

Cities – Missions’ New Frontier, Second Edition, by Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) (47 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Preface to the Second Edition

1. Gospel to Urban Settings

Cities are growing rapidly in all parts of the world, and like the world at large, missions tomorrow will be mostly urban. Christ is calling the church to bring the gospel not only to tribes and villages, but also to modern, socially complex centers of population, culture, and political power. [Page 11]

Chapter 1. The Urbanization of Our World by Timothy M. Monsma

2. Urban Dwellers Now Outnumber Rural Dwellers

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. (p. 2) 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. (p. 29)* [Page 13]

* United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects, the 1996 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 1998).

3. Medium-sized Cities Growing Faster

While the mega-cities (over 10 million) 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. [Page 20]

4. Where Do City Dwellers Live? (1995) a.

<u>Size of the Metro Area</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Urban Population</u>
More than 10 million	7.6
5 to 10 million	6.7
1 to 5 million	22
500,00 to 1 million	9
Less than 500,000	54.7

a. United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects*, p. 27 [Page 20]

5. World’s Population Living in Cities

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. [Page 20]

6. Kinship of Word and Deed

... 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*, * 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. [Page 21]

* Roger Greenway, *Together Again: Kinship of Word and Deed* (Monrovia, CA.:MARC 1998).

7. Be a Servant

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). * [Page 21]

* Abraham Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, trans. and ed. James W. Skillen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

8. Christians Serve All to Hear the Gospel

Ferries and other boats have capsized because all the passengers rushed to one side or the other. The ship of Christian missions will be well served if missionaries do not all crowd into that which happens to be popular, but spread themselves out in such a way that all ethnic groups and social groups have the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. In this context that means that mission sending agencies should send missionaries to cities both large and small so that all may hear and believe.

One final comment about missionary research in the giant cities of the world: Some research in cities has as its first goal to identify all churches in a giant metropolitan

area. If one has several years for such research, this is a feasible goal. Inasmuch as most of us do not have that kind of time, there is a better way to go about it.

Make it your goal to identify all the people groups within a given city, both ethnic groups and social groups. Once all the groups are known by name, one can then ask which groups have been reached with the gospel and which groups still need missionary attention.

Even ethnic groups that were resistant to the gospel in their homeland may be open to the gospel in an urban environment because in the city the people are already experiencing rapid social change. God may very well be pleased to use rapid social change to open their hearts to religious change as well. Knowing the various groups and their present religious condition is a great help toward determining the direction that a missionary's work in a given city ought to take. [Page 22]

Chapter 2. A Biblical Framework for Urban Missions by Roger S. Greenway

9. World to Come Will be Urban

The world to come, Scripture teaches, will be an urban world. The redemption drama that began in a garden will end in a city, the New Jerusalem. Heaven's citizens will be urbanites. Drawn by bonds of grace from all races, nations, and language groups, new-city citizens will live together in perfect harmony as God's redeemed people, his new covenant community. This city to be will enjoy everything the cities that might have been would have possessed, and one thing more: The citizens of the new city will not only be sinless, they will be sinners washed clean. Theirs is the story of redemption. Their songs are about the Savior and his blood (Rev. 5:9) [Page 27]

10. Christians Understand the Root of World's Problems

Herein lies the nature of the religious warfare that rages in the city. There are, as Augustine pointed out, two cities within every single city. There are Babylon with its citizens and Jerusalem with its citizens. These two are essentially at odds, for they serve different masters and live by different standards. The master of the one is Christ; of the other, Antichrist.

Christians living and working in cities can understand things that remain largely a mystery to persons lacking the biblical framework. Christians are very realistic about the city's essential nature and the cause of the unending frustrations that occur when citizens try to improve city life. Christians understand the root of the problem. It is the moral malignancy that lies buried deep in the city's heart. It is the legacy of Cain and the spirit of Lamech, which have never gone away.

Because Christians understand this, they should never make the error of humanistic idealists who suppose that somehow, through enlightened planning, greater leaders,

and more dedicated efforts, the city's ills can be cured. All utopian schemes for the creation of a perfect city on earth are immediately discarded once the post fall city is understood from the biblical perspective.

Followers of Jesus Christ, aspirants to the city that will be, have important roles to play in the common-grace cities of this world. But they should never be deceived into thinking that through their combined efforts and best intentions, in some fashion or to some degree, these cities will become the kingdom of God and the city of King Jesus. Neither gradually nor suddenly will the cities of humankind become the city of God. These cities are temporary, under the curse, and someday will be removed to make way for the heavenly city that the Scriptures promise. A clear understanding of this fact is extremely important for urban workers. Naive utopianism should find no place in urban missiology, for it is as self-defeating as it is unbiblical. [Pages 30-31]

11. Cities Are Center Stage

By God's common grace, the cities that now are were built and are maintained. The development of human culture and civilization depends on them. In cities the fiercest battles for human minds and hearts take place. For that reason, cities are center stage for the Christian mission, the great drama of redemption. Understanding this, Christians ought not flee the urban battlefield, but should purposely choose to be in the city and occupy all the corners of urban life, bearing the light, salt, and leaven of the gospel.

The work of God's people in the cities that are ought never to be narrow or isolationist. The church in the city has a task to perform that carries its members into all the systems and all the areas that comprise urban life. Whether in education or politics, city hall or the marketplace, the responsibility of Jerusalem's citizens is to proclaim who really reigns. They must pray for the city's welfare, attack its abuses, and promote its true good. God's people know where the crucial issues lie. They know that the city's deepest struggle is religious. Precisely because they know this, they must not allow anything to remain outside the scope of their work and witness. All that is in the city must be confronted with all that is in Christ.

Because biblically enlightened Christians have begun to understand the nature of the city and have heard the missionary injunction to go into all nations and make disciples of all peoples, they approach cities realistically and evangelistically. Christians need not be shaken or surprised by anything that happens in the city. They expect to find much that is beautiful and beneficial, because God's common grace is operative there, and the very nature of the city encourages cultural development. [Page 31]

12. Forces of Evil Also in Cities

Christians know also that because of God's special grace another force has intervened and is at work in the city. It engages the forces of evil and builds a community of a

different kind. It is the Spirit of Christ enlisting God's people in the mission of salvation. This Spirit longs to hear the message of Jesus proclaimed in the streets. [Page 32]

13. Jonah, Unwilling, Message of Rebuke

Imagine how the story might have turned out if Jonah had remained to minister in Nineveh, teaching the law, establishing justice, and serving as a light to that pagan nation, as Israel was called to do (Isa. 42:1-9). Jonah might have sent a message to his fellow prophets in Israel, informing them that a great awakening had begun in Nineveh, and urging them to join him there to follow up on what had started. This might have led to a new day for Israel, a momentous turning point in its understanding of God and especially of his care for the world—even for cities as wicked as Nineveh. Israel might have come to perceive its own election in a new light, that is, as God's messenger-nation to the world.

But Jonah's distaste for ministry in Nineveh prevailed. The overall failure in terms of mission sprang from Jonah's and Israel's stubborn refusal to understand both God's concern for all nations and the responsibility of the citizens of Jerusalem to be lights to the Ninevehs of the world. It was in order to expose Israel's misconstrued theology that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of this short book and included it in the Bible. The Book of Jonah served ancient Israel, as it serves the Christian church as an instructor, a rebuke, and a reminder about mission. [Page 34]

14. Evangelize Modern Urban Areas

The issue of Nineveh still stands before God's people. In this time of worldwide urbanization, will God's people seize the opportunity to evangelize modern Ninevehs, or will they turn away like Jonah, preferring service in less threatening places? And if they do go to the cities, how extensive will their message be? Will it challenge the cities' wickedness in all places where it lurks, calling forth repentance that reaches from shops and streets to city halls?[Page 34]

15. God is Initiator & Director of Missions

The whole length and breadth of urban mission is implied in this revelation. The God of the Bible is the initiator and the director of the missionary enterprise. He cultivates green plants and governs the creation order for the well-being of the human race, but his chief concern is focused particularly on people. For their salvation he sends his prophets, as he sent his Son, to the city. [Page 35]

Chapter 3. The Urban-Mission Movement in the New Testament by Roger S. Greenway

16. Ministry of Conversion

Because the kingdom of Jesus Christ cannot be extended without the conversion of sinners, the growth of the church, and the ever-widening application of Christ's new

order by the faithful discipleship of his followers, the agenda for Christian missions is fairly clear. It is hard to understand, therefore, why in some churches evangelism has been given a different meaning, and “conversion” is almost considered an outdated word. [Page 39]

17. Proclaim the Gospel

What must head the list of things to be done in today’s cities? If the New Testament shapes our strategy, we will begin with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Like Paul, we will do everything in our power to win converts and will openly affirm that to be our goal (1 Cor. 9:19-23). [Page 40]

18. Repentance and Conversion Necessary

Regardless of its foreignness to the Greco-Roman mind, Paul persisted in his conviction that repentance and conversion are absolutely necessary for entrance into the kingdom of God. * Christ and the apostles did not preach about a kingdom of God to which entrance can be gained, or whose program can be realized in the world, without the demands of repentance and conversion being met. New Testament discipleship involves a radical and continued change of faith, worship, and ethics. “All things are become new’ (2 Cor. 5:17 KJV). Christian conversion, with its implications for the whole of life, was the basic step toward changing what was wrong in Roman society. [Pages 40-41]

* Geerhardus Vos, *The Kingdom and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), pp. 91ff.

19. Conversion Necessary Before Other Ministries

The societal dimensions of what needs to be done in the city are readily acknowledged, as is the importance of ministries for community development and the promotion of social justice. But at the same time the holistic perspective on urban mission recognizes that nothing is more crucial for social change in the city than the conversion of persons, families, and groups to evangelical Christianity. There is both theological and empirical evidence to substantiate this position. [Page 43]

20. Paul, the Church Planter

New Testament mission strategy emphasizes evangelism, winning converts, and multiplying churches. Paul’s approach to the cities of the first century illustrates this very well. Within a period of ten years, by means of three missionary journeys, Paul founded churches in the four Roman provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. His sights were set on Spain, the farthest western frontier of the empire (Rom. 15:24, 28); and he may have reached there. Everywhere Paul went he and his coworkers preached, gathered converts, and formed them into local, self-governing churches.

Deep theological presuppositions lay behind Paul’s emphasis on church planting. Fundamental was his conviction that God had intervened in the world to establish a

new community of people centered around Jesus Christ. Paul, like any Jew well-grounded in the Old Testament, knew full well that God had a goal in history—the formation of a people who would serve him and carry out his purpose. Paul believed, too, that the Messiah would establish a community of people through whom God would, in the last days, act mightily and climactically in the affairs of humankind. When, on the Damascus road, the glorified Lord announced to Paul, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” Paul sensed at once what Jesus was referring to. He was referring to the church, the community of men and women whom Paul was persecuting; they were so well known to and so much loved by the risen Lord that he identified himself with them.

That settled the issue for Paul. The persecutor of the church would become a church planter. From the moment of his conversion, he regarded the church as the unique community of believers in and through whom God was carrying forward his design and purpose in the world. The church, for Paul, was the long-awaited messianic community with worldwide dimensions. It was to be the bearer of the Good News to all races and nations, and would in that way fulfill God’s plan in history.

The founding of a church, for Paul, was a tremendous thing. It was an act of incorporating individuals and families into a new community of Christ, a mini-Jerusalem within the cities of the world. As an establisher of churches, Paul regarded himself as God’s co-laborer, building a community which would endure for eternity.*

Paul was realistic about the world and the evils it contained. He made no empty boasts about establishing utopia or ridding the world of injustice. Nor did he try to accomplish everything which, in time, the church would have to undertake. The apostle’s task was to lay a foundation, to establish communities that would serve as lights, as salt and leaven in the midst of the city, as Zion’s representatives in the Babylons of the day.

[Pages 44-45]

* Grassi, *World to Win*, pp.21-23

21. Unfortunately Parachurch Agencies Are Doing the Work

The parachurch mission agencies have been raised up to provide structures and vehicles for the ministry of the lay apostolate. In places Where ecclesiastical structures had become rigid and evangelism professionalized, groups such as Campus Crusade, Youth with a Mission, and a host of smaller lay-run mission organizations were formed to teach laypeople that evangelism is every Christian’s business and that they too, equipped by the Spirit, can share the gospel and advance God’s kingdom. These lay-run mission organizations almost always have a clearer grasp of the world situation, and of how Christians should carry the gospel to the non-Christian masses, than do the leading thinkers and administrators of denominations who have many other things to occupy their attention. Until we discover how to bring the church and mission to embrace one another and work together more effectively, a major part of the

responsibility for evangelizing cities will continue to be borne by parachurch agencies. [Pages 49-50]

22. An Apostolic Legacy

Urban society in the Roman Empire was scarcely less threatening and complicated than our own, especially for those who were socially and economically disadvantaged, as so many in the early church apparently were. For these new Christians, Paul and his co-workers did four important things which modern urban missionaries would do well to repeat.

First, Paul and his co-workers taught aggressively a clear and concise body of doctrine centered around the pivotal truth that Jesus is the Messiah and, by his death and resurrection, Savior of the world. Second, they spelled out a moral system of behavior for the discipline of individuals, families, and churches that was centered in the lordship of Jesus Christ and his authority over all areas of life, and that stood in sharp contrast to the values and lifestyle of the world. Third, they promoted through the organization of local churches a high level of cohesion and group identity, centered in a common confession and reaching beyond the local group to include the broader movement of “all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). This double identity of the early Christians—local identity in a disciplined confessional community and supralocal identity through the broad network of churches located throughout the empire—proved to be a powerful factor in the New Testament missionary movement. [Page 50]

23. Intimate Fellowship with All Social Classes

A final word about the urban Christian movement which the apostles of the Lord produced. Its approach to the social evils of the day was characterized more by tension and anticipation of eventual resolution than by direct conflict with specific evils and a fixed approach to dealing with them. The early Christian assemblies included in intimate fellowship persons of a wide range of social classes, with tremendous inconsistencies and unresolved social issues between them. There were masters and slaves, rich people and poor, Jews and Gentiles, males and females. Each of these pairings represents social differences and injustices which eventually the Christian community would have to address. But instead of tackling every problem on the agenda immediately, Paul and his colleagues laid the basis for changes of immense significance. They did this by teaching the Scriptures, building the Christian community, and inculcating into believers' minds a patient reliance on God's power, coupled with a firm expectation of a better world to come. By so doing, they set believers free, free from obsessive concern over present inconsistencies, free to wait for God's judgment in this world and the next, and free to tackle the problems at hand through the leading of the Spirit and the instruction of the Scriptures.* [Page 52]

*For a more detailed discussion of Paul’s urban ministry with special application to the cities of Latin America, see Greenway, *Urban Strategy for Latin America*, pp. 71-134

Chapter 4. Antioch: A Biblical Model of Urban Church Development by Roger S. Greenway

24. Many Converts Come from an Anonymous Multitude

Most of the churches of the first century, and all succeeding centuries, were founded by Christians whose names were never recorded in history books. They received no acclaim, on earth at least, for their labors and sacrifices. Some giants of faith and missionary endeavor stand out against the horizons of history, and we all know their names: William Carey, Hudson Taylor, David Livingstone. Their very names call to mind the opening of great areas of the world to the gospel. We thank God for such people, for they were faithful servants and God used them mightily. But at the same time we must remember that the vast majority of converts, and most Christian churches, were the fruits of an anonymous multitude who served God faithfully without earthly acclaim. [Page 56]

25. Where “Christian” Came from

In the ancient world, slaves were called by their master’s name. That probably explains how the followers of the Lord first came to be called *Christianoi* (“Christians”). Slaves had no right to exercise their own will; they could only obey orders. They could not hold property or leave an inheritance were their own masters in nothing, but in everything they submitted to a higher authority, that of their master and lord.

The Bible does not record the name of the observant critic who first gave disciples the nickname *Christians*. But the name stuck because it fit. Disciples of Jesus regarded him as their Master and themselves as his slaves. “We are not our own,” they said, “for we have been bought ‘with a price.’” Body and soul, in life and in death, they belonged to their divine Master, Jesus Christ. Doing God’s will was their chief concern. The sovereignty of God was more than a slogan or a doctrine. It had a decisive influence on their way of life, and the enemies of the gospel took note and called them Christians. [Pages 59-60]

Chapter 5. Evangelism, Relief, and Development by Roger S. Greenway

26. World’s Population Live in Urban Areas

In 1800 only 5 percent of the world’s population lived in urban areas. By 1900 the figure had increased to 14 percent. In 1980 it was approximately 40 percent, and by the year 2000 about half the World was urban. By 2050 approximately 79 percent of the world’s population will live in urban centers. The Third World accounts for most of the urban growth. By the year 2050 two-thirds of the world’s population will live in urban

areas of the Third World, and that is where most of the worst poverty conditions are found. [Page 67]

27. The Urban Poor

Nearly 50 percent of the world's population now live in cities, and the majority of them are poor and outside the Christian faith. *The urban poor constitute the largest unclaimed frontier Christian missions has ever encountered.* The urban masses have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ or seen it demonstrated in ways that affect their lives. They live outside the normal reach of established churches, and few attempts have been made to draw them into Christian congregations. Their living conditions are largely unseen except in printed statistics and photographs. The causes of their poverty are barely understood by the vast majority of mission-minded Christians. [Page 68]

28. One-half of the Population are Teens and Children

Slums, ghettos, and squatter settlements are home to the urban poor. There are cities throughout the world where over 50 percent of the population live in slums, and this number is expected to increase.

An additional dimension of the problem is that almost one-half of the population of Third World countries is composed of children and teenagers. In Mexico City, about one-half are under 18. Tens of thousands of children live without parental support, shelter, or control. [Page 69]

29. Value of Human Beings

Many authors have written about the poor in light of the Bible passages that specifically deal with the subject. I respect their concern for biblical thinking and interpretation. They seek to know and do the full counsel of God. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the basic premise is rooted in Genesis 1–3, where the Bible teaches that the essential nature of human beings is the image of God in which they are made. All Christian concern for the poor and downtrodden springs from that premise.

What is a human being, and what value does he or she have? The Bible's answer is that a human being is an image-bearer of God and the most valuable element in God's whole creation. Possessing enormous potential and designed by the Creator to bring glory to God by exercising dominion over the world and its resources, a human being is of such tremendous value that he or she ought never be trampled upon. God so highly valued human beings that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem them from sin and eternal loss.

This biblical assessment of the value of human beings gives the Christian all the motivation required for relief and development ministries. If an image-bearer of God, a person like myself, is poor, oppressed, and helpless, and if I have resources that might lift such an individual out of distress, I need to look no further. I have responsibilities

toward that person in terms of his or her temporal and eternal welfare. No other motivation is higher or strong enough to keep the Christian worker from burning out when the going gets rough. As John Perkins has said so often in his speaking and writing, the most important element in Christian ministry among the poor is not our concern for the poor as such, but our love for God and those made in his image.* [Pages 70-71]

* See John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1976), and *A Quiet Revolution* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986)

30. Not Ignore Plight of the Poor

[There are] twin propositions that should guide us as we relate urban evangelism to relief and development:

If we wipe out poverty but neglect to tell the poor the Good News about Jesus Christ, we will have failed in our mission.

And if we preach the gospel but ignore the plight of the poor, we are false prophets. [Page 72]

31. Relief Ministries Do Little to Alter the Long-term Problems

Relief efforts often take the form of benevolence. To meet unexpected crises, for example, short-term relief ministries are what is needed. When disaster strikes an individual or a community, the Christian response is to take immediate and appropriate action in order to meet the need, as the Samaritan traveler did in the Lord's familiar parable, and as Christ himself did on many occasions by performing miracles. By so doing, Christians bear witness to God's love and mercy. Whenever possible they accompany their good deeds with a verbal witness to Christ, in whose name they perform the relief activities.

But relief ministries do little to alter the long-term problems that beset the cities. Churches and mission agencies that hand out food and clothing month after month and year after year are not really tackling poverty. Things need to be done that will break the poverty cycle for individuals, families, and neighborhoods, and fit people to a level where they can provide for themselves adequately and with dignity. Long-term relief only creates dependency, and dependency is debilitating and dehumanizing. It is tragic that so much of Christian concern for the poor has been expressed in ways that create and maintain dependency relationships. As a consequence, large numbers of poor people have lost confidence in their ability ever to rise above poverty; they have resigned themselves to living off the benevolence of others.

The term development is used to describe relief activity that is intended to avoid creating dependency and instead gives the poor the opportunity to earn a respectable living on their own. An old Chinese proverb illustrates the difference between relief and

development. “If you give a hungry man a fish, you relieve his hunger for a day. But if you teach him how to catch fish, you relieve his need for many days to come.” Applied to an urban strategy on behalf of the poor, this proverb suggests that development rather than benevolence is the route to take. Development protects the dignity of the poor and offers them the chance to rise above poverty and meet their needs on a permanent basis. [Page 73]

32. Christians Help Anyone

I asked a fifty-five-year-old African, the first of his family to become a Christian, what it was that initially attracted him to Christianity. He replied that two things had struck him. First, he observed that the Christians who came visiting his home seemed willing to help anyone, even Muslims. “Muslims will help Muslims,” he said, “but these Christians were willing to help anyone. They cared about us, and that raised my curiosity. I listened to what they were saying, and I asked questions. What made them do this, I wanted to know.

“The second thing that struck me,” he continued, “was the answer they gave to my questions. They told me that God cared, and that he cared enough to send Jesus to save his people by dying for their sins. That made me think, and after a while I started to believe that Jesus died for my sins too. That’s when I became a Christian, and now my four married children and their families are Christians too.”

When evangelism, relief, and development are joined in that fashion everywhere, there will be hope for the cities and a bright new day of church growth. [Page 80]

Chapter 7. Barriers to Reaching Urban Ethnics by Roger S. Greenway

33. Churches Run Away from New Ethnics

Studying the history of old churches in places like New York and Philadelphia, one discovers that, from the mid-nineteenth century on, countless church buildings were abandoned when the members moved away from the foreign immigrants pouring into the old neighborhoods. The pattern of churches running away from new ethnics has, unfortunately, a long and painful history in America.

Connected with this is the fact that neither Protestant nor Catholic churches have been able to make many profound and lasting changes in the moral climate of American cities. It is true, of course, that cities benefited enormously from certain great ministries in the past. This fact must not be forgotten or minimized. But even the most devoted city-lover must admit that Christianity has not done especially well in the great urban centers in terms of making a lasting moral and religious impact on the society, its politics, schools, and economy. In part, the churches themselves are responsible for this, and hard questions need to be asked about a religion that sounds great inside church buildings but has little transforming impact in the markets and the streets. But

there are other factors too, forces that the churches can do little about. The net result has been the city's negative image. Cities are seen as too big and bad to be redeemed.

Americans hate failure and adore success. We tend to set goals for our lives and ministries that aren't easy to achieve in cities. This may explain why so many of the more gifted ministers and ambitious workers look elsewhere for their challenges. Our view of cities needs to be changed before this barrier disappears. At the same time our definitions of success, discipleship, and fruitful ministry need serious overhauling.
[Page 94]

Chapter 10. The Intersecting Veins of the City by Timothy M. Monsma

34. Need Evangelistic Strategies

We may need a different evangelistic strategy for each one of these groups, for each group may have its own set of needs and interests (although they all need salvation through Christ). For example, what evangelistic strategy would one use with prostitutes? We sense immediately that it will have to differ from that used with women who are wives and mothers, or that used with women who are office workers, nurses, telephone operators, or attorneys.

Simply to tell prostitutes that they are sinners will not make much of an impression, because they know that without being told. Those who have worked with prostitutes in various countries tell us that a holistic approach is needed. Many became prostitutes because they were desperate to find work or because they were duped by someone. Now they cannot get out even if they want to.

Prostitutes must be shown that there is a viable way out. They must be protected from the pimps and brothel owners who may try to reclaim them. Commitment to Jesus Christ must become for them the beginning of a period of cleansing and renewal in body and spirit. It may also involve further education so that they can find their places as useful members of society once again.

The fact that prostitutes require a special evangelistic strategy, however, does not mean that they are a people group so distinctive that a church can and ought to be planted just for them. If every occupational class were a people group, as that term is presently used in missions literature, then there would be virtually no end to the number of people groups in the world, for new occupations are always appearing. Then, too, the people-group concept could not be used effectively as a measure to determine the progress of the gospel in the world. It is better to recognize that within every people group there are subgroups requiring special evangelistic strategies. From the point of view of good evangelism, each subgroup, and finally each person, must be taken into account. [Pages 122-123]

35. Christian Unity a Necessity

In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 the apostle Paul compares the Christian congregation to the human body. Each member of the body is its own unique function that the other members cannot perform, be it seeing, hearing, talking, or walking. The members depend on one another and cooperate with one another so that the body achieves its goals. It would be ludicrous for the members of the body to fight with one another.

The congregation is an organism because all its members are joined to Christ and find unity in him. The city is an organism because all its residents depend on one another for their well-being. The city is an organism in spite of all the ethnic and sociological diversity described earlier in this chapter.

While evangelism must take urban diversity into account, spiritual care leading to growth in Christ must work for Christian unity. It can do so by keeping in view biblical passages like Paul's description of the church as a body. In addition, the very structure and interrelationships of the city can be used as a model for Christians of various ethnic groups and social strata to follow in developing spiritual interdependence. If there is interdependence in the workplace, surely there is need for interdependence within the body of Christ. [Pages 125-126]

Chapter 11 Research: Matching Goals and Methods to Advance the Gospel by Timothy M. Monsma

36. Know Culture of Group Reaching

Studying a city's cultures may reveal whether cell groups or some other tactic will stimulate growth in a church. Cultural study may reveal the best time for church meetings, preferability of a central house of worship or worship centers scattered throughout the city, people's physical and emotional needs and a host of other helpful information. The best way to get to know a culture or subculture is to use participant observation and ethnographic interviews.

Certain questions are essential to good observation-interview research:

How strong is the extended family in this culture? If it is very strong, the need for cell groups may diminish, and the family may be the best primary vehicle for the spread of the gospel. If not, cell groups and other avenues of evangelism will be more important.

What is the people's economic condition? Among the poor or extremely poor, evangelism may need to be complemented by programs to help them out of their poverty. If they are wealthy, evaluate how well they will fit into an existing church that is middle-class or poor.

Are there linguistic barriers to the spread of the gospel among the people? If the selected group is one ethnic community, it can be assumed that its members all speak the same language. But if they are a social group, they might speak several languages. Even in a single ethnic group there may be an ethnic language and a national language. What then will be the language of worship and instruction?

Are there religious impediments to accepting the gospel? The chosen C group may consist of adherents to another faith. They may have been misinformed about Christian teachings. How can this misinformation be corrected? They may be hostile to Christianity. How can the hostility be overcome and the truth communicated? Accurate information regarding non-Christian beliefs, attitudes, and practices is needed to present the gospel gently and persuasively.

When these and similar key questions have been asked and answered in participant observation and ethnographic interviews, the researcher will begin to understand the approach to take in presenting the gospel a specific group of people. [Pages 136-137]

Chapter 12. The Stages of Church Development by Timothy M. Monsma

37. Group Reaching Should be Large

In choosing a people group with which to work, one should ask what kind of church will develop as the people of this group turn to the Lord. Will it be a self-sustaining church, or will it be continually dependent on outside help because of the extreme poverty of its members? Will it be a church with capable leaders, or will there be an absence of leaders?

Let us say, for example, that a person decides to work only with street children or only with prostitutes. Will a church consisting only of children be viable? Can they be ordained as church officers? Can former prostitutes be ordained as church officers if the sponsoring mission feels that only men should be ordained? Although street children and prostitutes are very real subgroups in many societies, they are not people groups in the sense that we ought to establish congregations just for them. Biblical congregations are always made up of men, women, and children; and there are no special advantages in departing from this pattern today.

In other words, the group with which a person decides to work should be large enough to include both sexes and all ages. With this in mind, one might designate all the street people, all those engaged in antisocial behavior, or all the poor in a given area as the group with which to work. If one chooses to concentrate on witnessing to a subgroup, they should be funneled into a larger homogeneous fellowship as they profess their faith in Christ. [Page 140]

38. Dependency and Cost of Meeting Place

A problem that many missionaries face is the extreme poverty of urban Christians. Coupled with this problem are (1) the danger of establishing a relationship of continuous dependency, and (2) the high cost of urban property and buildings, which often precludes a permanent edifice for the church.

The early Christians of Antioch and Corinth showed concern for their poorer brothers and sisters in Jerusalem by sending them financial aid. These gifts flowed across ethnic boundaries from Gentiles to Jews and fulfilled Paul's command to show charity "especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:10). It is fitting today that Christians in wealthy nations follow this example and show concern for fellow believers in the poorer nations. This aid should be given in such a way that it attacks the root of the problem, not just its symptoms. Many urban-shantytown residents who are receptive to the gospel are poor because they do not have the skills and the training to obtain meaningful work. To give them food, clothes, or money, or even to build them a church edifice, does not attack the root of the problem.

To attack the root, one must assist the urban poor in finding meaningful, adequately paid employment, either working for someone else or managing their own small businesses. They need practical vocational training. Their children may need schooling, for many city governments do not provide schools for shantytowns. Some urban poor may need a loan in order to begin a small business. Notice that the suggestions given here do not foster continuous dependency, but are intended to help people to help themselves. They are in basic agreement with the principle that a truly indigenous church is, among other things, self-supporting. [Pages 148-149]

39. Strive for Simple Lifestyle

There are several ways in which these problems can be prevented or solved. Missionaries (or evangelists) should strive for a simple lifestyle. While they and their families want to be comfortable, healthy, and happy in their work, they surely do not need to display wealth in order to achieve these goals. And whatever good things missionaries do have ought to be shared with their fellow Christians in appropriate ways. Church leaders should always be welcome in the home and at the table of a missionary family. The missionary who has a car should be willing to take the church leaders to meetings. Indeed, all those with whom the missionary has contact can benefit from the use of the car in emergencies, even if this means taking a sick person to the hospital in the middle of the night. People can live with some variation in standards of living, provided missionaries do not hoard all their good things to themselves. [Page 150]

40. 24-hour Oasis

In the crowded city of Colombo, on one of the busiest intersections, stands the Church of the Open Door, belonging to the Anglican denomination. Several decades ago this congregation decided that the location of its building should be turned into a witnessing opportunity. Thousands of people—Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians—passed the church doors every day. Many of them lived under crowded and difficult conditions, and a high percentage had personal and spiritual problems which the church thought they might like to talk about. Why not use the building to good advantage and make it a twenty-four-hour-per-day oasis where people could get away from the rush of the street, pray, talk to a Christian counselor, and be exposed to the values and teachings of Christianity? [Page 156]

41. Simplicity of Design

The principle of good stewardship must be applied to building acquisition and design. If we are going to reach the masses in the cities and plant all the churches that are needed, we must do some things we haven't done before and think of some designs we haven't previously considered.

Let's strike out for simplicity of design. We have all heard the familiar argument about how much was spent building Solomon's temple in the Testament, and that only the best should be considered good enough for God's house. But let's not forget that all the adornments of Solomon's temple are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The temple symbolized Christ, and now he has come. We should not try to duplicate or imitate his beauty through something else. The embellishments that Christians commonly put into church buildings, the glory we put into brick and mortar, are hard to justify in the light of the need of missions, the physical plight of the urban masses, the relative poverty of many Christians, and the sacrifices made by many pastors and other kingdom workers. I venture to say that most of the wealth we pour into church buildings is not to glorify God at all, but is nothing more than self-aggrandizement under the guise of religious zeal. I think the angels weep at many a building dedication, and so does the Lord. [Pages 163-164]

42. Need Deacons

Compassion, like judgment, begins with the house of God. For that very reason the diaconate is one of the church's essential ministries and is ordained as one of its offices. God has mercy on his people; he is concerned about the poor, and this principle of divine compassion shines through in the church. This has, it seems to me, tremendous implications for a diaconal ministry among the urban poor.

The second point that needs to be emphasized is the basic truth that the weak and the poor, just as much as the rich and the powerful, need to hear the gospel, repent, believe in Christ, and be saved. The poor are not exempt from this requirement, as if their poverty somehow atoned for their sins. Central to every strategy must be the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work for sinners. [Page 171]

43. Evangelism and Social Involvements Integrated

In the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, what has often appeared to Christians as a dilemma finds a resolution. Jesus' ministry is a model of the way the Christian's twin responsibilities of evangelism and social involvements are to be integrated. Jesus preached, taught, and healed. His concern for the physical needs of people flowed from his love and compassion for them as people, image-bearers of God, who are burdened down by sin and its consequences, hurting, hoping, seeking, dying. His healing ministry served as a bridge to his preaching ministry, as he blended concern for the temporal and eternal dimensions of human existence.

Christ's compassion was holistic compassion, concerned for sick bodies, empty stomachs, and perishing souls. Out of compassion for a leprous man he reached out and healed (Mark 1:41). Moved with compassion for people without spiritual direction, he set aside plans for a restful retreat and taught a multitude (Mark 6:34). When people were hungry and had no food left, Jesus used his power to feed them (Mark 8:1-10). Both his words and his works were expressions of his compassion for people.* In the prayer Jesus taught us, he kept humankind's two essential needs together—daily bread and the forgiveness of sins. [Pages 171-172]

*Bong Rin Ro and Gottfried Osei-Mensah, Preface, in *Word and Deed*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 8.

44. Glory to God

The goal of all Christian ministries in the city is the glorification of God through the salvation of sinners, the building of the church, and the extension of the kingdom of God. The pursuit of this goal is carried on in different ways, but the goal does not change. Everything done in the name of mercy must be evaluated in terms of its contribution to the accomplishment of this goal. [Page 175]

45. Holistic, Neighborhood-changing Ministry

In his article "Justice for the Poor: The Political Problem of Poverties," Jasper Lesage makes the point that poverty is a complex problem, and in actuality there is no such thing as simple poverty. There are many poverties, each requiring concentrated study and appropriate remedies. Lesage makes a number of suggestions that any urban diaconate might follow. He underscores the fact that most poverty situations are the result of some form of injustice and require political action and changes in government policies. "What is called for is a complex political response to a complex set of social

problems,” Lesage says. “If the problem of poverty were to be attacked solely by promoting Christian charity through private agencies and individuals, the problem would remain insoluble. It is simply too complex and vast a problem on national scale, disregarding the international problem, to be handled completely outside of government agencies.”*

But on a simpler and more local level, a great deal of holistic, neighborhood-changing ministry can and should be done. Evangelical churches still have a great deal to learn about urban community development and the ways in which changes can be brought about in poor and distressed neighborhoods. This area provides a major challenge for the next decade. [Page 176]

*Jasper Lesage, “Justice for the Poor: The Political Problem of Poverties,” *Pro Rege* 14.2 (December 1985)

46. Biblical Principles for Ministry among the Poor

On my list of urban giants is Harv Oostdyk, who worked for thirty years in the ghettos of New York City and more recently in Dallas and other cities. Oostdyk understands God’s heart toward the urban poor and the conditions that prevail among them. In his book *Step One: The Gospel and the Ghetto* Oostdyk suggests eight specific applications of biblical principles for ministry among the poor:

1. Place special emphasis on the family of God. The church which ignores the plight of believers in the slums is disobedient to the Scriptures and insensitive to its responsibilities to help the Christian poor.
2. Maintain a close relationship between evangelism and helping the poor. Christ wants his Word spoken in the pulpits of churches and also in the marketplaces of the city. “People with their hands dirty have more of a ring of truth in their voices. Evangelism happens in the midst of deep social involvement.
3. Go and love a poor person. If all Christians would try to love one poor person, the face of poverty would be drastically altered.
4. Pray for the poor. Cities need our prayers. Every Christian, even the elderly and bedridden, can through prayer be involved in urban ministry.
5. Recognize that part of any concern for the poor must be institutionally expressed. We live in an institutional society, and despite the number of its members the Christian church cannot make the impact that is needed unless it organizes institutionally on behalf of the needs of the poor.

6. Support local urban ministries. Most Christian urban workers are walking alone, and they desperately need the support of the Christian community. The slum, the ghetto, is a very lonely place unless one knows there are dedicated people spiritually, if not physically, alongside.

7. Minister to the urban poor locally as a means of promoting world evangelism. The Great Commission to the world is the Great Commission to our home community. Our opportunities overseas are staked to our domestic responsibilities.

8. Rely on God's grace to bring help to the poor. Claiming God's grace is essential for urban ministry.*

Oostdyk insists that before evangelical churches can be expected to turn in any significant degree toward the cities and the poor, something must take place in Christian colleges and seminaries. The Bible, he says, must not only be understood in its original languages and translated properly, it must also be applied to the needs of the contemporary poor. This is where the intellectual leadership in the evangelical tradition has failed. [Pages 177-178]

* Harv Oostdyk, *Step One: The Gospel and the Ghetto* (Basking Ridge, N.J.: SonLife International, 1983), pp 223-36.

Chapter 18. Ministry in Shantytowns by Timothy M. Monsma

47. Telling the Gospel to the Poor

When Jesus spoke at the synagogue in Nazareth, he read from Isaiah as follows: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me; therefore he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Then he told his audience: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21).

Deeds of kindness done to the poor are never sufficient in and of themselves. The greatest kindness that we can show to a poor person is to point that person to Jesus, for both the poor and the wealthy must prepare for the life to come. Poverty by itself does not save a person. Only the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross can do that. Jesus underlined the spiritual needs of those with physical needs when He said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" (Matt. 9:2).

When Lazarus died the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom not because of his good works but because of his faith. The rich man, on the other hand, may have thought that he, too, had faith, but his faith that God exists did not produce a life of service, and "faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:36). This lends urgency to the need to tell the gospel to the poor, to urge the poor to accept God's salvation, and to gather them into

churches where they can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus their Savior. [Page 226]