

**URBAN MINISTRY**  
**THE KINGDOM, THE CITY AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

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**1.. EARLY HISTORY OF THE CITY**

800 AD Chang'an in China had popn of 800K. Mexico – Teotihuacan nearly 100K.

Before 4000 BC Al Ubaid in modern Iraq, Temples and dwellings surrounding on terraces. Also Ur [5K popn] , Eridu and Uruk. In 3500 Sumerians came for sea trade and metal and ushered in Bronze age [Moholy-Nagy 1968:37F]

Sumer and Akkad battled for dominance.

Nile Valley centres like Heliopolis, Thebes and Tell el Amarna.

Piety, trade, security and politics.

Under influence of Hellenism the top-down of Mesopotamian theocracy turns to bottom-up local authority – a formally enrolled citizen body (demos) and a governing body (boule). Roman empire continued that initially. Empire a commonwealth of self-governing cities. As Empire expanded so need for administration and defence increases. End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cent AD popular democracy moves to well-to-do.

Koine Greek.

Rome's military conquests carried urban model: "North Africa had hundreds of cities, and north of the Alps major cities rose from Vienna to Bordeaux. Even in far-off Britain there were major cities at York, Bath and Londond... Rome's domination resulted in an urban imperialism." [Palen 1992:p38]

Rome: 650K in 100 AD – maybe even a million. [Chandler & Fox. 1974: 303]

Linked by some 52K miles of road. Megalopolis became Necropolis by 2<sup>nd</sup> Cent third of pop. of Rome were slaves, another third on doles. Bread and Circuses.

"You made a city of the far-flung earth." Epitaph to Rome, Rutilius Namatianus.

After 313 Churches held sway with Cathedrals. 1200 bishops in N Africa!

Crusades made cities military and, more, commercial centres.

Radical shift occurs in Middle Ages: central fortress and church in 'bourg', with the 'faubourg' of the merchant's settlement surrounding it.

13<sup>th</sup> Cent saw beginning of shift in France, Spain and England to 'bastide' – planned city with symbolic centre not church nor fortress but the market. [J.Vance 1990:178-205] In Europe by 1340 one hundred cities >20K [Bairoch 1988:136]

Renaissance, with more humanist focus, saw cities bereft of church attenders – [Ozment 1975:18]

**Muslim Cities (from ch 3)**

North Africa: 'for Muslims, cities often possess a special sanctity and are regarded as the sole places in which a full and truly Muslim life may be lived.' [Lapidus 69:v]

Dark Ages saw founding of new Arab cities and towns. Radiating centres of Islamization along the caravan and sea routes. Late 15<sup>th</sup> Cent tailed off.

16<sup>th</sup> Cent. Reformation was an urban event. Return to new cosmopolis. Geneva under Calvin became Jerusalem of Europe – influence spreading far and wide. 1666 Great Fire, Wren gave honour to Royal Stock Exchange.

## **2 INTO THE INDUSTRIAL AGE**

### **Colonial Cities**

16<sup>th</sup> Cent.

Before colonisation by Cortes Tenochtitlan, (upon the rubble of which he built Mexico City) Aztec centre 200K popn in 1519

Spanish built new colonial cities. Portuguese conquered earlier but built later

1690: Jakarta [Batavia] became Dutch City.

British created Calcutta in 1690 and Singapore in 1819 and occupied Bombay and Hong Kong

1649 SPCK founded

1783-93 Liverpool traded 300K slaves. After his conversion Joh Newton made three slaving voyages and loved the prayerful times.

### **Industrial Cities**

After Napoleonic Wars need for raw material and less interest in overseas expansion. After the temple, the castle and the market, now came the factory.

England in 1790-1810 became the ‘workshop of the world’.

1825 spinning mill output per worker was 300 times that of previous century.

1806 – 97% iron in coke blast furnaces. England had 2% world popn and produced equivalent iron to rest of world.

1825 first railway.

London in 1800 was 900K, by 1861 nearly three million – largest in world.

By 1900 almost four and a half million.

Manchester, a commercial capital of Europe with cotton. Similar in USA Chicago.

Visitor Henry Colman in 1845: “Every day I live I thank Heaven that I am not a poor man with a family in England” [Briggs 1993:116]

Census 1851 urban popn of UK 10.2 million. Church attendance 49.7% but 71.4% for rural areas.

1902-03 census: “Adult attendance at Anglican services averaged 4 percent in the poorest working-class districts, 5 percent in average working-class districts,... 18 percent in wealthy suburban districts, and 22 percent in wealthy West End districts... although most cities had a few conspicuously flourishing working-class parishes, the hundreds who attended these churches were few if set beside the thousands who stayed away. “ [FitC p31]

Middle class churchgoers saw the labour movement as marked by ingratitude, disrespect and sedition and worldliness. The voting record of English bishops in House of Lords on labour and factory reform very poor. Antiurbanism and Arcadian myth of back to nature, the city as a perversion of nature and hoped for individual converts. Boy Scouts movements etc.

Missionaries moved abroad to village communities rather than address urban at home, with ‘mission stations’ well away from urban areas.

## **3. THE FOURTH GREAT URBAN WAVE.**

Began in 1950s.  
Islamic cities saw new expansion.  
Population growth and immigration from rural hinterlands.

### **Suburbanisation.**

Single family home for middle and upper classes. (continental Europe different)  
Clapham set retreated ‘from dangers, cruelties, bad language, suffering, and immorality that filled the crowded London streets’ [Fishman 87:58]  
1961-74 the metropolitan counties and greater London lost 5.4% of their people, while the rest of Great Britain had a population increase of 12.8%. The outer edge of London increased in this period. Passion for Privacy. Public transport increases.

### **Inner City transformations**

Greater London lost 50% manufacturing jobs since 1960 – land of left-behind.  
1981 Manchester unemployed 20%, Birmingham 25% (40% ethnic minorities)  
Similarly in USA, the “rust belt”. Failed reform in 1950s and ethnic compounding.  
1950s-60s golden triangle of Birmingham/Milan/Dusseldorf expanding and inviting in ethnic Gaestarbeiter.  
1985 Britian’s Muslims number 1.5 million from Pakistan and Bangladesh, Nr and Middle East, Africa, Malaysia and the Caribbean. Bradford will find no English spoken and over the hill to areas of only white.  
African missions to rural areas now hitting back by importing Africans to our cities who are not city-wise. Less than one percent of Nairobi pastors are trained for urban ministry. [Mutunga 1993:26]

### **Megacities outside Christian Orbit**

1900 – largest cities were London , NY, Paris, Berlin and Chicago. All Christian.  
Now Chinese, Indian and Muslim cities. (Jakarta, Cairo, Baghdad, Istanbul, Teheran, Karachi and Dacca.  
Canada: no difference in attendance between rural and urban. 90% urban. 20% attend.

## **4 & 5 : GOD AND THE OLD TESTAMENT CITY**

Ur a shrine city of 220 acres with canals, harbours and temples. Heaven meets earth.  
A strained exegesis then tries to prove pro-city OT.  
Semitic tradition of Ba’al that capital cities were goddesses married to the Ba’al.  
Amarna Letters show Canaan of 1550-1200BC “as a time of chaos, dissension , and selfish competition among heads of city-states vying for their own survival and the economic resources of their closest neighbors.... Town is pitted against town, neighbor against neighbor. Tributes of agricultural products, trade taxes, women, and slave labor increase.” J Flanagan 1988:183.  
Land promised to Tribes is signified by the City names.  
Kings and city go together.  
David takes ark to City as dwelling place of YHWH. Deut.12:5 (although heaven)  
Chronicler urban building is sign of divine blessing, wicked kings do not build cities.

Alien within the gates could worship (Ex12:48-9, Lev22:18-19) Justice and compassion for the resident alien Z(Lev19:9-10,33-34) in the city.  
Lev25:23 the land and the cities are Yahweh’s and not self-promoting an urban greed.

Law's protection for all: Lev 19:9-10, Lev:14, Deut17:18-20)

I Sam wish for a King intimates ambivalence about Urban Kingship.

Isaiah 5:7, God looks to city for Justice (mispat) and not bloodshed (mispach); righteousness (tsedaqah) not cries of distress (tse'aqah) If they do not follow this path then God punish their cities as he punished Canaanite cities (Lev 26:25, Deut28:15-16, 52-55)

Jer 11:13 You have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah!"

Urban refugees:

Failure to display urban holiness led to fall of Jerusalem.

Babylon was network of urban centres of control and subjugation. Jer29:8 pray for the city into which I have called you to exile... Then return would be a multinational Jerusalem (Jer30:9) The remnant of Isaiah will return to rebuild the cities.

## **6. JESUS, SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH**

Roman cities not stand alone cities but nodal points within societal systems of villages and towns. Other gospels call villages (kome), Luke calls polis (Lk City of David) perhaps due to proximity to Jerusalem.

A large village acted as centre for the komae so might be called a polis.

**Galilee:** Josephus says: "The cities lie very thick and the many villages that are here are everywhere so full of people by the richness of their soil that the very least of them contained about 15K inhabitants." Wars of the Jews 3:43

One of the most densely populated regions of Empire. 750 sq miles pop 200K in reign of Herod Antipas (Batey1991:136)

One could not live in any village of lower Galilee and escape the effects and ramifications of urbanization." (Overman 1988:165)

Urban institutions like courts (Mt5:25) city market squares (Mt 23:7) banking (Lk 19:23) absentee landlords ((Mk 12:1-12) Centurions leaders (Mt 8:5) tax collectors controlling fishing rights (Mt9:10, Lk 5:27)

Caesarea Philippi minted own money as a toparchic capital.

Sign of Jonah (Mt 12:39-40)

Luke emphasises cities. Sets his face resolutely. Lk 19:38 – Blessed is Kg who comes in name of Lord, but 19:41 Jesus weeps over City.

### **Mission**

Jerusalem controls mission enterprise as described in Acts, but transfers to Rome.

And yet Roman literature is anti-urban at this time. Nb Ekklesia's urban ring. And the Essenes called Hellenistic cities an 'infectious germ' according to Philo, yet they are used by Christians.

**Paul** "concentrates on the district or provincial capitals, each of which stands for a whole region: Philippi for Macedonia (Phil.4:15) Thessalonica for Macedonia and Achaia (I Thess 1:7), Corinth for Achaia (I Cor. 16:15, II Cor. 1:1) and Ephesus for Asia (Rom 16:5, I Cor 16:19, II Cor 1:8)... In each of these he lays the foundation for a Christian community, clearly in the hope that, from these strategic centers, the gospel will be carried into the surrounding countryside and towns." (Bosch 1991:130)

Ephesus leading cosmopolitan seaport of Asia Minor so tentacles out (Acts 19:10)

Antioch: served as capital of Syria. (Acts 13:1-2)

Paul rooted in urban, “ a citizen of no ordinary city” (Acts 21:39)  
Uses Kyrios (urban usage of revered deities, high rulers – Kittle 1965:1049-58)  
‘Citizenship’ meant that residents of colonies (Philippi) were names in inscriptions in Rome and would thereby enjoy same privileges as if they lived in capital (Motyers 1966:158) so he can say, “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20)  
Antioch of Syria becomes entry point into Gentile world. (Acts 11:19-21 etc)  
**Conn says** “Paul saw the church in the city as a railway station, not an exhibition hall.” P147  
*Leitourgia*: Kittel says (1967:216f) a specific service performed by public benefactor for the urban public welfare. Such is the worship of the urban church.  
*Kerygma*: The keryx was the public messenger vested with public authority. From generation to generation we pass it on.  
*Koinonia*: not uncommon in urban Greek context. Baptism the mark of equality, open to women, sacrificial love, table fellowship of rich and poor. Unlike urban clubs of wealth and ethnicity.  
*Diakonia*: Urban slaves – transformed by cross (Mk10:45) Apostles become servants (I Cor 3:5)  
*Dikaioma* (justice) The gates in OT and the civic provinces in NT. “Generally lawsuits were conducted between social equals...or by a plaintiff of superior social status and power against an inferior (Winter 1994:108)

### **PART THREE : UNDERSTANDING CITIES**

Chicago School (founded by Robert Park) Louis Wirth tended to the anti-urban in that they saw urban as place of degradation, anomie and anonymity and as specific locales. The Urban Peril

But there is a human need for complexity and excitement. Middle and upper class observers assume the good life is defined by order and the choices that wealth makes possible.

“Like a jazz combo, urban ministry aims not for order but resolution into harmony.....a healthy skepticism towards order is an appropriate stance for the urban practitioner of ministry” p.172.

“Urban”: Denmark and Sweden means 200, USA 2500, Greece 10K. Un 20K.  
1870s Bishop to Disraeli, “church will probably lose the city”, “Don’t be mistaken, my Lord, the church has nothing to lose , for she has never had the city.”  
“Megacity” is a term which concentrates too much on size and not on connectivity and transglobal scale.

City and Suburb are total city. Lines between urban and suburban fading.

#### **Church in the Urban:**

Defeatism: “tendency to resist the city’s impact on the church instead of developing the church’s impact on the city.” (p165) But most ministers are not aware of their rural mind-set. Even in Brazil seminarians are coming increasingly from rural areas – even Liberation Theology majors on the rural mind-sets?

The shop-front churches were aimed at the walking poor.

Ignatius Loyola 1491-1556 abandoned cloister and struggled to build downtown residences, schools, social centres and churches. Followers like Francis Xavier did

same in Asia. If cities did not exist Jesuits helped create them – Nagasaki Japan founded as Jesuit settlement in 1579, likewise Sao Paulo in 1553. Presbyterian Church in America has founded Mission to the World (MTW) as an agency to church-plant in major urban centres of world mainly aimed at middle class influential folk.

**Agencies:**

Largely centred on Church Growth –

Africa: Urban Ministries Support Group in Nairobi.

Australia: Ecumenical Coalition for Urban Ministry.

Mexico's Vision Evangelizadora Latinoamericana (VELA) resource manual on church growth in Mexico.

ECUM in UK and City Cries.

Montreal: Direction Chretienne.

USA bewails that in 1997 a survey of 169 seminaries only 59% offered urban-directed courses. Two thirds fail to offer one course.

SCUPE: Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education.

Bresee Institute in Los Angeles.

Ray Bakke.

Class struggle now takes on guise of race-struggle.

Now movement from city to city.

Tombs of Cairo's City of the Dead become homes for thousands of dispossessed.

**Canada:**

Not an anti-urban mentality, no white flight. Church decline in rural and urban equal.

**City as Stabiliser**

Skyscrapers were initially disallowed in Marxist States as symbols of the stability of industrial capitalism. In Europe they have been restricted so that they do not overpower national monuments. Philadelphia made decision to build higher than city hall only in 1980s. Cities are showcases of how they see themselves. Cairo and Istanbul typical Islamic showcases.

Root Groups, Family Fellowships, Vine Groups, Communities of Faith in UK urban areas among the more poor. BECs in UK.

**The Training Curriculum**

Multidisciplinary:

- A. Diagnostic: understanding
  1. Identification of situation
  2. Engagement – knowing your community
  3. Recording – data is essential.

- B. Exploration:
1. Models of ministry
  2. Theories – sociology – contextualisation –
  3. On-site evaluation
- C: The Prescriptive Process
1. predictive work in planning.

### **How to be a fieldworker:**

Dialogical approach -

Explain your presence – be a learning student, not teacher!

Work with inevitable conflict

Individual work ends in stress.

Be wary of term ‘norm’.

You’ll probably misunderstand!

Learn the language and have a mentor to help.

Against the banking theory of learning.

Mentoring is the model for learning:

Imitate, mimic.

Danger of hiring professionals.

Field-work Process (based on Lingenfelter 1992:193)

1. contacting population – where do they gather?
2. Map, observe, interview
3. Observe actors, routines
4. Linguistic context
5. Social organisation and leadership analysis of networks, groups.
6. Obstacles to gospel.

Remember that informant may be at risk by associating with you. It will take time and will begin with superficial or with a blind.

People will try to please or tease you.

Look for values.

Be aware of multiplicity and overlaps of sub-cultures.

Interpreting experience – don’t assume our own culture is superior!

Test findings and interpretations.

Look from both sides: e.g. gentrification looks great! Social Cleansing?

Demographic study: data collections

Where are people in community being denied their rightful shalom? (Taylor 1979:23)

Felt need and real needs have to be differentiated.

Systemic needs as well as individual needs.

Bonding is necessary at some stage – or never be part of community.

Check our own prejudices – what do we think when we see young in new car in community? Absorb the life of the Community in celebration etc. Eat local.

### **Dealing with Fear**

But living in is not easy:

Poor schools, dangerous,  
Contact agencies, focus groups.

White suburbanites fear out of all proportion to reason. Confront own fears.

### **After the initial Rush**

When first in new culture one can have a sense of power. Uniqueness is appreciated. Headship rather than humility. Later comes missing orderly worship and quietness, spontaneity now feels just disorganised. Once felt useful now feel overwhelmed, wanting more privacy, missing home roots.

### **Stress Points**

Need friends and overseers, small group accountability and prayer. Leaders always expected to give but need spiritual food. Recreation is unnecessary extravagance in the light of local need. Healthy living! Busy and Active all the time in the city! Time for reflection or tired and stale. Discipline of prayer. people pleasing. We're never above others in holiness – that's self-deception. Need more skills and less contemplation is wrong way around.

### **Therefore for healthy Living**

Call on others. Don't leave it too late.  
Count the cost. Specific Training.

Indigenous leaders need all this just as much!

[also disciplines of Architecture, planning, politics, comparative religions, not mentioned by Conn]

### **Ethnographic Studies:**

Not to study people but learn from them.

Be objective and don't judge. Be honest about your biases.

### **Ethnic consciousness:**

Did Irish immigrants feel themselves an ethnic group prior to famine?

Segregate by choice or assimilation through generations?

The issue is power and its lack.

### **Poverty:**

Kept abstract and hidden because poverty is usually immobile. Red-lining.

Cut off from the society that controls you. No way in.

Unable to change one's situation.

Slums of despair or slums of hope?

Become exploiters of others.

Base ministry on the gifts of people rather than their need?

Let community control process. Diaconal.

### **The Fall: Sin in the City**

*"Cursed is the ground because of you"* (Gen 3:17)

buildings collapse, absentee landlords, red-lining community, home loans,  
garbage. No one cares.

### **create Signs of Shalom in the city**

Finding the real causes  
finding the real leaders and gifts. Indigenous.  
Leaders often groups not individuals.  
Community organising  
Vulnerability  
Transformation that does not promote dependency.