

## URBAN MINISTRY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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Urbanism: we are all urban now.

Urban Vocation:

1890: Henry Stanley *In Darkest Africa: the way in.*

William Booth: *In Darkest England: the way Out*

1950: over 82% UK urban. 2010 over 90% (5% specifically rural) but anti-urban – even Ebenezer Howard 1898 looked to garden city.

#### **TELLING THE URBAN STORY ~ Bible**

Jesus wept over city (Luke 19:41). Cain builds Enoch. Tower of Babel – negative.

Looked forward to the well-founded city, designed and built by God (Hbw11:10) positive.

King David brings Ark to the City!

Babylon: epitome of evil.

Jeremiah: build houses and live in them. (Jer 29:5)

City names represented personality: Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem (cf Zurich, Washington)

**Jesus and the City.** “one could not live in any village of lower Galilee and escape the effects and ramifications of urbanisation.” Overmann. Gospels – law courts, city market squares, banking, absentee landlords, centurion leaders, tax collectors.

Pentecost rights the wrongs of Babel – prayers for all nations. Mission to small congregations “two or three are gathered..” in cities governing regions. Tenement cosmopolitanism of Roman cities. “all things to all people” (ICor 9:22)

Bishops of cities ~ the rural were *pagani*.

Urban language taken over by church: *kerygma, koinonia, diakonia*.

Hbws 13:14: No permanent city, Looking for one yet to be. New Jerusalem!

#### **Story of Contemporary City**

Urban stats are nationally subjective. ‘urbanism’ ~all urban now.

Chicago School of Sociology (Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Louis Wirth) concentric zones with core zones or business district. But all cities are different so multi-disciplinary needed. At 1550 only 1% population urban. Then ‘mercantilism’ to distant colonies with coastal cities for trade.

1900 This new wealth and slavery: Sustaining this required Industrial mass production.

Monopolies undergirded by military empires of Great Britain and France then USA.  
Grandiose city centres, later workers onto new estates. Now >45K International companies (TNCs) oil, cars, electronics, food, drugs and chemicals. Commodity mentality.  
Doug Daft 2000: Post-global: expanding from global to local.  
Greek board game called Polis. Detroit since 1960 becoming derelict as result.  
Pre-industrial fertility plus post-industrial mortality plus in-migration equals BIG cities.  
Popn of Spain from rural to urban every year. Asian cities size of London every six months.  
Jeremiah 28: Hananiah felt history was malleable. J made yoke of iron – history will out!

### **3 THE STORY OF URBAN MISSION**

Disraeli ~ Wittington-Ingram “she has never had the city.”

Stewart Headlam welded sacramentalist Slum Priest trad with FD Maurice to create Christian Socialism.

1826 David Nasmyth founded Glasgow City Mission. cf London CM

1865 William Booth’s SA. Settlements. 1885 Methodist Central Missions.

1892: Dr Graham Taylor ‘Chicago Commons’ – urban theology!

WWI then industrial mission, Knutsford, Brasted, ATS.

Industrial Christian Fellowship & William Temple College.

1941 *Christianity and Social Order* ‘middle axioms’

1957 *Church and People in an Industrial City* Ted Wickham.

1965 *The Secular City* H Cox. But still anti-urban bias in *Meaning of the City* Jacques Ellul.

In UK: Parish and People, *The Parish in Action* Joost de Blank. Ernie Southcott, Stephen Verney 1969 *People and Cities* international.

1969: UTU. Don Reeves & Tony Dyson ~ Urban Ministry Project.

EUTP: David Sheppard, Ted Roberts, Frank Deeks, John Hunter.

GUML Nev Black (Grp for Urban Min and Leadership). Jim Hart Proj Officer for EUTP.

Jim Puntton (FYT) and Michael Eastman (SU) UMTA. In Fraser on Paulo Freire.

Black & White Partnership: Rostwith Gerloff. Barney Pityana, David Horn, Jn Wilkinson.

Barry Thorley, Wilfred Wood, Rajinder Daniel. Eric James on class bias.

1974 *Built as a City* addressed class.

#### **Faith in the City. Dec 1985.**

Middle axiom approach ~ “Jesus’ ministry was that of personal relationship and individual responses”. Nic Bradbury’s pastoral *City of God?* Grace Davie and Geoff Ahern *Inner City*

God looked at folk religion. Colin Marchant, Terry Dummond et al, *Mission alongside the Poor* was Methodist.

1997: Ann Morisy *Beyond the Good Samaritan* asked for theological reflection.

Community Development expertise growing apace. CCWA, Parish Audits.

### **American Connection**

1976: Urban Bishops Coalition. Urban Hearings. Raymond Bakke, Harvey Conn. Jim Wallis, Saul Alinsky.

### **Questions from this experience:**

1. Power:
  - a. Government and Church programmes have kept control out of hands of those whom Christ wanted to empower. (Austin Smith)
  - b. Evangelicals stealing the show
  - c. Parachuting in and out.
2. Nature of our mission:
  - a. What is Good News for the poor?
  - b. Is God already there?
3. The Word Urban:
  - a. Means just the poor? Lack of holistic understanding of poverty
  - b. Learning from the poor not considered.
4. Praxis:
  - a. Simple lack of it. Except for seminal work of Joseph Cardijn in 1920s.

## **PART 2. THE URBAN CHALLENGE TODAY.**

### **4 The New Urban Challenge.**

Now more cosmopolitan, international, technological, consumerist, privatised, ethnically aware, noisy, polarized, polluted, designer-orientated, globalised

Since Faith in the City: Cold War ended, Branding and Globalisation seen as significant, deregulation of Finance, Regional Government, Demise of major industrial base, Microsoft overtakes General Electric as biggest company. South England over-heating at expense of North. Inequality deepens. Migration patterns change. Privatisation of social care, Charities as 'service providers'. Dockland fashionability, urban sprawl, drugs, gun crime, gated communities, 9/11/01.

Saw city as a mechanism, then organism, now contested space or mixity (D Massey)

*Cities for the Many Not the Few* – emphasis on power analysis.

Leonie Sandercock – Australian planning. People make community not architects!

Saskia Sassen – hierarchy of Global Cities, World Cities, Core Cities (30% England popn. Also called ‘second level cities’) Many African cities have no place in the hierarchy so begins the flows of population.

### **Globalization ~ its ‘Squalor and Splendour’ (Kofi Annan)**

Jesus in Roman Empire saw this processed through cities.

British Empire 390 million, 52 nations.

### **Turbo-Capitalism: Technology, Politics, Economics. Cities as the hardware.**

Offer concentration of infrastructure, personnel, know-how and interface for the three motors to interrelate.

Offer *Proximity* of services, entertainment, life-style.

Offer *Command centres* of global capitalism

Offer *Consumer centres*.

- These by-pass the poor as irrelevant. They are moved away (eg Scotswood).
- They have to compete ‘Going for Growth’, ‘London First!’
- Are Nation States any longer powerful? They used to have responsibility for the poor and forum for social ethics.
- 1992: *Jihad vs. McWorld* Benjamin Barber.

‘Does Globalisation exist or invented to allow politics of economic entry into other countries?’ Galbraith.

### **New Features of Urban:**

Plastic Surgery on cities, waterfronts, skylines. Hit ‘soft targets’ are manufacturing locations or brownfields. Ghost towns of the valleys, Right to Buy, Debt and loan-sharks.

Edge Cities, gentrification, social cleansing, atomisation ‘eating out but not joining in’.

The ‘con’ back into ‘consultation’. Gated communities. Urban universities, entertainment, ‘Party City’ UK now houses one-third of European retail space.

### **Dual City:**

Isolation while it looks more neighbourly. Private space masquerading as public space.

Ethnic enclaves, gated communities, gentrified areas, outer estates. People make decisions about areas without seeing the pain their decisions create. Two-speed city. ‘Layered City’.

Meeting and not meeting. Under God we belong together!

## **5. URBAN MEANINGS**

**Nothing is assured:** job-hopping, marriage-hopping. Oldies remain and control communities (and churches). Look Indian but come from Africa, Europe, or WIs.

**Finding Identity:** Theatre of surfaces. People changed by economic production and consuming. Celebrities, Brands. Who is the CofE? Belonging to a dress-code.

**Urban relationships:** mesh-works of dynamic processes, not simply places. Cross-over cultures.

**Tough places:** power-brokerage. Footprint of city in danger. Micro-arms and prostitution in global village.

**Urban Consumption:** 8mph in London as in 1880s. 24/7 life-style. Drive everywhere. Sustainability means good governance, affordable homes, social inclusion, public services.

**Urban Power:** needs money to turn choice into reality. Sleaze and competitive bidding. Bread and circuses.

**Celebration:** cultures, ‘Lion’s Den of estate but flames burnt through my fetters’ Eucharist.

**Antonio Gramsci:** Controlling the popular mind-set. Culture is an arena of struggle and contest. To prove there is an alternative to oppression. We read the city and it controls. Jesus offers a different story.

### **Part 3: THE JESUS CHALLENGE**

Only glimpse the Kingdom as we perform it but that glimpse is enough.

Always have the poor – limitation and particularism of human condition, so every act must be symbolic. Acting and thinking locally *and* globally.

Michel de Certeau: ‘Power have strategies, poor only tactics’, but with Jesus it’s different.

Kingdom offers poor the tools by which they fully participate in bringing about future.

‘Blessed are the poor’ for you will play a special part in the drama of salvation.

Not dispassionate justice for them but positive discrimination. Js is there (gay attack)

Problem of poverty is beyond poor and rich. Against complex global processes. p85.

Being with poor helps us see ourselves as a community of outsiders, not dominators.

#### **Culture and Context**

Kingdom is a new frame of reference to live a life by. Engines of globalisation are culture carriers. The fish. ‘Kingdom’ has to be deconstructed. To live as if is to punch above weight. *Metanoia* against globalisation’s culture of dependency.

## **First Century Palestine – cultural battle was raging.**

150 BC Hasmonians built forts, Herod battled against them and assassinated Miriamne. Sebastos at Caesarea Maritima. Herod the Great only built temple at C-Phillipi in Galilee. Antipas: dumped Nabatean wife and married Hasmonian. Sepphoris (put down by Varus) and Tiberius and link road to tie into Empire's trade routes. Taxed 25-40% of income and produce! Cash crops necessary therefore. Cities housed alien aristocracy with no ties to land, using Torah as proof of God-given power ('great tradition'). William Herzog says that Jesus' debates about Torah therefore about whose world-view would prevail! Jesus' stories of absentee landlords, tax-collectors. Magdalan 'garum' sauce. Luke 4 launch is only 1 hour from Sepphoris!

## **7 THE MARKS OF THE KINGDOM**

Awe and wonder – Our Father Heaven: The burning bush of urban experience. Been to the mountain-top.

Thy Will be done: living repentance: Don't buy the prevailing myths. Poor are not persistently poor. Provision of services not expensive in comparative terms.

Commodification 666 vs Ecclesia market-place. Efficiency 24/7, when God is Genesis worker. Information vs wisdom (Gnosticism)

Stewards – our daily bread : screens are out of the body experience. Streets are tough and real. 45K hectares of derelict and contaminated UK land. Matter matters, so does work. Capitalism founded on 'scarcity', Father on extravagant generosity. Confidence in body, despite many brutally twisted. Banquet of Kingdom.

As we forgive: knowing the Other: Otherness is open road to reconciled embrace.

Incarnation ~ Zacchaeus, Syro-Phoenician woman. Migrant labour (Moses and Exile) Parallel communities/enclaves. Unions disabled. Fragmentation of Working Class. Social inclusion/exclusion. Babel-Pentecost multi-voiced. Fragmentation of community – of the one Body of Christ. The different person looks alien but this fragmentation can bring us back to knowing who we are. Listen without pretending we are more together than they are. Engagement: a loving relationship with so-called enemy is essential. Stay in the city.

Deliver us from evil – structural sin: The barrel is racist. Beast – who can fight against him? Supportive individuals but a system. Official having to cut back. Culture of paper-work and self-protection. Jesus stares at city from cross – the web of evil.

Structural Righteousness – power and glory : Heavenly rejoicing at the Lamb vs Beast.

Col 1: 16 – hold together/system. Stripping and Unmasking and in train. Refuse the domination. War of the Lamb ~ baptismal mark. Rublev.

Apostolic Mission – forever and ever: Living in the not yet. New ways of being church so that we are more listening and engaged and trustworthy. Urban folk can see through our pretence. Belonging together in community which faces issues together.

## **Part Four: People in Mission**

### **8: Street-level ministry.**

Some Churches have drive and purpose, others just hanging on.

Know whose we are: Biding our time. Informed urban prayer. See it from God's perspective and don't demonize, change. Acted parables and Sacramental Signs. 'our Servanthood is very acceptable to his power'. Help don't overpower. Jesus releases paralytic. The congregation is full of skills. A valuing attitude. Strategic patience ~ love always costs.

Not working alone: small congregations OK but discipleship to learn. Urban mentors. Networks. Set charisma aside.

**The community as priest**: handles sacred things, taking, blessing, breaching, sharing.

**Community as prophet**: even an ass knows not to prophesy until you've listened.

Allowed to be frightened, depressed, stressed out, reassuring counsel. Prayer and parties. Quiet places.

**Prophets Imagine**: outside the box. Crossover café, Bar'n'Bus.

**Prophets ask critical Questions**: Hbw mature prophecy when rich/poor divide grew. Critical solidarity. 'Restorer of streets to be lived in'. Is 58.

**Street Juggler** every member ministry.

### **9. Moving into Urban Mission**

*Worship*: meet the alternative every Sunday. Praising open the situation. Jazz Mass. Not able to read ways. Visit other churches. Introductory sessions.

*Engaged Listening*: Social analysis. The spiral. DIY kit. Dominant values? Causes? Live in the midst to feel it.

*Building Networks*: both with similar and out-lying parishes, Christian Aid, NECN, be inclusive church.

*Choosing our Partners*: Partnership/leverage/competition/outputs – all requires partners. "The suspension of mutual loathing in pursuit of money." Social mix never considered for

west end! Choose with eyes wide open. All the changing goal-posts of working with government. But it all interconnects and we must have that awareness.

**Faithful Action:** must 'signify'. Debt counselling, bring and buy, all God's creation. Fair-traded goods. Youth-bike, the Arts. Basildon Mosque attendance. An end to the unhelpful separation of evangelism & social action ~ make it clear when you can. Celebrate always.

### **10. Wider Horizons**

Kindred spirits: catholic contextual theology

Address nation at every level & internationally. But without arrogance.

No top-heavy church: listen to local. Clergy morale. Training. Appointments. Strategic partnerships.

Build bridges: provide education programmes. Bring people together. Use the experts.

Critique our Power-relationships: rode a donkey into Jm. Appropriate training. Role models. Be happy in failures. Purse-strings on policy should be shared. Don't superimpose.