

THROUGH OUR LONG EXILE: KEN LEECH

(DLT, 2001)

Place is something 'which earth has given and human hands have made'.

Exile. God is an unsettling character in OT. 'A people of tents rather than temples'

East London:

Mile End extent of Roman Consul's military jurisdiction.

1484 Richard III forbade aliens to work in the city.

1517 anti-alien riots in Spitalfields 1736 vs.RCs

late 1600s waves of Huguenots.

1820s steam boats; 1832 Omnibus; 1863 Underground.

1850s East Ham

1880 Royal Docks

1850s Suburbs

1866 cholera

1900 E London & Essex migrations mutual.

Until 1900 most of E London populated by local births.

Dickens gives it a bad name and then 1888 the Ripper Murders. Very poor.

Docks; Clothing; Boot-making; Furniture; Tobacco; Silk; Sugar; Beer.

1883: 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London'. Settlements – Toynbee Hall

1841-61 over 60K Irish move to London. 'human chimpanzees'. RC churches.

Sephardic Jews from Spain minority.

Ashkenazi after Ukraine persecutions. 1770s Poor Jews join rag trade.

1860s Jewish population now traders and shopkeepers.

1890s Russian Pogroms but English Jews antagonistic to their entry.

Whitechapel becomes Jewish and Bethnal Green remains English.

Wapping Irish take over Labour party.

Chapters Four and Five

1892-1906 race card played by Primrose League and Cons MPs.

1876 Hebrew Socialist Union. Unionisation of tailors. CP almost entirely Jewish.

1936 Mosley at Cable Street. Fighting police.

Shoreditch most poor. Then Bethnal Green and Stepney.

Abercrombie Greater London Plan 1944

Jewish CP and Irish LP fall out.

Black Community

Canning Town before 1939. West Africa, West Indies, Maltese and India.

1950s Somali. Early 60s the figures begin to signify.

1961: half East End have no access to a bath!

Joe Willaimson fights for slum clearance but says racist things.

Blacks suffered bad housing and political disconnectedness.

PART TWO: DOING THEOLOGY IN THE COMMUNITY

6. Urbanism and its discontents

‘Urbanism’: Louis Wirth – state of mind.

Patrick Geddes
Peter Kropotkin
Ebenezer Howard
Chicago School of Urban Sociology
1950s London Ruth Glass.

Then dominated by sociologists and town planners.
Now radical geographers. – David Harvey *Social Justice and the City*
Recently:

1. Economic and Political issues base
2. Cultural Diversity

Babylon contained eleven miles of walls; Rome tenements.
14 Megacities today, 27 by 2015.
Asian countries now build city size of London every six months.
London 6.4 mill but include metropolitan area is 12.5 million.
‘Exopolis’ shows the strength of urban life now at edges.
Counter-urban migratory trends.

Paris now second largest Portuguese city in world
Los Angeles more Salvadorians than in San Salvador.
32 million Latinos in USA.

Since 1840s British cities are depopulating. Bangladeshi and Docklands increased only East London.
Since 1960 Detroit has lost half its population. De-industrialisation.

London typical of urban policy problems

Collapse of economic base

- Knowledge based employment exaggerated.
- LDDC had half its jobs from re-located firms.
- Gentrification
- Wealthy new residents.
- Isle of Dogs – not one house for rent built.
- Decline in UK housing expenditure from 6.8% to 2.6% from ‘66 to ‘90.

Organised racism

- BNP councillor in 1993. Derek Beackon

Destruction of old communities

- Lack of consultation
- No infrastructure
- Strong patterns of kinship plus xenophobia.

Development Zones

- Health risks from dust etc. biggest building site in Europe.
- 1945 – reconstruction

1960s Renewal, Redevelopment
1980s Regeneration (cf Darwin's degenerate)
Toronto's Olympia and York selling in NY to pay for Docklands.

Health.

Washington DC infant mortality higher than Nepal.
Harlem higher than Bangladesh.
1951 UK health inequalities at lowest. Now increasing.

Theological Agenda

1. What is a good city?

Christianity was urban – 'pagan' = country dwellers, 'heathen' = heath dwellers.
But site of dehumanising forces. Profit before people. Enterprise before welfare.

2. Reduce Inequalities of Wealth and Power

Rich live in a world of their own. But they live in cities now.

3. Just Immigration?

4. North and South working together?

5. Learn from USA

We follow their failed policies (drugs) Churches taken seriously there.

6. What is Community?

7. Coping with Unemployment and Loss of Value

Bitterness from older redundancies.

8. Working for Sustainable City

Toxic waste into poorer areas. Traffic. Urban Lifestyle. Degrading.

9. Promote adequate Health Care

Eucharist is not junk food. Regeneration schemes thrive on outlets. Policy?

10. Housing transformation?

Good record from Churches

11. Literacy in capacity building

Paulo Friere and Chris Searle.

12. Significance of Place

Eroded by globalisation. Loss of roots. Ecclestone: 'soil reflects soul'.
Earth Summit in Rio 1992. Agenda 21.
Churches can be anchor organisations for a community.

7. The Captivity and Liberation of Theology.

Evagrius Ponticus.

1. Become Cerebral Discipline
2. Elitist Discipline. Class; male; should now be 'public discipline' (Martin Marty 1974) 'the people's Work'.
3. Seen as a preparation for some other form of life. It should be performative.
4. Seen as Pure and objective, not engaged.
5. Seen as an Individual pursuit
6. Disconnected from Prayer. cf. Orthodox understanding. Aquinas' last word was silence. By 1300 theology had lost ability to express ecstasy.

Doing Theology Locally

Theology is not a universal language says SA Institute of Contextual Theology.
Joe Holland and peter Henriot: *Social Analysis* 1977 – 1. insertion, 2. social analysis,
3. reflection, 4. Pastoral planning.

Fr Joseph Cardijn: See Judge Act in Belgium

Mirfield: Bridget Rees

Birmingham Oscott: Mary Beasley

Catholic Housing Aid Soc; UNLEASH on homelessness.

CARA;

Jim Hart in INCIT.

Robert Schrieter: *Constructing Local Theologies* 1985

Laurie Green: 'pavement Level'

History of Urban Theology

1892. Dr Graham Taylor: Professor of Social Economics at Chicago Theological
Seminary set up Chicago Commons, settlement.

1940s East Harlem Protestant Parish

1960s Urban Training Centre Chicago

MUST program NYTS

Ted Wickham: *Church and People in an Industrial City*. 1957. In Sheffield
Sheffield Industrial Mission. Also Roland Walls and Alan Ecclestone.

Margaret Kane in North-East England.

John Vincent: UTU

Urban Ministry Project, London.

EUTP, Neville Black.

1970s ECUM

1975 START in E London. Audrey Shilling (Oxford House, Bethnal Green)

Merseyside Churches' Urban Institute. Hilary Russell. John Moores Uni.

Passionist Inner City Mission, Fr Austin Smith.

'The Edge' paper.

Academic Theology?

Radical Orthodoxy with John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock.?

Ian Markham at Liverpool Hope Uni.?

8. Theology Race and Plurality

Largest minority is Bagladeshi. From Sylhet region. 61% of Spitalfields.

Bangla = bengal

Desh = land.

Fifth largest linguistic group in world. 88% Muslim. Rabindranath Tagore poet.

Seen as impure by Sunnis. John Webber's work.

Islam changing.

Is Jesus or Allah stronger?

Are we Christians or English?

Newham:

198 congregations, 77 religious organisation or centres.

25-30K Muslims, 21K Hindus, 4K Sikhs, 17K Christians.

Church of England

Not at home here, here to 'do good'. Hugh McLeod shows deChristianised very early.

1890 parish churches empty! St George's in the East in riots had only 40 congregn.

CofE has no sectarian tradition till recently. Ubiquitous and a structure.

1883 The Bitter Cry of Outcast London pulled in Methodists. Booth felt they'd failed.

RCs largely Irish, now concerned for empowerment before charity.

Greg Smith *The Christ of the Barking Road*. Pentecostal and uncritical.

Samuel Huntingdon, 'clash of civilisations'. A new cold war of faiths.

Rules of Engagement

1. build on traditions of justice
2. things are changing! Children are asking.
3. 'fundamentalist' unknown in Islam. But most are not
4. Start with practical issues. Female circumcision, drug, community organising.
5. Issues on our doorstep. Hospital chaplaincy team. Schools
6. Network across continents
7. Theology to be done. Affirm own experience.
8. Since Isle of Dogs and Derrick Beackon election, racism awareness!

Change practice not just ideas!

9. God on the Edge: theology and 'social exclusion'

Synoptics: one in ten verses about the rich and the poor.

St John of the Cross: poor person is an altar more venerable than one of stone.

Myth that poverty is marginal. To have no stake in society but still at its heart.

One third children in UK below poverty line. Highest proportion in Europe.

'Underclass' terminology has turned to SE.

But:

1. It is replacing notion of equality in society.
2. Forgets agents of exclusion. Outer Estates built that way! Asylum seekers!
3. Bypasses issues of power and sees SE as more and educational improvement.
4. Forgets that exclusion is a process and treats groups as SE Control.

Homelessness:

Young graduates with jobs but no way into housing.

Simon Community, Franciscans, Centrepont, Mission on the Margins:
Mary Beasley in B'ham.

Drugs:

Maze, E London; territory and gangs.

Mental Health

Homosexuality: David Randall

Clergy Style: *Disabling Professions* – Ivan Illich

Anglicans need to lose our respectability for this work.

Our clergy pattern is turning into one of retreat into the office.

We partner and thus hand over control and style to professional agency.

So, Deconstruction and Metanoia – subversion of convention and pretension.

Become remnant but hold to 'new catholicity' in solidarity with suffering. Crucified.

Allow network to grow, not control, at edge of chaos – since an organism is always off balance. Competence yes, but not culture of management.

Otherwise the language of accommodation not confrontation.

What happens if the 'cared for' group demand equality and membership?

Clement of Alexandria had to argue to allow the rich into the poor church!

10. Agenda for an urban Spirituality

Too much writing can get in the way of 'doing' Spirituality and Politics.

New Testament speaks hardly at all about personal formation but Body and its movement.

Don't distinguish between 'religion' and 'spirituality' or the latter loses Rule.

Solidarity needs inner stability. Stature of Waiting.

1. reverencing matter
2. compassion
3. resurrection experience. Not ashamed of my wounds.
4. engage question of conflict. Passion and energy and praise.
5. sense of wonder. Encounter with strange, alien and unpredictable.
6. silence against frenzy and compulsive behaviour.
7. hope of liberation. Vision of alternative future
8. darkness of unknowing 'agnosia' via negativa.

"Urbanology is a mystical exercise in which you intuit the spirit of place."

– Steve Latham, Baptist in Paddington.

11. Theology and Politics revisited

Most now occurs outside party machines.

Mary Hughes: the Dewdrop Inn, Whitechapel 1926

John Groser: Battle of Cable Street. Master of St Katherine's Foundation.

1. long-term commitment
2. personal as political. Dignity.
3. concrete local struggle showed national, global etc.

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4. dynamic celebration in liturgy.

“The Church is framed with the express purpose of interfering, meddling, in the world”, Newman.

Models of Political Engagement

1. Politics of Reinforcement: belief that church and govt on same side.
2. Politics of Retreat:
3. Politics of Rescue: rescue and nothing else.
4. Politics of Reform: social responsibility. Influence status quo. Faith in the City.
5. Politics of Radicalism: back to source.
6. Politics of Resistance: Bible restless. However this can focus on us as weak.
7. Politics of Revolution: change no longer possible within these structures.

Servant Church is easier than Prophetic Church!

“Kingdom of God” in biblical tradition is not a concept but a symbol that swallows up our actions and lives.