten million people online are at the point of conversion. By the strategic use of the self-selecting nature of Internet audiences you can reach just this "two-percent". By titling your page so that it only appeal to people who want to make a decision and making sure it comes up well in the search engines you can communicate solely to those about to make a decision for Jesus. My evangelism page is simply called "How To Become A Christian" and targets those who want to become a Christian but don't know how. It is read by thousands of people each year who have typed "how to become a Christian" in a search engine and dozens give their life to Jesus (in 1997-1198 500 people a year made decisions for Christ on this simple web page). You can even target very specific groups – say with a web page in Hindi with a testimony and a specific title that will show up in the search engines and attract those on the point of conversion. The Internet has also begun to be much more supportive of non-English scripts such as Tamil, Japanese and Chinese. It is quite possible to be a full-time and very productive Internet-based personal evangelist working solely with "ready to convert" enquirers after the gospel!


**The Internet As Missions Exposure**

Do you want to safely expose some bible college students to dialogue with Muslim clerics? Give them an anonymous email address and let them loose on the sites run by Muslim apologists. Do you want to teach tact in witnessing? Put your students in chat rooms. Do you want a youth group to dig into the Scriptures? Set them the task of answering questions online and they will be forced into doing the research for the answers. On the Internet missions candidates and bible college students can be involved with people from all cultures and belief systems and get exposure to both the friendly and the hostile with little risk of actual physical harm and in an environment where the mistakes won't ruin the ministry. Like all forms of mission exposure it needs to be supervised by an experienced missionary and planned in advance. It can also be integrated into traditional mission exposure trips as part of the preparation before arriving in the foreign country.


**Study Cells, Email Groups and Online Communities of Interest**

One of the great challenges of cyber-ministry is to bring people out of individual isolation into online groups and eventually into face-to-face communities of faith. Students at the Asian Internet Bible Institute are encouraged to find other students in their area and to form study cells discussing the material together and praying for each other. Generally one individual will the facilitator and motivator in gathering the others together. Communities can be intentionally formed through online discussion such as YahooGroups and the new Christian-based InJesus.com which among other things provides the online classrooms for the AIBI. Such discussion groups can be used for a wide variety of purposes such as theological discussion, personal sharing and prayer points, a discipleship group, online classrooms, coordinating a geographically dispersed project or team, sharing information among churches in a local area, community organizing around a cause, policy formation etc. Most successful online communities have between 40 members minimum and 600 members maximum. Below 40 members discussion tends to be occasional. After 600 members the traffic is so large that people start unsubscribing. Good communities are managed by "moderators" who are tactful and wise and know how to start, guide and terminate discussions. There are many testimonies to how such online discussion groups have proved an enormous source of support and encouragement to isolated missionaries, lonely clergy and busy believers. [Technical notes: By using CGI and Perl scripts it is quite easy to set up guestbooks, chat rooms, discussion boards, reliable secure scripts can be found at: http://nms-cgi.sourceforge.net/ . The latest community trend is the weblog commonly known known as "Blogs" see www.blogger.com. If you really get into blogs you can Use Movable Type for a dynamic weblog experience. For larger communities I recommend Xoops (xoops.org) which is a free, easy to install PHP/MySQL web portal system that has proved very useful for our Student Center). ]


**Online TEE and Pastor Training**

Theological education by extension has been around for many years in the missions context, in correspondence schools like ICI and through missionary radio follow-up from say FEBC and HJCB. The logical next step is to create online bible colleges. This is what I am doing with the Asian Internet Bible Institute (www.aibi.ph). The proliferation of Internet cafes in the developing nations means that web-based training is now accessible by pastors in practically every small town in Asia, without them having to own their own computer. Compressing study material into zip files and ebooks can minimize the cost of using icafes. This enables a 300-page training module to be downloaded in five minutes or less. Study materials can printed out in the icafe or just read offline on the computer screen. The AIBI produces a CD of the materials as well as distributing them online. AIBI students seem to fall into a number categories –pastors in remote areas who cannot access conventional forms of training, small denominations needing a low-cost training option they can easily implement, busy Christians who want to study at their own pace and time and who are comfortable with the Internet and bible students using AIBI material to supplement their studies. Another category is also emerging - Christians who simply don't want to fight the traffic in Manila for 2 hours to get to a conventional classroom! This is an increasing reality in Asia's mega-cities. Cyber-learning is still relatively new and many are cautious or fearful of the technology

but it has the potential to provide a low-cost and very practical educational alternative or Christians, particularly here in Asia. The challenge of web-based TEE is student management, databases, and in making effective use of online classrooms. Good database programmers, and a web-savvy Christian educator, are the essential parts of the team. The AIBI can be found at: http://www.aibi.ph/.

## Networking Missions Specialists

Missions specialists and project teams can be coordinated using free, easy to use technology such as email lists, discussion groups, groupware and web-portal software so that say a linguist in Pakistan can co-ordinate with a printer in Hong Kong and a funding church in the USA to produce a gospel tract in a tribal language. Discussions can be held between a dispersed team with each member receiving a copy of the emails that fly back and forth so that highly specialized personnel can consult on numerous projects without leaving home. These technologies can be made secure through strict membership criteria and in some cases by encryption of emails. I have used these technologies particularly in gaining prayer cover and in facilitating partnerships towards reaching a common objective such as the evangelization of a certain UPG. Task groups can be co-coordinated by using an online calendar with project events and deadlines, if you don't like CGI calendar scripts try using www.calendars.net. Email groups are particularly useful when they are focussed on a specific topic e.g. "missionary member care" or a specific project "reaching the XYZ tribe". Successful lists have a very clear purpose, are factual and concise and have a positive tone, which is set by a committed team coordinator. In addition to email groups there are numerous networking and resource sites for missions that can be of enormous help in finding partners, information, and even funding for initiatives. Brigada is perhaps the best known of these (http://www.brigada.org) and a helpful list of missions links can be found at: http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/misslinks.htm

## Online Mentoring, Counselling And Discipleship

This connecting of people with common interests plays out in mentoring missionaries and pastors and in online counselling and discipleship. A young missionary in a remote area can develop an email mentoring friendship with a more senior missionary, which can be a significant boost to the pastoral care of that missionary. Online leadership development has been attempted by mentorlink.org and church-task-force.org among others. My observation is that in cyber-space more informal mentoring takes place than formal structured mentoring and mentoring tends to emerge out of a rapport developing between two people online and then extending into a deeper relationship.

Online counselling and discipleship has been a controversial issue with some saying it should not even be attempted. Proponents of brief therapy, solution-focused therapy and cognitive therapy seem to be open to the possibilities, while more talk-intensive psychotherapies remain generally opposed. Various New Age therapies, personal coaching and motivational seminar speakers have adopted the Internet even offering

individual spiritual mentoring online. One coaching and training email list has over 1700 members. Career counselling has made extensive use of computers and online testing and counselling and is probably the most computerized segment of the counselling profession. Myers-Briggs and other personality tests can be administered online and staff selection procedures streamlined.

In the mission context a missionary can raise a personal issue with the mission counselor and get some online advice, and then, if needed, arrange for a visit to or from the counselor. Thus email access to competent counselors can help missionaries to deal with issues and irritations - without accumulating the stress until a face-to-face meeting at the next staff conference. This is very valuable in and of itself. The mentoring functions can be used in leadership development programs, pastoral training and in discipling new converts in creative access countries. Cyber-counselling is not a full replacement for face-to-face counselling but in many situations it will be a much welcome relief and better than no counselling or support at all.

## Christian Community Internet Cafes

The community Internet café is gaining acceptance as a mission strategy and a form of holistic development ministry in bridging the digital divide. Andrew Sears of AC4 and Dr. Josias Conradie of WIN International are well-known as innovators in this area. The Association of Christian Community Computer Centers (http://www.ac4.org). is an organization founded to assist in the use of icafes by churches and missions among others. In missions the Southern Baptists have used icafes as outreaches and teaching centers with some success and I have read excellent reports of the success of icafes as missions venues in Brazil, Thailand and Indonesia where they provide community Internet access and teach English and various computer courses. This strategy seems to work best in mid-sized urban communities in remote areas where an icafe is a welcome addition to their infrastructure.

I am attempting to take this one step further and use icafes as a self-funding sending strategy for teams of Filipino missionaries going into Muslim UPG's. An Internet café of twenty computers can support between 4-6 Filipino missionaries at an acceptable living standard for their area of ministry ($200 a month). Computers donated from Hong Kong will be used to set up three such icafes initially with a further 27 icafes envisaged over a five year period, Lord willing and providing. The icafe provides a point of community contact, a venue for web-based distance education and income for the team - as in Asia support levels from traditional sources are often inconsistent. All members of the team are expected to be computer-literate but only one will be an actual IT specialist looking after the computers, the others will be church planters, community workers and educators. This requires team based, on-field decision-making structures as advocated in a recent edition of IJFM and which will be outlined later in this paper. Further information can be obtained by emailing <johned@aibi.ph> and readers of IJFM can subscribe to an online discussion group on the use of icafes in missions by sending a blank email to: <strategic_cafes-subscribe@MyInJesus.com>.

**Other Applications**
There are numerous other applications being explored. These include distributing Palm PC's, loaded with development and educational material to remote communities (p3international.org), justice and community organizing via email, mercy ministries and relief efforts coordinated through a web-site, computer distribution to bridge the digital divide, online church consulting and so forth. The fertile imaginations of mission-minded Great Commission Christians are finding innumerable ways to minister to the nations using computers.

**Part Two - Moving Into Cyber-Missions**

What then should a missionary society do to take advantage of the strategic opportunities and low-cost advantages of cyber-ministry? This next section is how I think cyber-missions can best be implemented within the operating procedures of a contemporary missionary society.

**Integrating Cyber-Missions With Conventional Missions**
Cyber-mission works best when it is in active synergy with more conventional forms of mission. For instance a convert via web evangelism can be referred to a church in his or her area, or a student at the AIBI may want to articulate into a local bible college. Taking care of these transition points is a large and critical part of the task of the cyber-missionary.  The best way this synergy can happen is if cyber-ministries are a department of a larger mission and are headed by a Field Director-Cyberspace.
It is granted that cyber-missionaries could simply be incorporated into existing teams, so a team reaching Thailand could contain a cyber-missionary doing web-evangelism in Thai. But this would probably lead to much unnecessary duplication with each field area setting up its own computers and cyber-outreach. Since the Internet has it own unique working conditions, sub-culture and approach to ministry it should be considered as a separate field for front-line ministry. Cyber-mission is thus probably best organized as a separate department within the mission, but with extensive links to all the more traditional fields.

Cyber-ministry also defies traditional boundaries and definitions of whose field is whose. An evangelistic website may deal with people from Kenya, Myanmar and Brazil all on the same day. Except for websites in a particular local language, it is almost impossible to geographically confine such a ministry. Hyperlinks create partners, and alliances are formed on the Internet that would seldom exist on the field. Thus the Cyber-Missions Department will be the "fuzzy boundary" of the mission and the place where many of its possible linkages to other nations and organizations may well first develop.

A Cyber-Missions department does not just need computer technicians. It also needs passionate evangelists, careful bible teachers and sensitive prayer warriors. The Internet is simply a medium for the expression of all the gifts of the Spirit not a "gift" itself. That said, the WWW is a unique ministry space with a unique sub-culture and conditions of service. Cyber-missionaries need a definite calling and the ability to sit in front of a computer eight hours a day, three hundred days a year. Cyber-ministry looks

easy at first but in fact few people last more than three months in "full-time service" online. The requirements on human concentration and patience are immense and discouragements and weariness abound. Results rarely come as quickly as initially expected. People occasionally disparage cyber-ministry saying, "you aren't a real missionary, you just play with computers". The online environment can be emotionally hostile, and there are technical breakdowns. In fact it is just like any other form of missionary service! I advise cyber-missionaries to have some face-to-face ministry as well, as the lack of warm human contact can also be a very draining part of the challenge, especially for extroverts.

A Cyber-Missions team should contain, or have access to, a computer technician and a database programmer. Most of the other staff should be computer literate ministry personnel whose primary calling is non-technical (evangelism, teaching, mercy). The Cyber-Missions Team should have its own goals, budget, vision statement, and planning and be semi-autonomous. Where possible it should have its own physical space and be sufficiently separate so it is not invaded by other staff wanting their computers repaired. I spend a lot of time saying to people "No, I don't fix computers" and this needs almost to be a sign outside the door! Cyber-mission **should not** be set up as part of the administration department handling donor databases etc. While administration and cyber-mission both use computers they have little else in common and are very different in ethos and vision. Ministry in cyberspace needs its own space and recognition as a pioneer frontline ministry. Staff should be selected carefully and should be biblically trained pioneer missionaries and have at least two years of extensive experience with the Internet.

A note of caution: There is some danger of the Cyber-Missions department being portrayed as the "glamour team". Glamour tends to attract people who are there for the image, and who leave after a few months when reality sets in. Secondly it will develop jealousies among other mission staff, who nearly always suspect that money spent on technology is 'wasted".  This tension can be minimized by getting donated equipment (and letting people know its donated) and by conceptualizing cyber-missions firstly as a "means" for pioneer ministry with a spiritual and evangelistic emphasis rather than as a trendy technological addition to existing programs.

What about the alternative – making the entire mission a cyber-mission? At the moment there are certain disadvantages especially in applying for funding and in recognition among peers as cyber-mission has not yet been validated and accepted. I think cyber-missions are best nurtured inside conventional missionary societies for another five years or so before cyber-missionary societies are formed on a wider scale. Specialist cyber-missions can be set up just like there are specialist radio ministries and specialist tract distribution societies. It is a valid way forward. However anyone setting up such a mission should be passionate about networking the ministry into other efforts in the Kingdom or much of its effectiveness will be lost.
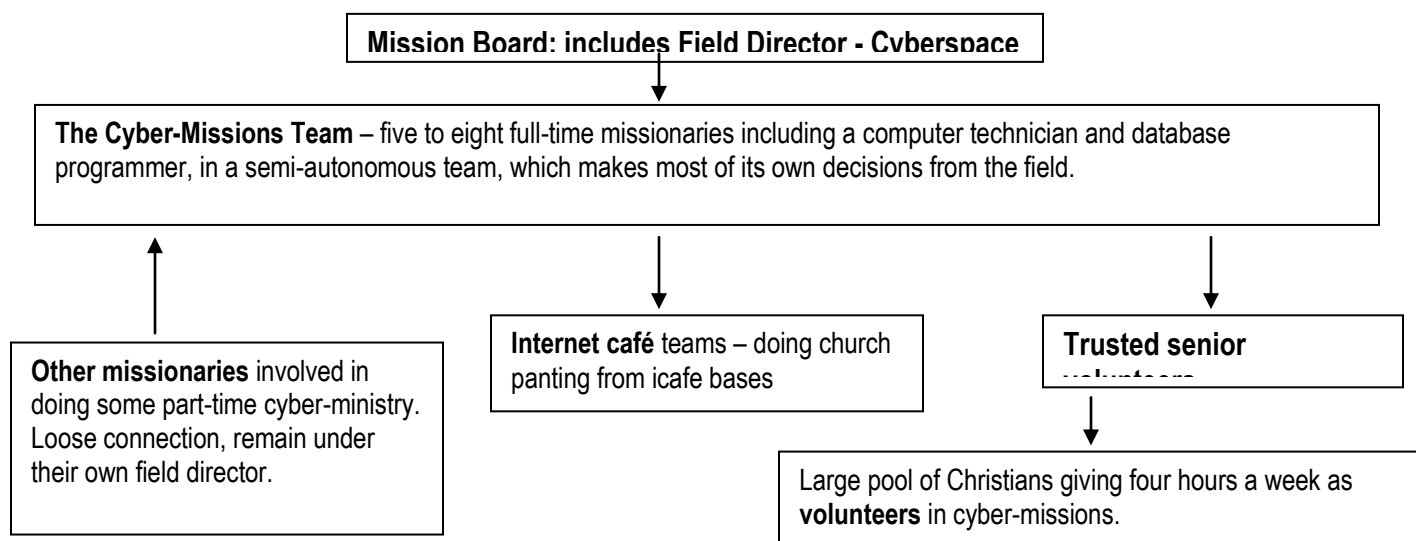
**Implication For Mission Structures**
The connected, egalitarian, self-navigating world of the WWW creates a culture that is highly independent, so most cyber-missionaries will not fit easily into a traditional

missions bureaucracy. On the other hand cyber-missions is technical, somewhat fixed in a physical place where the computers are, and does demand continuous steady daily application to the task. You can spend a day looking for a missing comma in a script that runs the website. Cyber-mission is a free wheeling pizza and coffee world that keeps strange hours, but it is also a technical and precise world.  It is too unconventional for the administrative types and too nerdy for the gung-ho radicals and thus falls somewhere between the two main types of mission structures today.

Thus the best structures for cyber-missions are those which give acknowledgement to fairly specialized folk. Good cyber-missionaries tend to be highly independent, focussed, disciplined, intelligent, technically minded and sometimes quite nerdy. They tend to be the NT type category of the Myers-Briggs test – particularly the INTJs. They have their own wavelength and when this is respected they can be built into exciting and highly productive teams.

Because of the current popularity of the Internet there is the possibility for a structure involving hundreds of volunteers coordinated by a central team of permanent staff. The central staff team would strategize and direct the cyber-ministry as a core group, other missionaries in the same mission who were interested could do "some Internet ministry" and perhaps lead a bible class online, and a large team of volunteers could do web graphics, man chat rooms, help with translation and answer enquiry emails, forwarding more complex matters to mission staff. I envisage a Cyber-Missions Department looking a bit like the following flow-chart:

| Mission Board: includes Field Director - Cyberspace |
|---|

**The Cyber-Missions Team** – five to eight full-time missionaries including a computer technician and database programmer, in a semi-autonomous team, which makes most of its own decisions from the field.

**Other missionaries** involved in doing some part-time cyber-ministry. Loose connection, remain under their own field director.

**Internet café** teams – doing church panting from icafe bases

**Trusted senior volunteers**

Large pool of Christians giving four hours a week as **volunteers** in cyber-missions.

The above structure is also well adapted to the Two-Thirds World context and the sending of national missionaries. Here in the Philippines potential Filipino missionaries sometimes find themselves alienated by the traditional selection process, with its possibility of personal rejection, which they see as devastating. With a large pool of volunteers the cyber-missions team can operate by invitation, rather than by "selection". Volunteers who prove their mettle would be invited to further responsibility and finally

onto fulltime staff as colleagues in the ministry. This operating by invitation is more relational and accepting and thus more suited to Asia. Thus the ideal structure for a cyber-missions department would a semi-autonomous team, consisting of full-time staff, part-time contributors and numerous volunteers, and operating by invitation on a relational basis, with its own budget, vision statement and planning. But who should lead such an enterprise?

**The Field Director – Cyberspace**

The Field Director – Cyberspace should be a mature missionary with high-level leadership and networking skills and a good technical and theological background. He or she should be able to keep the team together and focused on the task, not lost in making minor technological improvements or absorbed in online theological disputes. He or she would also be a champion for cyber-ministry in the organization. The Field Director-Cyberspace has to have a detailed on-the-ground awareness of conditions in the area of ministry and the needs of the local churches that they are ministering to so the most relevant and useful online materials are developed ensuring that the Cyber-Missions department is a servant of the national churches that the mission is growing.

(For this reason my ideal location for a cyber-mission would be in Singapore or a similarly well-wired city in a developing nation. If located in the USA there would tend to be inaccurate perceptions of field conditions and the technological challenges of the recipients.)

It is not absolutely necessary for the Field Director-Cyberspace to have a computing degree as that is more the province of the technical staff. First and foremost the Field Director-Cyberspace must be a visionary with a huge missionary heart and the ability to manage, delegate to, and receive advice from, field missionaries and IT experts.

Finally the focus of the Field Director needs to be on the church, and on the unreached, not on the Internet. The people visiting the website have a face and a culture and are Tibetans or Sikhs or Malay Muslims and it is these people that are the object of the ministry – not a technology. The Field Director needs to see the role as not just running a computer department – but being a pioneer missionary to unreached people groups.

**Conclusion**

Cyber-missions is going to happen, in fact it has begun to happen in the far-flung corners and on the innovative edges of mission. The mustard-seed has been planted. How can it grow best? I would like to see a consultation held among missions on how best fund, plan and implement cyber-missions as a form of front-line pioneer ministry. Out of that conference I would like the major missions to set up cyber-missions departments, linked and networked to each other with high-levels of external and internal cooperation. Also specialist cyber-missions should be set up and take their

place along with the other specialist missionary societies and hopefully in cooperation with other church and mission agencies. Cyber-missions is an adventure, and like all real adventure it has an uncertain outcome, and lots of risks, challenges and question marks. But the Internet is a great way to share the gospel, is incredibly effective and astonishingly inexpensive. Cyber-mission is complex, but it can be done and is being done successfully. Cyber-mission delivers results, and it can deliver those results in places where we cannot get any by conventional means. To use a saying from solution-focused brief therapy: "If it works – do more of it! ".

# Bridging the Digital Divide
**How one Toronto mission is bringing computer literacy to inner-city kids**.

By Denyse O'Leary | posted 8/8/01

"Forget adults. Focus on children," a business executive told Rick Tobias, director of Toronto's Yonge Street Mission (YSM).

Tobias's original plan had been to teach impoverished adults and single moms computer literacy so they could get jobs. But when Tobias asked businesses if they would hire YSM's grads, they laughed. They told him bluntly that a lack of white-collar social skills—never mind computer literacy—barred most poor people from employment in Toronto's silver and gold office towers.

What to do? Taking the business community's counsel to heart, Tobias decided to shift his focus to younger students, who could break the cycle of socioeconomic depression in their community.

Named after Toronto's most famous street, the Yonge Street Mission has for more than a century served the urban poor—everyone from newly arrived refugees to homeless people who sleep on city grates during the winter. Most of YSM's clientele live in southeast-central Toronto, an area dominated by Regent Park, a subsidized housing development with a 50 percent unemployment rate.

Regent Park looks like a prison without bars—it doesn't need them. The children here face steep odds against finding living-wage employment in the wired world. They have 66 percent less access to computers than other children in Toronto. Teachers try hard, but poor schools throughout Canada seldom have enough money for classroom computers.

Canada's situation mirrors that of the United States. A 1998 study by the U.S. Department of Commerce worried that "while computer penetration has increased nationwide, there is still a significant 'digital divide' based on race, income, and other demographic characteristics." For example, 51 percent of U.S. households own computers, but the numbers decrease to 28.7 percent among inner-city African Americans and 31 percent among Hispanics.

Going from computerless homes to computerless classrooms, many children are being educated for irrelevance to the 21st century economy. And irrelevance of any kind has a devastating effect. "By the time our children hit grade 5, they are emotionally dropping out of school," Tobias says, "and by the time they hit grade 10, they have dropped out, period." He hopes that introducing youths to computers at an early age will help reverse those trends.

Earning a Bright Future
When Tobias marketed his retooled computer-literacy program—providing hardware, training, and software for elementary students—both business and local educators were

enthusiastic. td Securities, the Toronto-Dominion Bank's stockbrokerage arm, became YSM's prime partner, helping to build and fund a computer lab. Microsoft Canada chipped in with free software for the lab and for graduates of the program. Dozens of business people volunteer with the program as well.

YSM began cautiously in 1999 with a 12-week course that covered word processing, database, spreadsheet, graphics, and typing skills. Kids who passed a final exam got a refurbished Pentium computer to take home, loaded with up-to-date software.

"We talk about it as a learn-and-earn program," Tobias says. "We do not tell the kids we are giving them a computer. We tell the kids they are *earning* a computer."

Rachel, 13, is excited about the prospect of receiving a home computer. She had tried using computers but did not get far because she did not know how to type, a skill she is now learning at the mission.

Julie, 11, drifted into the program with a friend and stayed, determined to get a computer. She says a computer with Internet access would help put her in touch with the world outside Regent Park. "If I do a project I can get information. I can also get information from my friends and my cousins," who are scattered through Vietnam and the United States.

YSM has graduated five classes to date, with 176 out of 200 students passing, and has placed computers in more than 150 homes. The program's success makes the mission the largest supplier of information technology in the neighborhood. The lab has recently added a six-week Internet course. Passing students (and their families) will get ten years of free Internet access at home, courtesy of the Royal Bank and AOL-Canada, to see them through school.

The Ultimate Test
When *Christianity Today* visited Yonge Street Mission recently, the computer classes started late so students could attend a school-sponsored antiviolence response rally—sparked by a shooting death near the elementary school. The lab is directly across the street from Regent Park, behind YSM's used clothing store, several doors down from an abortion clinic, and half a block from a small park "owned" by career drunks and drug users.

The program is bursting with kids, mostly of Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and south Asian origin. When one boy tried to sneak a friend in, coordinator April Binnie told him that the friend could listen but there were no available computers.

The fourth- through sixth-grade class was learning to build Web pages. They peered intently as a volunteer from a local Web design company showed them how to capture an image file and place it on a Web page.

The seventh- and eighth-graders were eagerly tackling a graphic-arts assignment: Choose a corporate logo and reproduce it in ClarisWorks. As Binnie and a volunteer

circulated and offered suggestions, there was no "acting out," just a low, continuing hum from the workstations.

Before earning his computer, Marlon, 12, had to go "all over" to access the Internet. Now, with his own machine, he's building a Web page. He looks forward to being able to use the Internet at home: "If I have projects, I could do it right at my house instead of staying at school a long time."

YSM does not, as a matter of policy, directly proselytize the children, who are mostly Muslim or Hindu. More subtle forms of evangelism are not discouraged, though. The word-processing exercise, for example, offers the students the chance to adorn the text of 1 Corinthians 13 with color printing and artwork—and the best examples are prominently displayed.

So far, Tobias and his staff are pleased with the way the program is working. "Teachers in our community now tell us that the kids coming out of our lab teach not only the other students but the teachers," he says. "All of a sudden, they go from being stigmatized and not doing very well to having a skill even the teachers don't have."

YSM's goal is to position poor kids for a shot at well-paying jobs. Toward that goal, a course in computer rebuilding and repair is also in the planning stages.

"This computer lab runs as a prime model of what can happen when faith communities and businesses partner together," Tobias says. One key difference: In Canada, the "digital divide" is driven by income, not race. Thus the political risks for businesses that get involved may be lower.

The ultimate test of YSM's computer lab is not whether students are online. It is whether business will really hire them four to five years from now for career-starting summer jobs. So far, several supporting companies, including td Securities, have said yes. Tobias says YSM eventually will provide a job-etiquette course for applicants, to teach critical skills that students do not learn at home or school.

"It will take five or ten years to know the full impact," he says. "But what we know already is that our kids are doing better than before. The teachers are excited. Those are good enough outcomes for us at this stage."

**Denyse O'Leary** is a journalist in Toronto and author of the forthcoming book Faith@Science: Why Science Needs Faith in the 21st Century (J. Gordon Shillingford).

# The Fractalling Church
by William M. Easum

As we wind down the 20th century, we also bring down the curtain on two major forces that have shaped most of Protestant history: the Modern Age and Christendom itself. The loss of these two has renewed an intense passion for disciple making.

Observable science dominated the Modern Age. Physical matter represented the fundamental building block of the last 400 years. If science couldn't observe something, it didn't exist. Matter existed; spirit didn't. Battles raged between science and religion as each camp attempted to defeat the other or to bring it into line. Most everyone dismissed paranormal phenomena as science fiction. Science won the battle in the hearts of most people in the West. But with science's fading influence, we see a rising interest in spirituality.

Christendom has been the dominant culture of the West since Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire 1,600 years ago. The church and Christian values unquestionably dominated laws, educational systems, business, commerce and social interactions. Christendom as a culture actively promotes the Christian faith and often disparages or even persecutes expressions of other faiths or persons with no faith.

Throughout Europe, North and South America, and much of Africa, Christendom has been the dominant culture and institutional religion. For example, Ireland is mainly Roman Catholic. In the United States until 1960 (and in some regions even later), every public-school student participated in Christian prayer and heard scriptures read from the Christian Bible. Many countries' laws prohibited the sale of goods on Sunday, but not on the Jews' or Muslims' sacred days of Friday or Saturday. During the reign of Christendom, children in the United States and other countries grew up in a culture in which the church, school and family reinforced the values of Christianity for them.

Children received mostly the same inculcation from all three. With the disappearance of Christendom, Christianity no longer has a monopoly on spirituality. The disappearance of these two major aspects of Protestant history means that in many parts of the world, Christians find themselves in a culture much like the one in which Jesus lived, a time in which Christians can't assume any type of religious heritage or handed-down faith. Unlike in the world of the Reformers, we simply don't have much to confirm in our children.

However, as in the first century, more and more often baptism now occurs as an adult experience. In the modern world, 85 percent of all baptisms took place before the age of 18. In the 21st century, 85 percent are likely to be baptized after the age of 18. We cannot label as a "second reformation" our era of moving people from pagan spiritualism to Christianity -- something Protestants have never experienced and Catholics have forgotten.

In the wake of these two losses, four shifts are occurring in those churches learning how to make disciples in a world like the first century:

1. From a mechanical view of reality to an organic view. Machines are managed; organisms are nurtured. Machines need mechanics; organisms need gardeners. Machines are local and isolated; organisms are global and connected. Tom Bandy and I wrote about this at length in Growing Spiritual Redwoods (Abingdon Press, 1997).

2. From an emphasis on volunteerism to servanthood. Volunteerism is based on the church's programmatic needs; servanthood is based on the individual's gifts. Volunteers give whatever time or energy they wish to give, usually with little or no training or accountability. Servants give based on a passion to live out their gifts on behalf of the spiritual DNA of the church. Servants are willing to be trained, mentored and held accountable.

3. From volunteer coordinators to facilitators of lay mobilization. Volunteer coordinators manage the programmatic needs of the church by recruiting anyone willing to donate some time or be elected to an office or position. Facilitators of lay mobilization design and manage a process based on the DNA of the church and on the gifts of called and accountable servants. Volunteer coordinators place individuals into jobs and positions the church needs filled. Facilitators of lay mobilization help people discover their gifts and match them to an existing ministry, or resource them to begin a ministry that fits their gifts.

4. From a command-and-control style to permission giving. Command-and-control characterizes a centralized, top-down, hierarchical, bureaucratic way of controlling everything that happens, as if one operated a machine. Permission giving occurs when an organization functions out of its DNA, and each person (each cell) can freely live out his or her spiritual gifts without having to ask permission, as long as that ministry enhances the DNA.

Leaders develop processes whereby people discover their spiritual gifts and can live them out without having to get permission from some centralized authority.
The impact of these shifts is changing the way effective churches make disciples. Merely making disciples no longer suffices. With the disappearance of Christendom, it is imperative that churches make disciples who make disciples. As in the first century, multiplication of new believers emerges as more important than addition. But how can we do this?

1. Churches must discover their DNA. DNA refers to the mission, vision and values of a church. Mission tells us what the church exists to do. Vision shows how it will accomplish the mission. Values describe the boundaries within which people can freely live out their spiritual gifts without asking for permission. In today's out-of-control, fast-blurring world, where all of the rules are changing and major pieces of

history are disappearing, churches must take a good long look at themselves and rediscover why God put them here.

2. Churches develop a process that embeds this DNA in every cell (person) and every level of the congregation. Everything aligns around the DNA. Every action must enhance and expand the DNA. The pastor becomes the "keeper of the DNA" instead of a chaplain. The staff embeds the DNA throughout the church instead of doing all the ministries. As a result, every leader and action replicates the DNA. Thus, the measure of leaders is not what they do, but how well they ensure that the DNA is embedded throughout the church. Being spiritual role models proves more important than what one does. "To be" lists replace "to do" lists. Leaders must be clear about their own personal DNA in order to lead such churches.

3. Churches base ministry on individuals' spiritual gifts, and teams provide a permission-giving atmosphere of saying yes to new ministries as long as they enhance the DNA.Leaders develop processes whereby people discover their spiritual gifts and can live them out without having to get permission from some centralized authority. Accountability to the DNA replaces control by a group of church officials.

4. Embedding the DNA in every cell and level of the church forms the heart of this renewed emphasis on disciple making. The one-to-one addition type of evangelism gets replaced with what I call "fractalling discipleship."

5. Fractalling means the constant replication of something. Although the fractal is a recent discovery in the field of mathematics, the leaf represents the best way I know to explain the concept. On a leaf, a large vein runs down the middle, and smaller veins branch out from the large vein. Each of the smaller veins has even smaller veins branching out from it, and so on. Every part of the leaf seems to bear an exact resemblance to the whole leaf. No matter how much you magnify the leaf, the pattern repeats over and over. That depicts fractalling.

6. The Bible and history show many examples of fractal disciple making. Jesus spent most of his ministry embedding his DNA in 12 very diverse people. Each disciple had his DNA, but with each having a different gene structure, each of them embodied it differently. Instead of solely making disciples, Jesus taught his disciples how to make disciples who would likewise make disciples. Because he focused on equipping others to make disciples, we read this article today. Had he spent most of his time with the entire flock of 70 people who followed him around, Christianity would not have spread around the globe as it did. Jesus taught us that the role of a leader is to create an environment in which others can grow to be disciple makers. Pastors, your flock is not your church; it is that small group whom you can equip to become disciple makers.

A modern-day church that fractals is the New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu. Its mission statement is "to introduce people to Jesus, to help them become more like him, and to reproduce the process in others." I was at New Hope in March 1998.

Four thousand people were attending worship then. By the end of 1998, the average attendance was around 5,000.

New Hope is simply one among many such churches that has decided not to be hospices for the terminally spiritually ill or hospitals for the lifelong dysfunctional. They see themselves as churches that equip spiritually sick sinners to blossom into people like Jesus. This church and many others have rediscovered the secret of what it means to be the body of Christ.

William M. Easum is president and senior consultant of 21st Century Strategies, soon to be Easum, Bandy & Associates. He is the author of several best-selling books, such as Dancing with Dinosaurs, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers and Growing Spiritual Redwoods (co- author Thomas G. Bandy). Bill can be reached at easum@easum.com. His web site is www.easum.com.

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# Why Are Denominations Being Ignored?

**By John Edmiston**

Why do governments and industry prefer local area networks of churches to denominations? Why are missionary candidates often wary about joining denominational missions? Why are Christian schools and hospitals increasingly choosing to associate in interdenominational networks rather than along denominational lines? Here are a few of the more obvious reasons:

- The Bible clearly promotes unity over disunity and denominations are increasingly being seen as an inferior way of being Christian. This perception is held by Christians and non-Christians alike. Cooperation is the preferred metaphor and mode of being.
- Denominations in Australia mainly have their origins in ancient disputes in England, Europe or America. Disputes that happened before Australia was founded and which we want no part of. The "walls" between denominations are artificial to most Australians. Unfortunately strong minded individuals and groups within the church perpetuate old disputes and kept sectarianism alive.
- Government and industry do not understand or appreciate theological differences and are puzzled by them and the obstacles to constructive action they represent. They want to deal with everyone at once and not to have to factor into the equation something they don't understand.
- People outside of church circles, and even some in them, are bewildered by the denominational titles and have no idea who to go to and what to do. If they can bypass this confusing state of affairs they do.
- Clergy tend to have a wide range of administrative abilities from brilliant to woeful. This creates uncertain expectations in those dealing with them. Outside organisations tend to remember the bad experiences with the less administratively competent clergy and would prefer to deal with a theologically informed and administratively competent layperson.
- Related to this most people, even Christians, question "clergy interference" in the administration of schools, colleges, hospitals and universities and they are being dropped from the boards of such organisations in favour of theologically informed and administratively competent laypersons.
- Layers of administration and representation are being rapidly decreased in restructurings in both the public and private sectors. This has two effects (a) the desire to deal with as few layers as possible and to go straight to the local church or Christian school. (b) Denominations are made to look overly hierarchical by their structures and thus the idea that they are "outdated" and behind the times is confirmed in the minds of the observer.
- The evident gender bias of denominations makes them unacceptable to many in the community particularly women who would prefer to deal with other powerful and informed women. Women occupy many of the key positions in the public sector that churches deal with and so they endeavour to bypass the "unacceptable" denominational structures.

- Women probably give more financially to the church than men given that they predominate in the church and are increasingly present in the workforce. Their giving is not going to go to structures that they perceive as robbing them of opportunities to express their faith and they will support local churches leaving malestream denominational structures.
- Ordination is increasingly coming under fire as outdated, sexist, unscriptural or as the province more and more of the local church. Increasingly a Bachelor of Theology is being seen as just as good a passport to ministry as the laying on of hands of a bishop. Ordination is also being eroded by ministries outside of denominational structures such as Campus Crusade For Christ where non-ordained people are making a very significant impact for God through things such as the Jesus Film. Also functions such as conducting marriage ceremonies are no longer the province of ordained ministers of the gospel. Ordination is looking shaky although is the one of the main powers that denominations have. More on ordination later in the book.
- Christians find they like each other no matter what church the other person comes from. "Church Hopping" has had one good effect in removing many of the myths about other churches. It has thus eroded denominational identity. People feel they are Christians first and Baptists, Lutherans or Pentecostals etc. second.
- Many local churches are in a significant amount of theological, financial or administrative tension with their denominational structures and feel they would be better off without them. For instance the homosexuality debate and the possible ordination of homosexuals has caused a number of Uniting Churches of an evangelical or charismatic flavour to become independent of their denomination here in Australia. While many others struggle with they compromise they perceive in their denomination.
- The churches that have departed and become independent have not notably suffered as a result. Their "liberation" has been evident to others still in the system particularly those that feel they are paying an overly large portion of the denominational dues and which have the strength to be independent themselves.

**How Long Has This Been Going On For?**

The movements for Christian unity began late last century were given impetus by John Mott and David Du Plessis and gathered momentum after World War 2 when the Billy Graham Crusades got churches working together for a common cause and Christians learned how much they had in common. In my home state of Queensland the Brethren, Churches of Christ and Baptist churches have been at the forefront of inter-denominational missions. Their denominational structures of networked autonomous local congregations have certainly contributed to the easy adoption of inter-denominational practices. Strict, creedal, formal denominationalism was eroded and this wave ended in mergers of similar but struggling denominations the largest of which was the formation of the Uniting Church from the combined Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches. Still the denominational metaphor was intact, the denominations did not dissolve into networks they combined into new and "more sensible" denominations. This first wave was based on the interpretation of John 17

(Jesus prayer for unity) as being organic and structural unity. The second wave disputed this and saw unity as "koinonia" rowing a boat together, the common cause.

The "second wave" that I observed was "cautious networking" and was three fold. Firstly came the formation of the inter-denominational Brisbane College of Theology where most denominations have their clergy trained through the same body albeit with denominational distinctives intact. Secondly churches in small country towns were combining for evening services and occasional mission projects. And thirdly the Churches Working Together initiative of the mainline denominations brought pulpit sharing and the occasional combined service to Catholic, Anglican, Uniting and Lutheran churches. It also saw cooperation in local area networks to achieve goals in pastoral care, education and social services. The denominational metaphor was being replaced by the metaphor of local area network of believers in a very cautious fashion. This was helped along by a "theology of the city" which saw the city/local area as the organising unit . This theology can get quite complex and to explain it simply it is based partly on the fact that the epistles of Paul were written to local areas not individual churches or denominations.

The "third wave" I observed came from two sources. Firstly the Vineyard movement with its network of independent churches seeking God in a particularly appealing way for many. It had a new and attractive flavour about it and while it did not catch on in a very big way in Australia it created a hunger for a similar way of being Christian here. The Crosslinks network of independent churches seems to have its genesis at least partly in the Vineyard movement and the gentle management philosophy of the late John Wimber. Secondly the task of churches reaching youth created a crisis that has had three remarkable expressions. Firstly Scripture Union came up with the idea of placing church funded chaplains in government high schools. To get this past the State Education Department which did not want denominationally biased chaplains Local Chaplaincy Committees had to be formed representing all the churches around a given high school . They then funded the worker in the school who was recruited by Scripture Union and approved by the LCC on negotiated guidelines that were also approved by the Education Department. So far in Queensland over 70 such chaplaincies have been formed and this is increasing at a fast rate . Churches are working together in local area networks and funding a common worker. While this is still quite peripheral to church life in Queensland it has required much negotiation and cooperation so that the process of chaplaincy formation has been a huge exercise in trust building between local churches. The second youth-related issue has been Religious Education in schools which used to be denominationally based with each denomination for instruction. Commonly smaller denominations banded together as "Other Protestant Denominations. " .With women RE teachers entering the workforce and increasingly busy local clergy it became impossible to find enough teachers so denominations did the sensible thing and started grouping together a bit. Eventually the idea of a common curriculum emerged negotiated between churches in the local areas such as Townsville West. Initially denominational distrust was at a high level and it took 6 months or more for these agreements to be put together. Last month a new Townsville West agreement was put together in a single meeting. The third youth related development was an outcome of the Youth For Christ combined youth rallies of the 70's and 80's and the Youth Alive rallies in Pentecostal

circles. Youth who met at these rallies networked along the lines of affinity and friendship and not along the lines of doctrine. Youth began to move around each others churches at such a speed that all youth ministry has become essentially inter-denominational. Youth pastors are now getting together regularly and networking frequently partly to keep track of their charges and partly to organise combined events. Denominations have little meaning in the world of youth work. In fact they come close to being nonsensical. Its one huge youth network - at least here in Townsville.

Other factors have certainly contributed to the collapse of the Berlin Wall of denominationalism. These factors include ridicule and persecution where Christians have suffered together in the face of a hostile world. Even the mild anti-Christian stance of the media has been a force making Christians feel that they are more together than apart. Christian bookstores, common books, commentaries and lexicons and Bibles, Christian radio and common Christian music have all been factors. Few denominations realise how close they have become. I lecture at two bible colleges one very Baptist and non-charismatic and the other very Pentecostal. They are under the impression that they are "totally different". Yet my lecture notes on Hebrews or Church History at the Pentecostal college would be perfectly acceptable at the Baptist college since both colleges use exactly the same references, notes and textbooks. If I changed the title page of the notes no-one would be the wiser.

## When Will The Battle For The Denominations Begin?

In management literature they have gone from being future-ists to "present-ists' and are asking "what unperceived change has *already* occurred that will define the future?" The collapse of denominations is such a change. Its happened. The battle is over. This book is in the past tense. It examples are from yesterday. I am not predicting anything I am rather describing what *is now* and trying to find the way forward. There will be no "battle for the denominations", no rearguard action to preserve the past; the troops have moved on – and in droves. So my question at the head of this section is (deliberately) misleading. The discourse of cooperation has been normalised and the discourse of denominationalism has been marginalised. In other words when people talk in denominational terms now they sound weird and behind the times***. It is no longer normal to be denominational any more than it is normal to be racist***. Increasingly denominationalism is being viewed as undesirable and even pathological within Christian circles. It is certainly no longer the favoured way of being Christian.

## What Has Replaced/Will Replace Denominations As The Means of Organising The Faith and Life Of The Churches?

Local area networks of churches will help us find faith and fellowship and task focused associations will organise our schools, hospitals, missionary societies and theological colleges. Larger networks will exist in matters of doctrine and styles of worship and even higher level organisations will co-ordinate the efforts of the schools, missionary societies etc. This has largely happened but is still happening hence the time ambiguity in the header.

**But Surely Some Tasks Will Still Belong To Denominational Structures Like The Training, Ordaining & Appointment of Clergy.**

1. The training of clergy is already being done inter-denominationally in all major denominations and a B.Th. from any one college will be accepted by the other denominations. Candidates moving between denominations generally only have to take a few subjects on denominational distinctives.

2. The appointment of clergy. Many Baptist churches and all independent churches simply advertise in the Christian newspapers and magazines when a pastor is needed or promote an elder in the church. Such appointments are just as functional as those made by denominational panels and in many cases even better as the participating church has more say and thus greater "ownership" of the decision.

3. Ordination is under fire and being seen as officious meddling in many cases. It is either never instituted (Churches of Christ) diminished in significance (many Third Wave churches) or relegated to the local church. Independent churches ordain simply by the laying on of hands of the elders in the congregation. Pastors so ordained seem to function just as well as those ordained by a bishop.

4. Discipline of errant churches is another supposedly denominational function. However it is simply not being done by the denominations and when it is done it is often done poorly. Even this can be done by networks. A successful restoration of a church in error was achieved when a network of pastors who prayed together helped one of their number back on track. No denominational "heavies" were involved and in fact they were remarkably absent from the process. Friends can help each other be accountable and to stay on track as "iron sharpens iron" and networked clergy are far less likely to fall than often isolated denominational clergy. Similarly correction of doctrine is being done more by Christian authors and Christian media than by pronouncements from denominational HQ. Creeds have become minimalist nine point affairs and something of the magnitude of the Westminster Confession would not be contemplated by any denomination today. Even in Catholic circles canon law is being increasingly resisted or ignored.

5. The sense of continuity, history and belonging that denominations provide is being replaced by allegiance to the Scriptures and to personal experiences of God. Allegiance can be to the local area network or the task focused organisation just as much as it can to a denomination. I find many people who describe themselves as YWAM-ers for instance and find their allegiance there rather than in events in Europe's past. Many Australians find it awkward to have an allegiance to a denomination like the Lutherans where the history is that of Germany in the 1500's. Perhaps that is why the Lutheran church in Australia has barely spread beyond the German sub-culture.

6. There is thus no function of denominational structures that I can think of that cannot be done as well or better by local area networks of churches or task

focused associations. Hierarchical denominational structures are simply unnecessary.

**Ok John, Back Off, You Are Sounding A Bit Too Hostile Here… Denominations Have Performed A Very Important Role And Will Well Into The Forseeable Future and Besides Thousands of People Have Died Fighting For Those Denominational Distinctives and Ways of Being Christian**….

I thought you would say that! Lets deal with the "martyrs" argument first. People have died fighting over all sorts of things. People have died fighting over their favourite football team. Probably someone has died fighting over a bus ticket. This just indicates the presence of a vicious tribalism that is prepared to kill those who believe and live differently. It says nothing about the rightness or wrongness of those so killed or the structures they used to organise themselves. That is not to say that such deaths were unworthy or in vain. However they should not dictate how Christians organise themselves today. The structures we use should be the best possible structures that help us with the following top priority tasks amongst others:

1. Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
2. Loving our neighbours as ourselves.
3. Developing a vital Christian community that lives the abundant victorious Christian life together in peace.
4. Fulfilling God's calling to make disciples of all nations.
5. Undertaking ministries of mercy and compassion to a hurting world.

Local area networks of churches undertook the first three of those tasks very capably during the first century AD and roving task focused missionary bands such as the one Paul led were responsible for evangelism, mission and the collection for the starving saints in Jerusalem – the last two tasks on our list. Denominations were not needed then and these five tasks were done as well or better than they have been done since. Denominational structures were never put in place by the apostles who were 'network hubs" rather than archbishops and popes. Denominational ways of being are a mixed blessing promoting stability on one hand and allowing tribalism in the body of Christ in the other. Their effect in stifling the more unusual but sometimes more vital aspects of the faith has been a high price to pay for order. When God orders nature it is with great variety and a harmony between the species. He did not plant all trees in rows or say "I like petunias therefore all flowers will be petunias". The animals are not filed from A-Z or kept isolated from each other. God's order is "beyond bureaucracy". Therefore if the Church is to reflect God's order it will be "beyond bureaucracy" and the traditional forms of denominational structures. Denominations are often half of the solution, an expedient structure created during a revival or reformation. There are better ways of organising ourselves that we can move towards. We now need to take the next step into new ways of being Christian that go beyond denominations.

# From Problem to Solution Focussed

Brief Therapy focuses on success rather than failure and on the future rather than the past. One of its central contentions is that the solution has nothing to do with the problem. Its practitioners seek to help clients by constructing solutions with them rather than analysing their problems. It is suggested that by continually rehearsing a problem, a client's past and future become bound up within that framework (see diagram below)

The Problem Focus
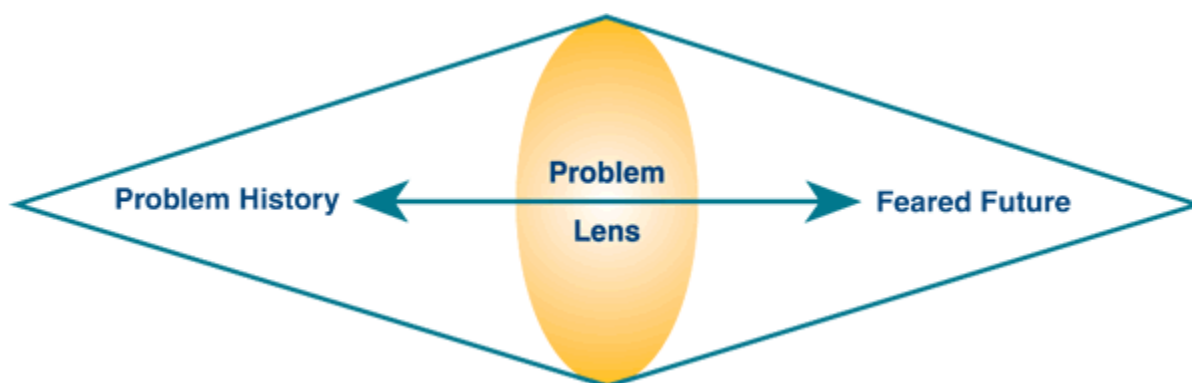


When clients "have a problem", it is as if they perceive their experience through a problem lens. Typically a client only sees significance in past experiences that are consistent with the present problem. They construct a problem history which reinforces their fears for the future.

# Solution-Focussed Teams

**John Edmiston**

**Moving Beyond The Problem And The Paralysis Of Analysis. Finding Solutions.**

**Going From Why to How**
**Going From Past To Future.**
**Going From Misery To Mission**
**Going From Blaming To Solving**
**Going From Analytical To Practical**

**Finding The Way Out Of The Desert**

**Catching People Doing Things Right**

**Being Vulnerable To One Another's Strengths**

**What Are We Doing That Is Good And That We Would Like To Continue Doing?**

**Drop What Isn't Working. Do What Is Working.**

**"Crowding Out" The Negatives With An Abundance Of Positives**

**Move From Rock To Rock To Cross The Stream. Don't Analyse The Stream.**

| **Problem-Focussed** | **Solution Focused** |
|---|---|
| Past | Future |
| Blames | Solves |
| What is wrong? | What is working? |
| What is weak? | What is strong? |
| Fixes machines | Fixes people |
| Analysis | Invention |
| Suspicion | Affirmation |
| Supervise people | Motivate people |
| Eliminates the bad | Strengthens the good |
| Hospital | Olympic team |
| Experts at surviving | Experts at winning |
| A few experts | Many contributors |
| Fear of disaster | Enthusiasm about the project and the team |
| Dreads anything new to cope with | Embraces and creates positive change. In control |
| In the trenches | |

**Problem-Focussed**
**Problem: Flat tire**
Find the nail.
Take nail to laboratory for analysis.
Determine the origin of the nail.
Sue the manufacturer
Start petition about nails left on roads
Appear on 60 Minutes
Contact City Council
38 clerical staff employed in new nail
detection section plus one nail inspector.
Receive bills from lawyers & laboratory.
File for bankruptcy.
Appear on 60 Minutes.

**Solution-Focussed**
**Problem: Flat tire**
Remove spare from boot along with jack
and tyre spanners.
Undo wheel nuts.
Remove flat tire.
Put spare on.
Tighten wheel nuts.
Drive home.
Watch 60 Minutes.

1. It is extremely natural for teams to adopt a problem-focussed approach especially in a bureaucracy.
2. Such teams exhibit a loss of energy due it to it being dissipated in analysis, blame, criticism and fear.
3. Such teams are frequently mildly to very unhappy.
4. Thus moving to a solution focussed approach releases energy and a general sense of well-being.
5. It also generates better solutions in the workplace.

## But That's Just The Way We Are...

Few people are actually truly content with working in a negative environment. Its just that adopting a whole new way of thinking and working seems "too hard" The fact is that being solution focussed frees up energy to get other work done and is easier than being problem focussed. It is also surprisingly easy to implement.

## Change What You See & Change What You Say

Only look at "the problem" long enough to solve it.
Create a "vision of a solution". Only speak about the problem long enough to define it.
Speak mainly about the good things and the solution that is underway.

## Drop What Isn't Working. Do What Is Working.

If you do what you have always done you will get what you have always got. Drop things that don=t work and replace them with things that do work. Old habits die hard.

## Being Vulnerable To One Another's Strengths

In a sports team you have those who can run fast and those who are accurate and those who have great strength - and you work to combine strengths. You don=t focus on weaknesses as much as on how to get the best out of everyone=s strengths. People are partners not problems. You trust them and rely on their strengths - you are "vulnerable" to the winger running fast or the goal-kicker being accurate. The coach does not come on field to kick the goal.

## "A Good One Warney" Catch People Doing Things Right

Top teams reinforce each other constantly. The approval of other team members is a powerful incentive to exceptional performance. Create an atmosphere where you are looking out for things to give a quick pat on the back about. These might include:
 Handling a difficult customer well.
Showing courage on a bad day.
Fixing up a nagging problem that annoyed everyone.

## Be Alert For The Winning Moment Or Strategy

Expect solutions to appear. Watch for the track in the desert. Look for the signs of a good solution. Sense opportunities. This might work.. - generate continual hopefulness.

**Applications To Urban Mission**

1. Urban mission can get bogged down in the problems of the city and in analysis rather than in looking for solutions. Look for the opportunities not just the causes.
2. Teams working in the city need to adopt a scanning of the horizon for solutions, particularly solutions given by God in Scripture.
3. Try turning the problem into a solution – e.g unemployment can be viewed as an available army of volunteers and people who can be trained.
4. The Holy Spirit is solution-focussed and Jesus was the most solution-focussed person of all. He seldom diagnoses but always heals! What solution would Jesus find right where you are working?
5. Concentrate on the pragmatics not the dramatics.
6. Fix the problem instead of fixing the blame. Remember the 4 R's of Resolve, Resent, Reject Revenge – and turn people to the positive and constructive rather than the blaming and vengeful.
7. We need to be vulnerable to one another's strengths, listen to one another's perceptions and solutions and honor one another's spiritual gifts.
8. No more "crab mentality"! Network widely and positively and bless your co-workers and even other organizations.
9. If it isn't working – then stop doing it – no matter how "sacred" and traditional it is. Church services in Latin won't work in the barrios!
10. If it is working – then do more of it – even if it's crazy, unusual or doesn't get much approval from head office.
11. Help communities to fill their time with positive, self-esteem building activities.
12. Ask the community questions like: "What are we doing that is good, that we would like to continue doing ? How can we do more of it?"
13. Teach communities to catch each other doing things right and encourage one another in development and mission.
14. Solutions come from people with the power to effect the change you want made. Find the specific person who can help you with your solution – a mayor, businessman, police chief or whoever and approach them personally and positively.
15. Let anger move you to solutions not into reactions and witch-hunts. Use your inner energy positively and in a faith framework of creativity and wisdom.

# 25 Biblical Strategies For Urban Ministry

## By John Edmiston

How did God's servants in Scripture minister to the city? What strategies and methods did they use that proved effective? This is a very brief overview giving you a smorgasbord of biblical models of urban ministry to choose from. You will then be asked to select an appropriate strategy and do some very basic planning. Of course the method you choose will depend on your calling, your resources and on the spiritual character of the city you are ministering to.

1. Intercession - as Abraham did for Sodom in Genesis 18 and Esther's fast in Susa..
2. Prophetic declaration - as Jonah ministered to Nineveh.
3. Political Involvement - as Daniel had a "wisdom ministry" in the city of Babylon. See also the article "A Biblical Perspective On Politics" later in this book.
4. Ministering to the city in a time of crisis when people are open to spiritual encouragement. Isaiah 37-39.
5. Ministering to the city at key moments in its history e.g during its foundation (David after taking Jerusalem), its reconstruction (post-exilic prophets), or times of drastic change and turmoil (Jeremiah).
6. Building religious buildings of such scale and grandeur that they become a point of renown, an attraction and a centre of community life e.g the construction of the temple and the cathedrals of Europe.
7. Involving the city in a large scale project for its own benefit but which needs God's help to be achieved e.g. Nehemiah building the walls of Jerusalem and the unity, sense of purpose, and joy in the Lord that resulted.
8. Creating songs that are sung in the cultural life of the city and become teaching instruments. David and the Psalms. Martin Luther, Charles Wesley.
9. Religious renewal and restoration of worship in the city by a converted city leadership as in Hezekiah's revival.
10. Short-term ministry teams going in to a large number of cities with power ministry "heal the sick, raise the dead & preach the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9&10). This prepares the way for a more thorough preaching of the gospel - Jesus later followed up and came to the cities.
11. Taking advantage of major community events as a point of proclamation as Jesus did with the Jewish festivals. Needless to say great wisdom is required in the employment of this strategy though successful ministry at the Olympics and Expo trade fairs has been accomplished without giving undue offense.
12. Social action - feeding the widows, helping the poor, healing the sick as the early Church did. (Acts 2-4)
13. Open worship that non-believers can see and take note of as when the early church worshipped in the Temple. Street worship teams and teams on beaches with guitars have a magnetism that draws inquiring people to the gospel.
14. Creation of a Spirit-filled community where there is evident love, wisdom and power. (Acts 2-8).
15. Preaching in the synagogues, places of prayer, and the local Aeropagus or place of discussion as Paul did in Acts.
16. Starting with those who were culturally closest to the speaker and had the best chance of understanding the message e.g. Paul and the Jews.
17. Moving into those networks that are most responsive to the gospel. When the Jews refused the message Paul then went to the Gentiles in the city. Paul seemed to

have a quite pragmatic view and did not waste much time on resistant areas but instead went where there was "an open door for effective ministry" ( 1 Corinthians 16:9)

18. Deliverance ministry and dealing with magic and the occult as a way of demonstrating the superior power of the gospel. (Acts 19:11-20)
19. Founding a teaching institution. Teaching from a central and accessible point in the city such as when Paul taught from the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus (Acts 19:9,10). or from his own rented quarters in Rome.(Acts 28)
20. Creating networks of churches fed from a central city so that the surrounding rural area is completely evangelised as Ephesus and its surrounding area was (Acts 19:9,10).
21. Appointing well-discipled "circuit preacher" pastors over the network as Paul did with Timothy in Ephesus.
22. Training urban leadership such as the Ephesian elders (Acts 20)
23. Hospitality to the network such as Philemon seems to have practiced. (Philemon 1:5,22)
24. Books and literature ministry - keeping information and encouragement flowing along the inter-city network. Dealing with specific issues in writing e.g. Paul's epistles.
25. Empowering house churches and networking them together so they did not become inward and isolated. Keeping the Christians in the cities in touch with each other and the Christians in other cities and networks. (See article on networks later in this book) This is part of the purpose of the greetings in Paul's epistles.

## Selecting Your Strategies

- Go through the above list and cross off those strategies that simply do not apply to your situation.
- Go through the remainder and group them as you see fit.
- Reflect on your own callings and gifting.
- Select a group of strategies that you can start to work with.
- Taking them one at a time list "Who, What, When, Where, How and Why" as in the example below.

### *Example: Strategy- Training Urban leadership*

Who - are the leaders I want to train?

What - will I teach them? What resources do I need to do the training?

When - will I run the training?

Where - will I hold the training?

How - will I conduct the training? Educational methods etc.

Why - am I doing this? Is God really in it?

After you have done this the optimal strategies for your ministry should become clear to you and you should have a few good plans that you can implement.

# Evangelism Is Not Working - by Mark Greene

Evangelism is not working
But it could be…

Here's a riddle:

When is the Church not the Church?
When is a Christian not a Christian
When is a minister not a minister?
When is the Holy Spirit not the Holy Spirit?

The answer to all four questions is essentially the same – the workplace.

Amongst all the huff and puff, wailings and gnashing of teeth about the state of the church in Britain, one central fact ahs been overlooked… the bulk of church-generated initiatives have nothing to do with the way people spend their the bulk of their waking hours. That's why over 50% of evangelicals have never heard a sermon on work… not one. How can we possibly pretend that the Church is supporting its people where they are when the vast majority have no support whatsoever for the way they spend 60 or 70% of their waking lives. And if it's true that most people think their work is spiritually inferior to the pastor's and the missionary's, if it's true that most people have very little idea why their particular work as secretary, bricklayer, stockbroker, housewife, engineer might be of significance to God then it's also true of evangelism.

In today's church evangelism is singing outside Tesco's, it's sketchboarding, it's acting in shopping precincts, it's inviting friends to seeker services, it's developing relationships with our neighbours, it's Alpha, it's lots of things. But one thing it isn't - it isn't about equipping the people of God to think Christianly, live Christianly and share Christ right where they are.. The one place people are not actively encouraged and equipped to make a difference is the place many people spend 50, 60, 70 percent of their waking hours. The one where Christian and non-Christian have to meet. The one place where the playing field is even, where Christian and non-Christian are subject to the same corporate culture, may have the same boss, the same pressures...the one place where the non-Christian can actually see the difference that Christ can make to a life - not for a couple of hours over dinner but over a couple of years for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty hours a week. The workplace.

Are many ministers inadvertently letting their zeal for evangelism and their desire to build a strong local church distract them asking how God might want to use their people outside the local context? There is a danger, I believe, that we will view church members exclusively in terms of how they can contribute to the local household of God rather than how they might also contribute to the growth of the kingdom of Christ, wherever he has placed them. And there is a danger that we will become too focused on getting non-Christians into church to hear the minister rather than into the kingdom of God by hearing the word.

The Church has done its research. It has concluded that fewer and fewer people know even the basics about the claims of Jesus, and so we are encouraged to build bridges to the unchurched, to go to the fringe and beyond, told that we need to learn to speak their language. Indeed we do. But the thrust of the response is to send us out on the highways and byways, to neighbours who on the whole we don't know very well and don't spend

that much time with. Meanwhile back in the workplace, the average Christian has already built bridges and crossed them, has already developed relationships and already speaks their co-workers' language. Warm contacts. Are we encouraging people to go and fish in pools and puddles when they are often sitting on a lake full of fish. The person who knows them well doesn't live next door, they work at the next desk.

This monthly series is designed to help put the word not only on the street but into the workplaces of Britain. After all, that's where you are and that's where the non-Christians are. And every month we'll be including some true stories from the front-line – so write, e-mail, fax in your stories of how God has used you in your workplace – in small and not so small ways. If your letter is printed then you'll receive a copy of Thank God its' Monday and if it's the best of the month then you'll receive not only the book but a video too. So do write in.

As you know, Britain's workplaces are filled with all kinds of people, with all kinds of problems - illness, fear of redundancy, adultery, grief, confusion, purposelessness, promiscuity, ethical conundrums, criminal negligence, racist hiring policies, dirty tricks and so on. People who need salvation. Oh, that we would encourage one another to see these little 'villages' and 'towns' as our mission fields. What a difference that would make to so many people - to be released into confident ministry just where they are. Nehemiah, Joseph, the Exodus midwives, Naaman's servant girl, Daniel, Ester, Lydia would have approved, I'm sure. After all, when it comes to witness in a pagan environment the Bible is very clear - leave it to the workers.


Mark Greene is Executive Director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity And the author of Thank God it's Monday, the video A Vision for Workplace Ministry and the forthcoming 50 Ways to Support the Workers Without Going Insane. Mark.Greene@licc.org.uk

# Structures for Mission in the Twenty-first Century: A Blueprint

## Introduction

More than one hundred forty missiologists and missionary practitioners gathered in June 1998 to think about mission. They represented a broad array of denominational identities, regional involvements, and particular missionary experience around the world. They proposed to think creatively concerning the future of Christian missions on the eve of the twenty-first century.

The congress was organized around eleven practical themes, assigned to eleven study colloquia. Our colloquium was assigned the task of thinking about structures for participation in mission.

## Commission and Principles

"Make disciples of all nations." We received the commission two millennia ago. Today the commission compels us into a new millennium. It is a moment of unprecedented challenge and thrilling opportunity.

What structures will enable our participation in the on-going mission of God? We believe that structures for mission in the twenty-first century must learn to manifest...

> *greater interconnectedness:* The missionary task of the church belongs to the entire church. We are therefore compelled to undertake it as particular players in a drama much larger than ourselves. A "corner" on mission does not exist; there exist only mutually accountable and complementary inter-relationships. We must imagine connections—structures from north and south, structures young and old, denominational boards and specialized agencies, interconnected in the redemptive work of Christ. We cannot go it alone.

> *wider participation:* Every baptized believer shares in the mission of Christ; this is a fundamental part of our identity. We undertake this mission joyfully and purposefully together—as a body, together in prayer, purpose, making decisions and carrying them forward. Our structures must ensure the wide, open and genuine participation of all they hope to serve, in a spirit of trust and modeling trustworthiness. We will not exclude anyone from the joy of participation in this task.

> *purposeful agility:* Structures are conditional, secondary, and human-made. Structures for mission are made for people in mission and not people to fit our structures. We must build structures suitable to our task, flexible in form, and agilely relevant in decision-making. We must permit our structures to grow, change and perhaps even to die. We refuse to be rigidly bound to what is; we propose openness to what might become.

> *fairer access to resources:* The missionary task of the church belongs to the entire church, but we have not shared its joy and responsibility equitably. Indeed we have too often understood it particularly as our own and reserved its direction for "our own kind." We must repent of painting ourselves into the center, where only Christ belongs. And we must build structures that share equitably at every level and

with every partner: information, deliberation, conversation, resources, money, decision-making, and power. The task will be served by building bridges and not fences, doors and not walls. We will share in this mission, or we will not exercise it authentically.

## Thinking about structures...

We attempted a dialogue about structures for mission. What is God doing in the world, in our estimation? How may we participate more effectively in God's mission? How may we structure our involvement appropriately?

Our conversation was lively and wide-ranging. We attempted a description of the task of mission and the context of mission in the world, picturing the result along a grid with two axes. Along the vertical axis we arranged descriptions of the church and the world as they might appear in the year 2020, in light of present trends. Along the horizontal axis we arranged the fundamental tasks of Christian mission, as we find them in the Bible. Structures for mission must be elaborated at the interface between these two axes—task and context. Our understanding of task provides us with a "what" to do. Our understanding of context supplies a corresponding "how," "where" and "in what order," etc.

Structures are demonstrations of theology in action, a kind of "theology on four wheels" (Skreslet 1998). We know this intuitively: our behaviors follow our thinking. Our organizational behaviors, as well, reflect underlying concepts and assumptions. We think it important, therefore, to have a careful look at the concepts and theologies that drive our structures from within—our understanding of the task itself, and the principles that inform its application. (See Appendix 1)

But structures are not simply theology. They are occasional, secondary, and conditional creations. Effective structures, indeed, are intentionally occasional; they put their "wheels" on the ground. They are engaged in contexts and circumstances. They are products of cultures and immersed in histories. We think it equally important, therefore, to have a look at the contexts that challenge and inform our structures. (See Appendix 2)

At the interface between task and context, we found it difficult to envision particular structures or specific forms. We are not, perhaps, the appropriate persons for that concrete task. Structures for mission will be devised by people in mission. Organizational forms will be created and recreated, improvised and evaluated along the way, as actual communities of believers follow their Lord into the world. But this, too, represents an important insight for the elaboration of healthy structures for mission. They are not devised appropriately by "experts" behind closed doors. The prospect may even be dangerous. It unhelpfully confuses means with ends.

At the interface between task and context we discerned, simply, principles that seemed to us particularly important for the elaboration of structures for mission on the eve of the twenty-first century. They are principles, we hope, that may helpfully inform the larger community of believers as it structures or restructures its participation in Christ's mission.

Perhaps our experience may model a process by which people in mission may themselves discern and build structures suitable for the tasks to which Christ has called them: they are constructed at the interface between task and context; they are informed by principles.

We propose, really, a blueprint—an aid for the construction of new structures, the reformulation of old structures, or perhaps even their deconstruction. We propose to trace the overall contours of appropriate structures for mission, without perhaps delineating all of the details. We hope to describe the function, "feel" and priorities of useful structures for mission. The construction effort itself is a task for the road.

## A crisis in structure?

It would seem that we face today a crisis in structures for mission. Traditional western structures seem too often tired and ineffective, whether "churchly" or "para-church" in orientation. And insofar as they attempt, simply, the conventional sending of conventional western missionaries, they seem increasingly "out of touch" with the dynamic movement of God's Spirit around the world.

Meanwhile, lively experimentations in alternative structures seem to proliferate amazingly—short-term and long-term; youth-focused and second-career or post-retirement oriented; paid "professionals" and "tent-makers"; American-led and broadly international; denominational and interdenominational; synodically-governed and purely congregational, etc. The variety is dizzying.

And not only, to be sure, in the west. Vital new efforts are emerging in places we have thought until now "out-of-the-way." Cross-cultural missionaries on the eve of the twenty-first century may as likely be African or Asian, as from the United States.

How do we make sense of all of this? Traditional classifications no longer easily apply, or guide us without ambiguity. Who is "sending" today and who is "receiving"? What is "domestic" mission and what is "international"? Who is taking the lead in missionary initiative and who is following along? Should our structures for mission maintain denominational identities, or "go independent"? Are they "sodalities" or "modalities," "para-church" or "church"? Or are they perhaps "para-Kingdom," in service to something larger than either alternative? Does it matter in the end?

**Let us describe several obvious dimensions of the structural crisis before us:**

We are pleased, certainly, for the wide variety of new and creative initiatives in the cause of Christ and his Kingdom. We recognize, however, that the advent of newer structures may mean the displacement of older structures. Will our traditional, "tried and true" institutions endure in the broad marketplace of alternative structures? Will they reinvent themselves, or, perhaps, discover the grace to lay themselves aside?

We are concerned as well that proliferating new structures actually contributes to the cause of Christ in the world. There is nothing, of course, inherently good about new. We are concerned for the focus and direction of emerging structures for mission. What are they after, in the end? Are their purposes appropriate? Do they correspond to the radical values of the Kingdom of God?

We are concerned that some structures appear "commercialized." They are designed to "play well" vis-à-vis supporting constituencies "at home", but less concerned to discern the hand of God in the world. They are concerned to protect "their people" or "their turf," but make little reference to the values of the Kingdom of God. They are creatively competitive for "donor dollars," but are less enthusiastic about the risk and sacrifice of actual loving

service. They may be driven by their budget rather than Christ's mission, and more concerned with their "bottom line" than with faithfulness to his cause.

We feel alarmed at the appearance of structures peopled by "lone rangers", mostly from the west, who think it economical in God's good design to inject themselves uncritically in the work of the church around the world. These are individualist structures and strategies without the balance and accountability of interrelationship within the broad Body of Christ. In the Body we discover few "lone rangers," but rather entire communities of believers in complementary pursuit of Christ's mission in the world.

We are concerned as well with the fascination for short-terms and quick-fixes. At their worst, these are structures that may degenerate into common self-serving tourism. They may be more concerned to serve western constituencies than real people in actual cross-cultural situations. They may have more sympathy for the travel and learning needs of well-funded youth programs in America than the complicated challenges of the world beyond. And insofar as they do, these are structures fueled by our culture and its values more than they are by the costly mission of Jesus Christ.

We are concerned for the crisis evidenced by under-supported denominational boards of mission. Traditional denominational bases of support appear to be eroding, as contributing members age and younger members, or potential members, appear less committed to denominational identities and participation. The erosion is complicated further by political factors. For political reasons, denominational boards must often present the cause of mission as one of the many competing concerns of the church rather than its indispensable center. Western boards, moreover, may relate to churches in Africa or Asia more vibrant than their own, with distinctively African and Asian perspectives on theology, and ethics and mission priorities. How may they participate meaningfully in the life and mission of churches "come of age" around the world that may espouse values uncomfortable for the theological tastes of their western colleagues?

We are concerned for the direction of traditional, independent missionary societies. Their structures have developed, for the most part, a century ago during the "Great Century" of western-dominated missionary expansion. Without doubt, they were well-suited for participation in that important era. But they may be less suited for the multi-form challenges specific to our own day. These are structures designed for movement in one direction: the transfer of money, material, people, and organization from the resource-full north to the supposedly resource-less south. But they may have little experience with multi-lateral sharing among people and vision and power from many sources—east and west, south and north—in common service to the cause of Jesus. One-directional mission is increasingly anachronistic. How may societies learn participation in the exceedingly broad, multi-faceted, multi-gifted missionary movement of today?

We are concerned for the persistent distinction between "overseas" and "domestic" mission, reflected in structures that give themselves exclusively to one or the other. We believe the distinction is no longer tenable; the language itself is inherently prejudiced. We have developed structures that are efficient at sending "over there", but do not recognize the cross-cultural "frontier" within their own cities and neighborhoods. Insofar as the distinction persists, it confuses our understanding of mission and issues in structures unable to guide us effectively.

Structures, in the end, are about the conservation and exercise of power. We are concerned that many structures for mission—whether "board" or "society," "church" or

"para-church," etc.—continue to locate their fundamental power in the west. These are structures that look instinctively to the west for imagination, leadership, patterns of organization, accountability, theology, and priorities and resources for mission; at the same time, often failing to acknowledge the participation of the world church in the world-wide cause of Jesus. This is a road close to idolatry.

Finally, we are concerned for structures committed to form over function, or rigid adherence to inherited organization at the expense of openness to the Spirit's fresh molding and direction today. We are concerned for structures that are denominational in identity, or charismatic in style, or American in leadership, or evangelistic in emphasis—in the first place. They have placed form over function, but they are not open to fresh direction nor can they be well suited to meet the complex challenges before us today.

The Kingdom's cause, of course, continues to compel us. How will we structure our response appropriately?

**Spirituality for structure**

We feel it inappropriate to prescribe specific structural forms for participation in the mission of God in the world. It is, after all, the mission of God. It is larger than "church" or "para-church," "modality" or "sodality." There exists no structure equal or synonymous to this mission. We may expect it to take what forms and structures God designs from time to time, rather than our prescriptions.

But we may discern an inner disposition of appropriate structures for mission. They are characterized by a personality – a spirituality, if you will – if not a prescribed form.

Structures for mission, after all, are essentially human relationships patterned for participation in the mission of Christ. They are not mechanical operations; they are organic expressions of the Body of Christ. They are characterized by attitude and temperament as much as mechanical design. They must, of course, take some concrete form. But the inner spirituality that flavors and drives them may be more significant than the form itself. Appropriate structures are elaborated by informed hearts.

**What are the contours of an appropriate spirituality for mission structures?**

*"Open the scroll..."*

A spirituality for mission structures must begin, first of all, in an open, humble encounter with the Word of God. We must learn again to "open the scroll," as Jesus did at the outset of his ministry (Luke 4). Jesus himself discovered the shape of his ministry in direct interaction with "the scroll," in personal identification with the messianic ministry described by the prophet Isaiah.

If we are to discover appropriate structures for twenty-first century mission, we need to learn in the first place to "open the scroll" afresh. We need to resolve to open our eyes, to see anew, to hear again the Word of God shaping us and molding us in mission. We need to open the scroll in community with our brothers and sisters from across the church and around the world, our partners in ministry. Only so may we hope to discover the practical shape of our ministry.

And we must take care to "open the scroll" widely and without prejudice. It will not be adequate to elaborate structures for mission on the basis of selected "proof texts." We must "open the scroll" in its entirety.

### The beatitudes...

As we "open the scroll" today, we find ourselves suddenly in continuity with the disciples of Jesus twenty centuries ago. The task commended to them is commended to us. The promises and challenges given to them are promised and challenged to us.

Consider the beatitudes: Jesus' description of blessed attitudes and blessed relationships (Matthew 5). How may we build structures—relationships in mission—in conscious continuity with these radical "blesseds"?

*They will be structures poor in spirit, that do not take themselves too seriously.* They will count themselves stewards and servants of Christ's mission, rather than owners. They will not take their particular form or organization too seriously. They will be nimble, rather than overcome by the heavy baggage of their own traditions. They will travel lightly. They will be purposefully flexible and able to respond quickly to the demands of changing contexts, as good stewards should.

*They will be structures that mourn purposefully and prophetically for everything that grieves the heart of God.* We are not skilled at mourning; appropriate structures will learn to mourn. They will learn to acknowledge the injustice, racism, spiritual apathy, prideful tribalism, bold oppression—the systems of sin that bind and destroy us—and to mourn their operation in our lives. These things grieve the heart of God; they must grieve us as well.

*They will be structures that demonstrate meekness, serving others in the greater cause of Christ rather than engineering their own aggrandizement.* Meek structures will not serve themselves. They will not be full of themselves. They will not constrain their attention or their program by their "bottom line" only. They will learn to serve with some abandon and love with some recklessness—simply, meekly, without calculated constraint.

*They will be structures that hunger and thirst for righteousness, structures that will not be contented until all have been satisfied by the love and righteousness of Jesus.* We must have structures that hunger and thirst for righteousness. We must learn to critique the influence and power of alternative "hungers"—in particular, the appetites of the West and the North and their influence on the communication of the Gospel. We must have structures infused with passion—but passion for justice, that all may have access to the gospel of Jesus.

*They will be structures characterized by mercy in their relationships.* Merciful structures will learn to translate the disposition to care and compassion into deeds of caring and actions of mercy. They will not be afraid of accountability. They will not be content with their own good intentions, but resolved to carry their intentions into lively and responsible practice.

*They will be structures that strive for purity of heart and motivation.* We must have structures "pure of heart"—structures that have learned to critique and differentiate between their own cultural values and biblical values. They will be structures that have

recognized bravely the cultural conditioning of their own forms, perspectives and traditions.

*They will be structures that make peace, building understanding and emphasizing trust within the exercise of mission rather than suspicion and distance.* They will be structures that build daring partnerships in mission—partnerships that share liberally their resources, power and responsibilities. We must have structures that work resolutely to eliminate the divisions that separate us and reduce our effectiveness in mission: north and south, overseas and domestic, evangelical and conciliar, professional and lay, etc. We must have structures driven to broad ecumenism by their deeper and broader commitment to mission.

*They will be structures that learn to rejoice even in the face of persecution.* Structures for mission in the twenty-first century must be willing, joyfully, to suffer persecution in the exercise of their calling. Appropriate structures must be willing even to die for the sake of Christ and the cause of the gospel—or should their persistence come to compromise the mission of God.

The radical "blesseds," of course, are more than inner commitments or dispositions. They are items for action. And they are a wonderful, concomitant array of promises. The poor in spirit will inherit the earth; those who mourn will be comforted; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied, and so on. These are dispositions that issue in action and are empowered by promise.

This is the pattern we find in the scroll. It is the necessary flavor of biblically authentic structures for mission.

## Fleshing it out in the gathered community of believers...

It may be inappropriate, as we have said, to prescribe specific forms or organization for the exercise of mission in the world. We may easily identify its fundamental agency, however. The gathered community of believers is the basic unit of God's mission in the world. "The local church, wherever it may be, is the primary structure for mission" (Vierow 1998). "Every Christian community has a mission that begins locally and does not stop till it embraces the world" (Martinson 1998). It is here that our missionary task is played out.

In the gathered community of believers, after all, we encounter the Body of Jesus Christ; and wherever Jesus is found, he is found active and engaged in mission. In the gathered community of believers we see the Body of Christ in mission. Indeed, we believe the gathered community to represent the fullest expression of God's mission in the world. The gathered community of believers—each local congregation—is where the universal church engages the world. It is the frontier between those who are gathered in and those who remain outside the fold. In the community of believers we see Christ himself calling his own, equipping them for mission, sending them into the world, and through their ministry, gathering still more.

The community of believers will structure itself in forms that reflect its global task and its local particularity. Because the gathered community participates in Christ, it participates in his universal cause. And because it exists only as a culturally conditioned gathering of specific human beings, it will permit itself—indeed, it will celebrate—a wide variety of missionary giftings and participation in its communication of the gospel. We see already and envision still more "niche" contributions, as communities of believers discover and add

their particular gifting to the larger cause of Christ. We picture a wonderful variety of local participations in the global mission of Christ.

Yet the amazing variety of gifts in mission, each one particular to some local context or need, underscores the importance of mutuality accountability within the broad Body of Christ. Local gatherings of believers need the counterpoint and balance of other local gatherings. Denominational expressions, too, need the balance of other Christian traditions. Without the counterpoint of differing gifts and perspectives, our structures succumb too easily to prejudice and self-serving pride. We paint ourselves too easily into the center where Christ only should reside. Structures for mission must build deliberate mechanisms of mutual balance, accountability, and honest evaluation. The alternative is idolatry.

We envision a genuinely ecumenical approach to mission. We need to make room for one another in daring complementarity, acknowledging the wonderful range of Christ-given structures and gifts for mission. We identify whole-hearted cooperation in mission as the first and most important goal of genuine Christian ecumenism, and genuine Christian ecumenism as an important goal of mission. Ecumenism's specific features or interrelationship should be functions and consequences of that mission, rather than structural ends in themselves, but they must discover useful expression for the sake of mission.

"Fleshing it out in the gathered community of believers," therefore, means local and particular involvement in broad and multi-faceted networks. "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" (1 Peter 4:10). Each believing community must steward its particular gifting. Each must contribute what it can for the sake of God's mission in the world. We must learn together to share knowledge, to build bridges, to cooperate in creative alliances of many shapes and varieties. The missionary task is far too large to "go it alone".

## Conclusion

We have written, basically, for ourselves and for the ten colloquia of the Congress on the World Mission of the Church. Certainly we have not pretended a scientific or thorough study of task, future contexts, and corresponding structures for mission. We have written personally and impressionistically, as agents ourselves engaged in the mission of Christ.

We anticipate, however, that other brothers and sisters may find it meaningful to "listen in" and join our conversation. For the most part, we have written with North America in mind. We hope that North American mission agencies, boards and societies, in particular, will want to carry this conversation farther.

For there is much farther to go. The commission of Christ, our task, is as urgent today as ever before. There is much service to render and wonderfully good news to tell. Let us participate, each one, in the great, interconnected, multiform mission of God.

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**Appendix 1: "The x axis"**

**What Does God Want Us to Do in the World?**

*Unroll the Scroll*

Jesus unrolled the scroll and announced his Spirit-anointed mission as a fulfillment of Isaiah's vision. We also, in asking what God wants us to do in the world, unroll the scroll. We turn to scripture for vision of what God has made us to be and to do in God's mission among all the nations.

*Living in Christ*

We are recipients of God's mission in us. We are baptized into Christ, being one in him, no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Galatians 3:27-28). We are a new community, reconciled to God and to one another (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). We walk together in the presence of Christ (Luke 24:13-35), loving one another and our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Called into the mind of Christ, we follow Jesus in his way of being in mission (Philippians 2:1-11). As individuals and as community, we receive the power of the Holy Spirit to send us into the world (Acts 1:8).

*Following Christ in Mission*

We are called to: Ministries of:

> *Mt 28, Lk 24:47*

Make disciples, baptize, teach Proclaim good news (of Kingdom, heaven, to the poor)Invite to faith Challenge to repentance, and announce forgiveness

Worship Education Proclamation

> *Lk 4, Mt 10:8, Lk 1:46*

Liberate the captives, set free the oppressed

Cast out demons

Overturn the forces of pride and oppression. Deliverance of captives

Prophetic advocacy

Solidarity

> *Ac 17*

Testify in the synagogue, city center and market place among people of diverse cultures and faiths. Testimony and public witness

> *Mt 10:8*

Cure the sick, (raise the dead), cleanse lepers. Healing

> *Mt 25, Lk 6:21*

Care for the sick, visit the imprisoned. Comfort those who mourn

Caring

> *Mt 25*

Welcome the stranger

Hospitality

> *Eph 6:18*

Pray in the Spirit, at all times. Ask, seek, find

Prayer

> *Mt 25*

Feed, water, clothe Be merciful, compassionate

Sharing

> *2 Cor 5:18-20*

Be reconciled and become agents of reconciliation. Reconcile, appeal on behalf of God

Reconciliation Public appeal Peace making

> *Eph 4:12*

Equip

Equipping the saints in ministry

## Appendix 2: "The y axis"

## What will the world be like in 2020?

*Six critical trends or developments:*

1. Reclaiming identities -- challenged identities

- Resurging world civilizations; decrease of traditional Western Christian civilizations.
- Relationships dictating structures more than resources.
- Nation state demising. (3,4)
- Deconstruction/diversifying of criteria for leadership.
- Business community held accountable for social development, justice, environment, etc., and not only economic or product accountability. (6)
- Ethnicism/tribalism/racial identity may be expected to increase.
- New communities, genuinely multicultural communities. (5)
- Local languages and cultures will flourish in the internetted community.
- New alliances undreamed of before. (3)
- Generational differences. (1,6)

- Changing status of women in leadership positions.
- Pluralistic faith world.

1. Migrating populations

- Migration of work, etc., global nomadism. (5)
- Disappearing communities. (2)

1. Technology

- Proliferating niche markets.
- Cross-cutting tendencies. (4)
- Significant disparity between internetted and not. (4)
- Local languages and cultures will flourish in the internetted community. (2)
- New alliances undreamed of before.

1. Widening gap between rich and poor

- Increasing population; ecological strain. (5)
- New centers of economic influence.

1. Urbanization

- New communities, genuinely multicultural communities.
- Disappearing communities.

1. Other

- Business community held accountable for social development, justice, environment, etc., and not only economic or product accountability.
- Aging of the Western world.
- Still many who have not heard.

**What will the church in North America be like in 2020?**

1. Diversification

- Democratization of Christian identity.
- Rise of "charismatic" leadership. (2,3)
- Life of church in South -- clues for future church structures will emerge from there.
- Churches that mirror their culture will grow (but possibly with counter-cultural ethos).
- Proliferating of "umbrellas": vernacularization/indigenization.
- Decline of sources of financial support for mainline structures.

2. Changing Identity

- Less denominational.
- Decline of liberal Protestantism; Roman Catholic resurgence; growth of evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.
- Church continues to ape business and structures in the world.
- Growth, plateau and decline of church in Asia.

- Church more ethnically diverse.
- Western church no longer the norm -- theologically or culturally.
- Denominationalism "lite"; average American will belong to three denominations in lifetime.
- "Revolving door": second generation charismatics return to church.
- De-ecclesiasticalization of church.
- Mission/body of Christ/Eucharist and church (marks of the church?).
- Proselytizing continues to be a problem of mission.
- Seminaries decline in effectiveness.

3. Migration

- Migration may spread the gospel more than missions.
- Diaspora congregations throughout the world.
- Growth of emerging church and globalization of mission activity/sending.
- Multi-directional missionary sending.

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**Structures Colloquium Participants**

Marjorie Carlson, Gerald Currens, Tom Houston,  Bonnie L. Jensen,

Patrick Keifert,  Charles Lindquist,  Mary Motte, Todd Nichol,

J. Paul Rajashekar,  Karl Reko,  Stanley Skreslet,

Joyce A. Thompsen,  Duain W. Vierow,

# Nehemiah & Faith Based Organizing

Beth is a senior at McCormick Theological Seminary and wrote this paper for a course entitled "Transforming Communities"
By Beth Freese Dammers
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**ORGANIZING THE BUILDING OF THE WALL**

Cutting the Issue

There is no lengthy introduction. By chapter 1 verse 3 the problem is stated:

The Jews that have escaped Persian captivity are in great trouble and experiencing shame because the city wall of Jerusalem is broken down and the gates have been destroyed in fire. The center of Jewish life and worship is weak and vulnerable.

News of this situation causes Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, to turn to God in prayer and confession. He confesses that he, his family and the people of Israel in general have failed to keep the commandments given to Moses. Nehemiah asks for forgiveness.

Nehemiah also makes a very specific request of God. He asks that God give him success and that King Artaxerxes will be merciful (Neh 1:11).

Unlike current organizing principles, Nehemiah does not first gather the people and then ask the people to identify the concern, to name their self-interest. Rather, Nehemiah asks his brother what is the condition of the people. From this one-person perspective of the state of things, Nehemiah decides the issue in a vacuum. One might wonder, what if the Jews were not interested in returning to Jerusalem, but wanted to build a new religious center. In a somewhat righteous manner, Nehemiah leaves no room for group discussion or a consensus building around the issue. His faith leads him to "know" what is right and good for the people. He believes he knows God's will for the Jews and thus claims this as the issue.

Developing a Strategy & Meeting with the Decision Maker

Nehemiah knows that he is in a relationship with the king, that of servant/cupbearer, that affords him privilege. He has a personal relationship with the king that he will leverage to achieve his self-interest of rebuilding Jerusalem. Being wise like a fox, he knows that a sad disposition will receive the attention of the king, who has never before seen him sad. This tactical decision will elicit a curiosity from the king and thus the king will be the one to open the dialogue. Nehemiah maximizes his personal relation ship with the king to gain what he desired, ie: for his own self-interest.

Additionally, Nehemiah carefully chooses his words, using "city" rather than naming "Jerusalem." Even speaking the name Jerusalem may be heard by the king as that "rebellious city" (cf: Ezra 4:8-16). Nehemiah has thought through the decision maker's own self-interest and is strategic in choosing words. If the Jews were to rebuild their own city and establish an independent nation, they would no longer pay royal taxes

and therefore the royal revenue would decrease (Ezra 4:13). To avoid this strain of thinking, Nehemiah never uses the name of Jerusalem in conversation with the king.

Because of the existing congenial and somewhat intimate relationship that Nehemiah shares with the king, and because Nehemiah has no great powerful organization backing him up, his use of the cooptation tactic is a good choice.

Rather than Nehemiah needing to ask the king for help, the king responds to his state of great of sadness and offers, "What do you request?"

Note that at these crucial points in the organizational development process, Nehemiah does not rely on his own strength or wit, but turns to God. He first prays to God then requests permission to journey to Judah (still not saying Jerusalem) to rebuild. In the footnotes of the HarperCollins Study Bible we learn that although Nehemiah frames this request as a pious act in memory of ancestors, the ancient custom would have implied that with the rebuilding of a capital city comes the governorship of the province.

In chapter 2, verse 6, the king's self- interest of needing and desire the care and companionship of Nehemiah surfaces. The king's first response is "How long will you be gone?" and "When will you return?" In good negotiating style Nehemiah answers the king with a specific date (quantifiable). He does this to ease the king's anxiety. Immediately he follows with a second request of letters addressed to the Governors of the provinces through which territory he must pass to arrive in Jerusalem. This request for letters from the king is a way for his passport to safety.

His third request of the king is to provide a letter for one of the Governors so that timbers might be provided for the beams of the gates, wall of the city and the house that Nehemiah will live in. Nehemiah receives all that he has asked from the decision maker, King Artaxerxes.

Chapter two ends with the identification of the enemies: Sanballat, Tobiah (governors of neighboring provinces) and Geshem (king of Quedar, vessel to Artaxerxes). They fear that the rebuilding of Jerusalem may weaken their own power and economies plus lead to rebellions.

Upon arriving in the city, Nehemiah sleuths the territory at night accessing the damage. His plan continues to be secret, "I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem" (Neh 2:12).

In 2:16 it is clear that this issue remains solely the initiative of Nehemiah. No one was in on the plan, not the officials, Jews, priest or nobles. Suddenly in 2:17 it appears that Nehemiah has assembled the sponsoring committee to lay out the issue and gain support. "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace" (Neh 2:17). His convincing presentation of God's graciousness and the generosity of the king, move the leadership to respond, "Let us start building!" The sponsoring committee commits to the common good and the issue has been cut.

Nehemiah must have missed organizational training on the day the organizer preached, "Do not divulge your own self-interest or plan to the enemy." When he is ridiculed and questioned by his enemies, Nehemiah replies divulging where his alliance lives, with God, not with King Artaxerxes. He names that God will be the source of success, their plan to start rebuilding and his belief that the Samaritans, the

Ammonites and Geshem have no claim to Jerusalem. His bold faith and confidence in God drives him to declare his strategy and plan to his enemies.

Building the Organization & Assessing Assets

Although the text describes the recruiting of organization membership later in the book, clearly Nehemiah and the leadership team were successful in their tactics. In chapter 3 we are presented with the donors list as might be seen in the annual report. It is impressive on several fronts.

The people financing the repairs to the city walls and gates are from many lands, of different heritages, different professions and in at least one instance included sons and daughters (3.12). In verse 17 there is some hint that perhaps the responsibility of repairs was divided among districts. Some folk made repairs in their own neighborhoods, opposite or beside their homes. Self-interest for these folks is more obvious.

There were many hands involved in achieving the work. Each family had a part, a specific section that is recorded with detail as to where it was and to which sections it connected. Each donor, family, craftsperson touching the wall or gates is taking clear ownership of the project. The individual ownership is then enhanced in allowing folks to see beyond their own contribution to building on one another's work. The cooperation of many makes a wall complete that individually none could achieve on their own. Nehemiah's plan for this work builds the strength and unity of the organization.

The assets of people, labor, time, money, skills, and dedication are all documented for generations to come.

Enemy React & Tactical Response

Recalling the boldness of Nehemiah's truth telling to the enemies at the end of chapter 2, it is not surprising that the enemies respond with anger, enragement and mocking of the Jews. Sanballat and Tobiah rant and rave mocking that anyone could break down the rebuilt wall. Nehemiah turns to his greatest ally/sponsor, God. He pleads that the actions of his enemies not be forgiven and their sins remembered.

The enemy strategy is to cause confusion by proceeding with a surprise attack that will cause the rebuilding of the wall to stop. While Nehemiah is praying to God for protection and arranging for protection day and night, the Jews who lived near the enemies share information with Nehemiah of the planned enemy attacks.

Nehemiah responds strategically:

He places folk at the lowest height of the wall so that enemies approaching may believe that the entire wall is guarded in such massive forces.

With a strong public speech, he calms the organization by recalling the power of the LORD, reminding folk of the mission and playing up the emotional draw of doing this for our families' sake. It is an issue of preserving the Jewish heritage.

All workers are armed with spears, knives or other weapons so that they may continue working and be ready to defend the wall and themselves.

In verse 4.15 we must presume that Nehemiah has insider spies in the enemy camp "divulging" that the enemy plot is known. With confidence all return to work.

As an indication of his wisdom and flexibility as an organizer, Nehemiah re-allocates the resources, divides the labor, appoints guards and enacts a security system in the trumpeter. Additionally he ensures immediate growth of the organization by requiring all Jews to remain inside the city walls rather than returning to their homes outside the walls at night. Publicly, he praises them for this dedication.

Caring for the Organization, Accessing the Assets, Again

It is not only the exterior enemies that offer resistance to completing the issue; it is also the internal organization. The energy is waning and the self-interest is shifting. If basic needs such as food cannot be met, then the self-interest of the issue is no longer building the wall but becomes providing nourishment for the family.

In all his planning, Nehemiah had not considered the impact to the internal system when he recruited/forced so many folk to remain within the walls of the city. The infrastructure was fragile at best and it did not take much to make it start to crumble. There must be someone who is constantly re-evaluating the resources and how each tactical decision may impact such resources. No decision is made in a vacuum.

The organizer himself is angered by this outcry. He too has been pressed to limits. Yet rather than act immediately, him thinks it over, again deliberately planning strategically. How will he use his power and position to respond? This is a bit tricky because it appears that Nehemiah, as Governor, may be part of the system that is taking interest and requiring pledges thus limiting food resources for the many. In a careful speech to the gathered assembly that shifts from the second person "you" (placing blame) to the plural first person, "we/us" as the ones restoring, Nehemiah is clear, "the thing you are doing is not good." (Neh 5:9)

Nehemiah restores the officials and nobles by requiring they take an oath to uphold their promise to restore the people. This is crucial to the health of the organization to preclude destructive infighting. Any kind of bickering or mistrust of one another within the organization will weaken its effectiveness.

Enemy Spies Infiltrate Organization

Enemy spies continue to report progress on the building of the wall. The enemies join together and request that Nehemiah meet them on neutral ground, the plain of Ono. After numerous attempts to arrange for a face-to-face meeting with Nehemiah and his continued declines to such an offer, Sanballat openly declares that he will go above Nehemiah to his boss, King Artaxerxes. Sanballat threatens that he will report to the king that Nehemiah is plotting to become king himself. Nehemiah holds firm calling Sanballat's bluff.

The enemy than plots to entrap Nehemiah with the use of an inside planted spy in a scheme that will discredit his reputation. God allows Nehemiah to see through the scheme and remain safe.

Victory Achieved and Celebration

With the successful completion of the wall, the enemy looses their own sense of self-esteem. They perceive this work has been done with the help of the God of Nehemiah and the Jews.

Jumping to 12:27, the completion of the issue, building the wall, is celebrated. Levites are "bussed" in to ensure one big celebration with rejoicing, music and thanksgiving. Nehemiah arranges for a "company of singers"--only the best of the best will do for this celebration.

The celebration is choreographed in a deliberate re-enactment of the construction of the wall. A simple parade with lyre and harp will not suffice. In grand theatrical fashion, the Sponsoring Committee, leaders and workers all mount the wall and walk the entire length of the wall. The group moves around the wall step by step in two groups, meeting at the temple just as the stones were laid one by one until the circle is complete.

Now while television and radio were not a part of this point of history, Nehemiah ensured that the "joy of Jerusalem was heard far away." (Neh 12:43) Perhaps this is the best kind of PR--out of the depths of their rejoicing joy is carried on the winds far and wide.

Building on Success of first Issue, Defining the next Issues

Now that the wall is built, guidelines for community living and thriving must be established. This then, is the next issue that Nehemiah and Ezra take on to ensure the re-establishment of the Jewish nation. Roles and responsibilities are assigned (Neh 7.1). A large assembly of the people is held to enroll folk according to their genealogy. This assembly is for the building up of the organization. Now that a "win" has been achieved, it is easier to attract more folk to join the organization. Imagine the families at this rally proudly displaying their banners of family heritage, each calling out publicly what they will donate to the organization (Neh 7.6 -- 7.73).

At the next public assembly in the town square where all can hear, even the defiled, Ezra, on a specially made platform (someone is paying attention to sound and space) reads from the law of Moses. The goal is to re-establish the religious festivals and way of life. To ensure that Ezra's reading of the Law is interpreted correctly, 13 Levites work the crowd creating a buzz.

In chapter 9 the retelling of history, where these people have been and the remembering of the community story builds to a point of covenanting with God. This promise is sealed and signed much like any agreement with a decision maker would be.

In chapter 11, the issue is strengthening and growing the organization. Nehemiah knows that by increasing the number of folk that come to live inside Jerusalem, he will strengthen the organization. Knowing the strength of relationships, Nehemiah lists who is who and to whom they are related in 11:3 - 22. It's all about relationships!

The removal of the foreigners is perhaps yet another tactic focused on strengthening the organization. If all those unable to follow the religious law and guidelines of the

community are removed, the organization may be more cohesive and less likely to break the covenant.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOD IN ORGANIZING?

In defining the roles and responsibilities of the organizer, decision maker, ally, enemy and sponsoring community, I find myself pondering what is the role of God in faith-based community organizing? What difference does is make to community organizing that we are a people of faith?

At nearly every step of his organizing, Nehemiah turned to God. He asked for God's mercy to be on the decision maker, he asked God to remember the sins of his enemies and over and over Nehemiah boasted of his own goodness and righteousness, asking the LORD to remember his good deeds, a kind a works righteousness.

It is clear to me that God opens our eyes to see the issue and feel a passion for making a change. In this way God feels like Sponsor. I also recognize that God is our most faithful advisor and when we are able to fully trust in GodSpirt to move us, God empowers beyond our own understanding. In this way, perhaps God is our greatest asset. God is also our ally, ever present. And sometimes God is the Decision Maker, the one to whom we pose our questions, waiting for a response. I suspect that if we listen carefully God is extremely skilled at agitation.

# Urban Spirituality

## The Rev. Mark W. Wendorf

## Assistant Professor of Urban Ministry
## McCormick Theological Seminary

**Story One**
From the very beginning cities have been the best and worst of places. They can be founts of great and wonderful works of God. And they can be the source of greatest evil. This makes sense because cities are the greatest concentrations of humankind. And where there is humankind there is sin and glory.

God called me, perhaps like you, to urban ministry. I, a small town boy, did not choose the city. God chose the city for me.

Before long I was disturbed by it all.  By how much there was to do, by how complicated the problems were, by the depth of the poverty, by the intensity of the pain, by the overwhelming heat of the summer that was not broken from breezes by invisible trees.

I was disturbed by how elusive the solutions were, by how overwhelming were the number of problems, by how insensitive were the institutions, by how incredibly difficult it was to measure any success, let alone any progress.

I was especially disturbed by the people who came knocking at my door and window, wanting food, wanting money, wanting a listening ear. I set aside time every day to deal with them and they overwhelmed my time.

I found myself defenseless in the face of their intricate stories. Even if I did not believe their stories I had to give them credit for being so imaginative and thus found it hard to deny them anything.

My spirit and pastoral discretionary fund dwindled. But I hung on to the idea that I was helping people. That if I gave them what they said they needed, then I was helping them. Then they began to return with new stories, new problems. And soon new people were coming with them. News travels fast through the projects.

Slowly and painfully it dawned on me that the harder I worked, the more work there was to do. Forget what your parents taught you – that a job well done stays done – in the city a job well done simply earns you ten more.

The needs are incredible. The answers are difficult. The struggle to survive – as a person, a church, a community – is daily, constant and eternal. It eats away at your faith and by mid season you are ready to take to the streets – or to your bed.

**Story Two**
Student Leo came to Mother Josephine and said, "Mother, I keep all the commandments. I always serve the people. My door is always open. The hungry are fed. The naked are clothed. I preach constantly. What more should I do?"
Mother Josephine answered, "Why not be totally consumed by fire."

**Story Three**
Urban ministers hear a lot about burnout. There is a good reason for that. We are sitting ducks for it. Our jobs are never done. Results are hard to measure. Our expectations are high. Most of us do not get to choose whom we will serve.

We know the consequences of burnout: tempers flare, health fails, relationships suffer and die, cynicism grow, we do not sleep well at night, sometimes it even becomes difficult to breathe. Some of us end up in bed, paralyzed for months, crushed and destroyed. We see only the dark things of life. We shield our eyes from the light, lost in a deep chasm of depression.

**Story Four**
There are moments of joy. Like Ali, from a family of ten, who goes to school part time, finds a job in a group home and goes on to become the director of county mental health services. Or there are the two nurses, who one night a week offer blood pressure check ups and blood sugar tests and keep adding services until twenty years later there is a $3 million dollar community, non-profit health clinic staffed by 12 doctors, 6 physician assistants and 15 nurses. Everyone of them kids from the 'hood.

Or there are the stories. The funny stories. The pastor on the roof. Jesus in the trunk. The church full of dogs. The squeaky Christmas stroller. And the wrong way funeral. So bizzare they are funny.

**Story Five**
But even the joyful stories turn sour. Like the baptism of the new baby. The mother is sixteen and it is her second child. The first child died of SIDS. She and the children are doomed to a life on welfare. The baby pees all over you because the mother was too poor to afford diapers the day of the baptism.

Or the year end celebration for the Head Start graduates when during the celebration parents break out in a fight at the rear of the sanctuary arguing over what color balloons each will take home after the service. The police are called. Four people are arrested while the little ones eat their cake and cookies.

Or there is the one you think will get up and out. You pull every string you know to get her a full ride scholarship to a church related college, but she comes home after four weeks for a job at Chickenshack because she was homesick. She had never been out of the neighborhood overnight before she went to college.

**Story Six**
Somehow through it all you cope. You find a mentor in the community who helps you understand all the fuzziness and craziness. Helps put it in perspective.

You find a loved one, who loves you for who you are – sins, mistakes and errors included. And whom you can love right back.

You find a place, a group of people, you can hang with, party with, talk with. And the sound of the neighborhood and the cry of the people never enters the conversation.

And you find a place you can go. A place to hide when you can't take it anymore. A place where you can go and play and have fun. It is other and apart.

And you pray. You pray for help and you listen for hope. You sit in silence. You scream in anger. But you pray.

Faith keeps you strong and keeps you going. Faith is an abundant grace from God, a gift from God. But it is also a work of faith, the responsibility of you the owner. So to keep the gift alive you have to find time to nurture it, love it, enjoy it, use it, and practice it.

Never for a moment think that evil and its systems are not working in the world. That is why the baby dies from rat bites, the teen is gunned down on the corner, and the poor widow can't get health care. Bad things do not just happen. They happen because there is evil in the world.

Urban ministry is not just the use of skills. It is a battle between good and evil. It is not just about changing people it is also about transforming systems and without your own spiritual skills and resources evil will win out.

Urban spirituality is more than vague platitudes about caring for one another. You know, the kind of phrase that comes with "God loves you, so do I." Urban ministry is a little tougher than that. It is more like, "God loves you and I am trying to."

An urban spirituality requires a thick skin, hard hitting social analysis and a clear connection between inner spirituality and outward action. An urban spirituality is fully aware of the demonic powers within us and around us and is prepared to meet them head on.

**Story Seven**
Once there was a disciple of a learned woman. The disciple was commanded by his teacher to give her money to insult him for three years. When the three year trial period was over the learned woman said to the man, "now you can go and minister."

When the disciple was entering the city gate there was a certain wise man who sat in the gate insulting everyone who came and went. He saw the disciple and the wise man insulted him. The disciple immediately burst out laughing.

"Why do you laugh when I insult you?" asked the wise man.

"Because," said the disciple, "for three years I have been paying for this kind of thing, and now you give it to me for nothing!"

"Enter the city," said the wise man at the gate. "The city is yours."

**Resources**

*Systemic/Theological Analysis*

City of God, City of Satan, Robert Linthicum

Naming the Powers, Walter Wink

Engaging the Powers, Walter Wink

Unmasking the Powers, Walter Wink

Anything by William Stringfellow

Roll Down Your Window, Juan Gonzalez

### *Spiritual Disciplines*

Reformed Spirituality, Howard Rice

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster

Cost of Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Soul Feast, Marjorie Thompson

# Prayer Is Social Action
by John Robb with Larry Wilson

Seven years ago, a giant tree stood on the banks of the Awash River, in an arid valley about two hours' drive southeast of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It had stood there for generations, seemingly eternal.

For years, the people who lived in the surrounding district had suffered through famines because they were unable to bring water to the higher level of the surrounding land. Unable to grow adequate food, countless numbers suffered and died.

In their suffering, the people looked to the tree for help. Believing a spirit gave it divine powers, they worshipped the towering giant. Adults would kiss the great trunk when they passed by, and they spoke of the tree in hushed, reverential tones. Children said, "This tree saved us."

In 1989, World Vision began a development project there, including an irrigation system to make the valley's parched earth bloom for the first time. But even as they labored to build the system, the great tree stood like a forbidding sentinel of the old order, presiding over the community, enslaving the people through fear. For spirits need to be propitiated with animal sacrifices and strict observance of taboos. In this way the tree's spirit ensured its continued grip on the mentality of the community, threatening the whole process of transformation so crucial to the people's future health and development.

When World Vision workers saw how the villagers worshipped the tree, they knew it was as an idolatrous barrier to the entrance of Christ's kingdom and transformation of the community.

One morning as the staff prayed together, one of Jesus' promises struck them: "If you have faith, you can say to this tree, 'Be taken up and removed' . . . and it will obey you." In faith, they began to pray that God would bring down the menacing goliath.

Soon the whole community knew the Christians were praying about the tree. Six months later, the tree began to dry up, its leafy foliage disappeared, and finally it collapsed like a stricken giant into the river.

The people of the community were astonished, proclaiming, "Your God has done this! Your God has dried up the tree!" In the days and weeks afterwards, approximately 100 members of the community received Jesus Christ because they saw his power displayed in answer to the Christians' prayers.

**Evangelism, Social Action - and Prayer**
For years, Christians have divided themselves over the most effective means of transforming our world: verbal proclamation of the gospel - witnessing - or social action. In truth, the two cannot be separated. Without both, there is simply no Good News. And one thing ties them both together: prayer to a God of temporal justice and eternal salvation.

Traditionally, many evangelicals have been quite comfortable praying for the salvation of friends, family, and even people groups. But some of us still don't pray enough for justice for the oppressed, economic opportunity for the poor, or protection for the powerless. We thank God for providing us food at dinner, yet do not ask him to feed those who are starving. After 11 years of combining evangelism and economic development among the

world's poor through World Vision, I can say there is no holistic transformation of people apart from united intercession by God's people.

Wherever in the world there is significant development - people coming to Christ, health improvements, economic opportunities, adoption of kingdom values - it is the direct result of Christians praying.

In Matthew 18, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

In God's kingdom, prayer is social action.

## The Spirituality of Social Problems

As we seek to help the poor and stand against injustice, we forget that we are also standing against Principalities and Powers. Since the garden of Eden, humans have cooperated with Satan and his evil spirits to gain control over individuals and societies, leading to wide-scale famine, disease, poverty, slavery, injustice, and suffering. Whenever we try to help the victims of these tragedies, we enter a fray involving the great socio-spiritual forces that rule the world's massive institutions, social structures, and systems.

Satan and the Powers are dedicated to destroying human beings made in the image of God. Satan is the master deceiver and the author of idolatry, seeking to dominate the world by undermining faith in God, twisting values, and promoting false ideologies. He does this by infiltrating institutions, governments, communications media, educational systems, and religious bodies, and uses these to seduce humankind to worship money, fame, success, power, pleasure, science, art, politics, and religious idols.

Throughout much of the Old Testament, Satan induced Israel to abandon God and worship the false gods of the Egyptians, Amorites, Canaanites, Edomites - and they suffered God's promised consequences: oppression, slavery, foreign invasion, and poverty, (Judges 6:6; 10:6-16; Deuteronomy 28). The same sin and its consequences afflict the world today. Northern India is one of the world's darkest areas. Indians estimate there may be more than 300 million gods there. Kali, the goddess of destruction, is a regional deity worshipped in Calcutta, West Bengal. Anyone who has been to Calcutta has seen the devastating impact she and those who worship her have made upon the city's people.

Elsewhere in the world, the occult is behind some of the most brutal injustices of this century. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge - who killed as many as 2 million people in the 1970s - were based at two occult strongholds in the north where Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and regeneration, and Naga, the serpent god, are worshipped. And during Liberia's recent civil war, SIM missionaries reported that "armies" of children practiced juju - a kind of African magic or witchcraft - to gain power. They would wear fetishes, call spirits to come into them, get drunk, and then murder whole villages of innocent people.

## Powers Affect the World

Such brutality and oppression - and their connection to spiritual powers - is not peculiar to the Third World. Talking to Christian leaders in Bosnia last year, I learned that Croats, Serbs, and Muslims - including many of their religious leaders - practice sorcery and black magic.

In the United States, we have suffered the likes of Charles Manson, Jim Jones, and the Branch Davidians - obvious examples of demonic influence. Theologian Walter Wink also sees demonic infiltration of the CIA, government administration, and armed forces to ensure continued U.S. political and economic dominance over weaker nations. Commenting on the blind allegiance so many citizens give to national self-interest, Wink writes, "What makes nationalism so pernicious, so death-dealing, so blasphemous is its seemingly irresistible tendency toward idolatry. In the name of this idol, whole generations are maimed, slaughtered, exiled, and made idolaters. One hundred million lives have been offered on the altar of this Moloch thus far in the 20th century."

Referring to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Francis Frangipane, an Iowa pastor, wrote in his book *The Three Battlegrounds*, "There are satanic strongholds over countries and communities, churches and individuals. . . These fortresses exist in the thought patterns and ideas that govern individuals . . . communities, and nations. Before victory can be claimed, these strongholds must be pulled down, and Satan's armor removed. Then the mighty weapons of the Word and the Spirit can effectively plunder Satan's house."

Through prayer we participate with God to demolish strongholds, establish his kingdom, and change the world.

**Praying Against the Powers**
In Revelation 4:1-8:6, John describes a God-given vision of mankind's history. It is filled with images of God and celestial beings interacting with each other and with mankind. In these verses, the Lamb of God opens seven seals, each affecting the history of the world. By the end of chapter 7, all of heaven is singing and worshipping God, wondering what will happen next in this unleashing of human history.

At the beginning of chapter 8, however, they all fall silent. Seven angels with seven trumpets stand before God, ready to announce the unfolding fate of the world. But they must wait as an eighth angel offers God incense and all the prayers of the saints - prayers for justice, vindication, and victory. Nothing can happen until these prayers reach the nostrils of God.

"What happens next happens because people prayed," Wink says. "The message is clear: History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being. . . God works with us and for us, to make and keep human life humane. And what God does depends on the intercessions of those who care enough to try to shape a future more humane than the present."

The apostle Paul emphasized, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms," (Ephesians 6:12). In this struggle, prayer is the decisive weapon, and it is often aggressive and violent. Karl Barth said, "To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world." The structures and forces of injustice, oppression, and war are so overwhelming, all our efforts to help the poor and needy will fall flat - unless we first invite God into the fray. Until we achieve victory in prayer, engaging the outer world is hopeless.

I'm not saying that prayer is all that is necessary to change the world. For too long, too many evangelical Christians believed prayer is a substitute for action, dumping on God the responsibility for doing what he already commanded us to do throughout Scripture. But neither is social action a substitute for prayer.

**Praying a Desirable Future**

West Africa is one of the poorest regions in the world. Few people are literate, political oppression is rampant, and Christians are often persecuted. Several years ago, Nathan, a young agriculturalist, visited one of these countries to study its agricultural practices.

Over the next year, Nathan fell in love with a specific group of people he studied. He wanted to reveal God's love to them by helping them agriculturally to alleviate some of their suffering. As a Christian, he knew that only prayer would enable them to see that love for what it was.

After returning home, Nathan prayed daily for that group of people, and for Christians who were trying to help them. Specifically, he prayed that a Christian organization would start a development project among them. One Sunday as he prayed, he felt especially attuned to God's Spirit. "I felt that whatever I asked that day, God would give me," he says, "so I asked for everything I had already been praying for, and then some."

Fifteen years after he had left the country, Nathan returned to visit the people he had been praying so long for. He discovered that a Christian organization had established a community development project in the very center of the region he had prayed for, and its work went far beyond his own prayers. People's lives were being changed. They were even becoming more receptive to God's love.

Doug Barnett, a World Vision technical advisor in West Africa, says, "Who knows how many of our Christian development activities have been bathed in prayer ahead of time by saints like Nathan? Although we may never see firsthand the results of our prayers, we might be surprised by what can happen."

**Prayer Changes the World**

There are at least three ways that God honors our prayers to change the world.

***Prayer breaks through the false dominion of the enemy.***

In Mark 9, as Jesus prepared to exorcise an evil spirit, he said, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but by prayer." If this holds true for the demonization of individuals, does it not also hold true for the spiritual oppression of societies?

Satan's main goal is to keep God from being glorified on earth. He hates God, and he hates human beings, who are made in God's image. Through culture, television, drugs, and even some religious practices, Satan and his minions influence the hearts and minds of people worldwide.

In Latin America, West Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, people are deeply afraid of these spirits and look for ways to protect themselves through amulets, elaborate rituals and festivals, or witch doctors Not surprisingly, these protections can be very expensive, contributing to the poverty and oppression of the poor.

In addition, by affecting what you believe, Satan can influence what happens to you. In Hinduism, for example, the idea of fate imprisons millions of people in spiritual and economic poverty. Fate determines the caste you are born into. If you are born into a poor caste, you probably will not try to better your life by becoming an attorney or an accountant. Fate cannot be overcome.

That's a Satanic stronghold, a deception that keeps people in bondage and impoverished, and keeps them from progressing. The New Testament calls this an act of war, a spiritual war in which spiritual weapons can help liberate people groups, cities, and nations from the powers of darkness. That is why united prayer is so important for the breaking of this demonic bondage.

In Mark 3:27, Jesus said, "No one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house." Satan is not going to let go of individuals or a people group without a fight, and he must be dealt with before people can overcome that dominion. Paul said the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. So you've got to remove that resistance, that false dominion from a society if you want to see economic or spiritual transformation. Holistic transformation will not happen without united prayer.

### Prayer changes us and leads us to act.

"Social action without prayer is souless; but prayer without action lacks integrity," Wink says. As we pray for social change, the Holy Spirit begins to transform us, and we find ourselves getting involved in social ministries. It's as if God returns our prayers as a kind of divine command to become the answer to our prayers.

In 1992, after the Los Angeles riots surrounding the Rodney King verdict, 40 pastors in Fresno, Calif., starting meeting once a month to pray for the hurting people of their city. Soon they started praying with laypeople and Christian civic leaders from the tops of city buildings overlooking the urban landscape. They met in a different location each month, including city hall, the rescue mission, the county jail , high schools, the school district office, the International Trade Center, and Fresno Pacific College.

As all these Christians "got out of their churches and into the community," they saw, understood, and began responding to its needs, says Jim Westgate, a professor at Mennonite Brethren Bible Seminary in Fresno. Today more than 6,000 evangelical Christians are involved in Fresno's inner-city ministries.

Through Christ's redemption, human stewardship over the earth is being restored. And through prayer, we as his redeemed people reassert our God-given dominion over the world, ruling and reigning with Christ. Through believing prayer, we open the door for God's intervention in our troubled world, and open ourselves up to become part of God's answer to that world of need.

### Prayer leads to spiritual transformation.

God cares whether people are hungry or sick, whether they have clean water - about all the things they have to contend with. For that reason, World Vision is committed to transforming communities and infusing them with the values and qualities of the kingdom of God: love, civic responsibility, caring for one another, economic development. But more than that, we work for the spiritual transformation of these communities. We know that apart from a change in people's hearts, there will be no outward change. Unless people move toward the kingdom of God and become citizens of that kingdom, espousing its values, we will see little change in their outward lives.

This kind of change is not possible apart from conversion - people coming to faith in Jesus Christ. So evangelism is extremely important. And prayer must go hand in hand with sharing the good news.

United prayer weakens and pushes back the spiritual darkness blinding countries, towns, and individuals, enabling them to hear and see the good news of Jesus Christ. United prayer opens hearts to a new way of living, and when hearts are changed, so are the communities in which people live.

### History Belongs to Intercessors

According to Scripture, intercessory prayer is the key to fulfilling God's gracious purpose for the peoples of the earth. In Psalm 2, God said, "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession." Through Ezekiel, God said he looks for someone to "stand in the gap" before him. And through Isaiah, the Lord said he posts watchmen on Jerusalem's walls who will "never be silent day or night," giving themselves and the Lord no rest "till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."

We live in an age when people often pray small prayers and have limited expectations of God. Perhaps they believe he does not really care about the world's suffering. Perhaps they doubt his willingness to interfere in our temporal injustices. Maybe some people even believe him impotent. But I believe history belongs to the intercessors, those willing to believe that God is bigger than our suffering, those willing to believe that his power is more than able to answer to the world's needs, those willing to confront him with their God-given vision of a society full of justice, health, and love.

John Robb directs the Unreached Peoples Program for World Vision's Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center in Monrovia, Calif.

# A CITY OF PRAYING NEIGHBORS

### By Alvin Vander Griend

What would your city be like if every neighbor and neighborhood were prayed for daily? I think it would be a city in transformation with many people coming to Christ, don't you? That's what God wants. His hearts desire is for all people to be saved and for all of us to "live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Its going to take prayer to make this happen-lots of it! Prayer may not be the American way, but it is Gods way. God has chosen to rule this world through the prayers of his people. He also governs blocks, neighborhoods, and entire cities that way.

To see their cities transformed, pastors and other spiritual leaders need to be intentional about mobilizing believers to pray for their neighbors and for their cities. Here are some ways for leaders to encourage city-wide prayer:

## Identify and Engage Intercessors

Intercessors are the point persons whom God uses to lay foundations of prayer for ministry. They have the ability to pray faithfully and effectively for other people and for kingdom causes for extended periods.

Finding and engaging intercessors must be a priority in mobilizing a city to pray. Every church has intercessors who are willing to labor in prayer when informed of a need. In one church 25 members identified themselves as intercessors when the pastor offered them a free book on prayer.

Once identified, intercessors should be encouraged to focus significant prayer efforts on their city. They should be urged to pray in line with Gods will on such issues as:

> unity among spiritual leaders in the city

> revival in the city's churches

> motivating believers to pray for their neighbors

protection and guidance for public officials and city employees destruction of the devils works and breakdown of his strongholds It is also wise to bring intercessors in the city together from time to time for prayer, sharing, and celebration.

## Pastors Do It First, Then Preach It

Pastors and church leaders must themselves model prayer in order for church members to take them seriously. When it comes to prayer, people will not follow a theorist. They will only follow a practitioner. Pastors who have already practiced what they preach are the ones most likely to experience success in challenging their people to pray for neighbors.

E. K. Bailey, pastor of the Concord Missionary Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, accepted the challenge to make his home a House of Prayer and to pray for five of his own neighbors before introducing the idea to his congregation. One neighbor on his prayer list

was a Harvard law graduate who for years had spurned the gospel for intellectual reasons. As E. K. prayed, God softened this mans heart. Then, one Sunday, he showed up at a worship service and, to Pastor Bailey's surprise, was the first person to respond to the gospel invitation. Prayer had made the difference. When E. K. Bailey, some weeks later, preached on prayer and challenged his people to pray for their neighbors, a great many of them responded and formed their own Houses of Prayer. They simply followed their leader.

**Challenge All Church Members to Pray for Neighbors**

Gods society-transforming prayer plan in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 calls for all believers to make "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving . . . for everyone." A congregational plan to pray for neighbors must not be "a program" for a small percentage of the members. It ought to be a lifestyle for all the members.

Pastors need to challenge all their members to pray for their neighbors with sermons on passages like 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Colossians 4:2-6, and John 14:12-14.

For a simple, easy way to begin, members can then use the five-n-five prayer challenge: pray five blessings for five neighbors for five minutes a day, five days a week, for five weeks. HOPE's Five Blessings brochure serves as a training tool for this exercise. In this brochure the word BLESS is used as an acronym to help intercessors remember five important ways to pray for neighbors:

> B Body - health, protection, strength
>
> L Labor - work, income, security
>
> E Emotional - joy, peace, hope
>
> S Social - love, marriage, family, friends
>
> S Spiritual - salvation, faith, grace

Any believer who is able to participate in worship can pray this way—young or old, new or long-term Christian, educated or uneducated. Families are encouraged to pray this way together. Singles may do it alone or join with others.

When Craig Turley, pastor the Covenant Family Church of Redlands, California, introduced the House of Prayer concept to his congregation, 100 percent of the members accepted the Five Blessings challenge to pray for their neighbors. Turley later commented, "Praying for neighbors in Houses of Prayer is having the effect of intensifying prayer in all aspects of our congregations life. Its also causing us to reach out with love to those around us."

Combine the Efforts of Many Churches to Plant Houses of Prayer on Every

Street

A single church can make an impact, but it will take the combined efforts of several churches working together to make your city a city of praying neighbors.

Pastors who come together for prayer and mutual support are in the best position to give leadership to such a united prayer effort. They need to agree first of all on a common strategy and then on a common starting time. Implementation plans offered by HOPE, will facilitate such combined efforts.

Leaders should also plan for a way to map the city and identify where Houses of Prayer are located or need to be located in order to cover every block. A Neighborhood Mobilization Database, made available by Mapping Center for Evangelism, is designed specifically for this purpose. It can be ordered by calling 1-888-MAP-7997.

**Appoint Key People to Administrate the Ministry**

Once the combined effort has begun, some key people will be needed to coordinate efforts and insure that the ministry is sustained for the long term.

- Consider appointing a computer-literate person to chart the existing Houses of Prayer
- a coordinator to keep in touch with intercessors
- a convener for the pastors prayer network
- a coordinator for community-wide prayer events

Leaders should also establish some dates for combined prayer events. These will provide a time to recast the vision, report results, share answers to prayer, and celebrate Gods goodness. Some cities are now having combined Sunday-evening worship services quarterly for this purpose.

I believe God wants every town and city in America to be a city of praying neighbors. This is the desire of his heart. God wants all to come to salvation, all to come to a knowledge of the truth, and all society to be transformed. His plan to make that happen, in one word, is prayer. In four words, it is "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving . . . made for everyone (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

God, in his sovereignty, can transform a city any time he chooses. But since he chooses to work in response to the prayers of his people, we can expect it to happen in those times and in those places where his people, in obedience to his command, earnestly and urgently pray. Gods part is to act in line with his promises. Our part is to pray. God always does "his part." The only question that remains has to do with "our part."

Our part is obedience. And obedience to a clear command of Scripture cannot be delayed. Don't put this off! Start right now.

For additional information contact:

Houses of Prayer Everywhere ,
PO Box 141312 Grand Rapids, MI 49514
800-217-5200 / 616-791-9926 (FAX)

Dr. Alvin Vander Griend, Executive Director ***avg@missionindia.org***

Paul W. Dozeman, Associate Director ***pdoze@missionindia.org***