

Introduction

During the wilderness wandering, the spies returned to Moses with their mixed report. The land truly was flowing with milk and honey. "But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large" (Num 13:28). The providence and promises of God took a back seat in a majority report that measured urban challenge only in terms of size, density and population.

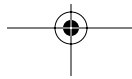
Have things changed, or are God's people still afraid of what cities hold? This book aims to address today's urban reality in all its complex and interrelated facets.

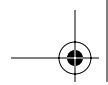
How to Use This Text

The content of this book was carefully structured for students to work through sequentially in order to get a full-orbed understanding of urban ministry. Yet the work can also be used as a reference book; any section can be read by itself.

The first three sections provide a foundation for what follows. Part one is a historical section, attempting to lay out a global view of urban history and demographics. We wanted our treatment to be as comprehensive as possible. This historical analysis provides perspective and renewed vision for what the sovereign Lord is doing in his world. It identifies some missiological concerns that have not yet been addressed fully by present-day mission strategies.

The second section takes a biblical-historical look at God's concern for cities. Drawing on both Old and New Testaments, this material helps the reader put together the present contemporary world with the world of biblical times. Actually very little has changed regarding either issues or solutions. Biblical strategies must be operative in contemporary society if there is to be kingdom reign.





The third section—"Understanding the City"—presents ways to interpret and define the city. It is strong on sociological information. How do we do theology in the midst of the historical reality of where and how people live? The city's complexity can be overwhelming; this section assists the student and practitioner in wrestling with the various aspects of the city as a Christian.

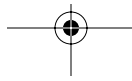
Now that the foundation has been laid, section four looks at practical skills and highlights the importance of the social sciences. In the early 1970s Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner from the School of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary introduced social-scientific perspectives and methods into church planting and church growth. Their work was helpful but was often dismissed as too secular and not Christian enough. Again and again, both in classes and other forums, we have insisted on the utilization of the social sciences as an applied science for mission. This section leads the reader to grasp the need for doing serious field work before embarking on any mission endeavor. Bible translation work since the beginning of the twentieth century exemplifies how insights from anthropology and sociology help us understand cultures and societies for the purpose of bringing the gospel to unreached peoples.

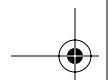
Section five addresses Christian community development among the poor. The church has to reckon with its inescapable responsibility to the poor. The Lord Jesus has summoned his body to be what he is in the world. Mercy ministry is not optional but is demanded of all Christians, reflecting God's concern for the value of life and his image bearers (Rom 5:21-26).

Much will depend on the development of leaders, which is the subject of our final section. This section may be one of the most important, because all the ministry described in preceding sections is vitally dependent on biblical leadership. The city will not see effective kingdom ministry if leaders are not preaching and living the whole counsel of God. Reductionism will not do. Sociology without biblical theology misses the mark. Justification without justice will not be divine salt that penetrates and preserves our God's world.

All across the world urbanization is proceeding apace, not waiting for us to decide whether the city is a legitimate place for mission. The Lord of history is calling us to be servants of his gospel in the cities of his world.

Lima, Peru, one of the major cities of South America, can serve as a specific example of contemporary urban challenges. This will lead us to formulate a contemporary agenda for reflection which lays out the many questions this book seeks to address.





Lima, Peru: Looking for Clues

Indigenous peoples have inhabited the area we now call metropolitan Lima for nearly seven thousand years. But 1535 was a crucial turning point. Conqueror Francisco Pizarro saw Lima's safe harbor advantages and began its transformation into his "City of Kings." City-minded Spanish colonialists shaped Lima into one of the two most important urban centers of what became Latin America (the other is Mexico City). "As both the political-administrative capital for the viceroyalty and its principal economic center, Lima also took on the role of the social capital of Spanish South America" (Kent 1994:459).

Population patterns. For a little over four hundred years, Lima grew slowly. By 1796 its population accounted for a little over 6 percent of Peru's total. By 1940 the city had grown to 645,000 people, about 8.6 percent of the nation's population.

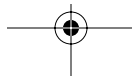
Then came the last half of the twentieth century. And Lima, like the world's major urban centers, underwent a demographic explosion. By the early 1990s well over six million people, nearly one-third of Peru's population, were calling themselves Limeños.

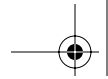
The city is now a center of political and economic power. By 1988 Lima was thirteen times larger than the country's second city. Its metropolitan boundaries enclose more than 50 percent of Peru's entire urban population (León 1992:201). And paralleling this demographic growth have come significant urban challenges.

Religious directions. Over 90 percent of Lima's residents are formally attached to the Roman Catholic Church. Some of the church's 136 parishes are home to tens of thousands of constituents. But, reflecting a long history, there is a divorce between church and religion. Few fulfill Catholicism's minimal requirements of participation in Sunday Mass. Faith expresses itself in a more individualistic way, often disconnected from the official church. It is to the confraternities and brotherhoods, in what is termed "popular religion" that one looks for manifestations of serious commitment (Klaiber 1992:16).

"Popular religiosity" is a genuine expression of Catholic piety fitted to native traditions and the painful marginalization of the poor. It is "a people's way of crying and remembering and aspiring" (Cox 1973:117) the faith of those who have been least integrated into the mainstream of urban society.

Processions and feast days, the multiplicity of saints, the prominence and popularity of religious relics bespeak rural backgrounds of devotion and veneration. Those less linked to the agricultural cycle turn to more secularized forms of faith, to horoscopes and astrology (Candelaria 1990:9-14).





"Without doubt the most important popular religious manifestation in Peru is the great procession of Our Lord of Miracles, which takes place three times during the month of October in Lima" (Klaiber 1992:91). Clothed in purple penitential robes, the faithful accompany the image of the crucified Christ, the "Purple Lord," carried on a heavy platform through the streets of Lima. The Brotherhood of the Bearers of the Lord of Miracles had three hundred members in the 1920s; by the 1980s the membership had reached some four thousand.

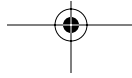
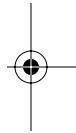
But such expressions of "popular religiosity" are often less (or more) than the church expects or wants. The distance between private faith and ecclesiastical practice is a concern.

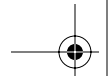
Some in the 1990s looked to the papal push of the Lumen 2000 movement, the "new evangelization" of Latin America, to narrow the gap. Others, like Gustavo Gutiérrez, Lima's "father" of liberation theology, struggle with the connection between popular religion and the poor. In his earlier writing Gutiérrez expressed fear of its opiate impact on the poor. Conversion, he noted, demands society's transformation, not just a personal change of heart. Can these expressions of popular religion deaden the poor, those very agents of change, to their identity as the church of the poor, for the poor? In more recent years Gutiérrez appears to be looking for more positive connections.

Poverty's expansion. The recent expansion of migration has underlined the challenge of poverty in Lima. Since 1950 the people of the Peruvian countryside have been slipping through the city's back door. Pushed by poverty and fear of the violent activities of the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path), they are pulled by an optimistic urban hope. Most settle in the *pueblos jóvenes* ("young towns"), an aristocratic euphemism for the 598 squatter areas that ring the metropolitan area.

Between 9 and 10 percent of the city's population lived in these "slums of hope" in 1955; by 1985 that figure had reached 50 percent. There are also hundreds of thousands in old, overcrowded inner-city tenements called *tugurios* (Grigg 1992a:24, 103). Marginalized by poverty and a government simply unable to keep up with the flow, these urban migrants form cities within the city.

Relatively untouched by large-scale industrialization, the new Limeños join the 49 percent of Latin America's work force who find their livelihood in the informal sector. By 1984 nearly 70 percent of Lima's working population was linked to this nonformal sector, which the government does not regulate. "Many join the 200,000 to 300,000 army of street vendors, who sell everything from brooms to artichokes" (Maust 1984:10). Cars are repaired in backyards, and furniture gets repaired and clothing is manu-





factured in people's homes. "This trade does not get registered in the country's economic statistics. It pays no taxes to governments strapped for cash. And millions of citizens in the informal sector are outside government health programs and have no provision for their old age" (Berg and Pretiz 1992:91).

Poverty's youth. Old age is not always a problem in Lima; youth is. Typical of Latin America's cities is the youthful age of Lima's population. One-third of the country's population aged fifteen to twenty-four—1.2 million—are Lima residents.

Typical also is the marginalization of the young. By the mid-1980s officials estimated there were ten thousand abandoned children in the city. They shine shoes, change tires, wash cars or go begging during the day. At night they sleep in parks or on sidewalks. A major in the Salvation Army comments, "I know of children who live on a cup of tea and a couple of bread rolls a day."

Contemporary Urban Challenges

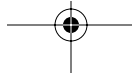
The story of Lima is reproduced with variations in many cities. By looking at these cities we become aware of the challenges facing the church today. But just what are these challenges, and how is the church responding?

Population explosion. Whatever else we see, we see the city as *more of everything*—more people, more buildings and expanding neighborhoods.

Isolated voices speak of a "decline in the growth rates of cities nearly everywhere. The era of rapid urban growth is about to finish" (Prud'Homme 1989:45). But usually these predictions are limited to so-called developed countries, suggesting more slowdown than decline.

Many continue to affirm the 1985 predictions of Rashmi Mayur, then president of the Global Futures Network. "Ninety percent of the earth's population," he suggested, "will likely be urbanized by the end of the next century. Much of this urbanization will take place in 'supercities' in Third World countries" (Mayur 1985:28).

Urban populations will continue to grow at almost twice the rate of national growth, and large cities at a rate three to four times as high. Does the church show any indication of interest in these expanding urban centers? Vital signs are beginning to appear in the Southern Hemisphere. In Latin America, Protestants "have now reached a critical mass of about 15% (with wide variations from country to country). Although the vast majority of Latin Americans when polled still identify themselves as Catholics, relatively few attend mass regularly. The upshot is that the number





of active Protestant churchgoers is comparable to that of practicing Catholics" (Berryman 1994:7).

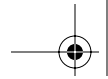
How much of that Protestant presence is urban? Full figures are not yet available. And hints are sometimes not consistent. Between 1990 and 1992, 710 new churches—five a week—were established in greater Rio de Janeiro. Typical of elsewhere, 90 percent of these were Pentecostal. During the same period one new Catholic parish was established. El Salvador claims 390,000 evangelicals in its capital, 26.4 percent of the city's population. On the other hand, in Venezuela 4 percent of the total population is Protestant, but in Caracas the figure is just 1.16 percent. Lima now boasts an evangelical community of 212,000, 3.2 percent of its total (Pretiz 1995:8-9).

A full recognition by the church of the potential of the world's cities seems yet to appear. Commenting on Africa, a Catholic observer remarks that "about 80% of missionary personnel in Africa are engaged in rural parish work, while there are very few actually involved in ministering to the slum dwellers of the towns and cities" (Zanotelli 1988:283). An evangelical addressing the same context adds, "Churches . . . have failed to recognize fully the tremendous needs of the multitudes who left their homes and went to the cities" (Falk 1979:426).

Socioeconomic gap. Everywhere the global city is becoming identified with the poor. In the United States past practices of housing discrimination have locked blacks and Hispanics into isolated urban neighborhoods. In the meantime, the work base of the American city has shifted from industry to service orientation. Factories spring up in industrial parks in the suburbs far from these urban communities, while new office buildings transform the urban skyline. Entry-level and low-education-requirement jobs become scarcer in the city. Blue-collar employment opportunities shrink as white-collar openings expand.

Economically marginal communities are finding more doors of occupational opportunity closed to them. Federal aid resources for the city are greatly reduced, and a crumbling urban infrastructure must look to a diminishing tax base among the growing poor. Help is not there to give. The white middle class, now joined by a rapidly emerging black middle class, continues its movement to the suburbs with its tax dollars, while central-city expenses skyrocket.

In England's urban priority areas (UPAs) the patterns are similar. The gap between rich and poor becomes a gulf. The poor, both unemployed and working, bear both the brunt of recession and the blame as "social security scroungers." By 1981, just over 2.6 million unemployed people and members of their families were living in poverty or at its margin—



three out of every ten people under pension age.

And what lies at the heart of the problem? "The national decline in the number of manual jobs, and the concentration of manual workers in the UPAs" (*Faith in the City* 1985:202). As in the United States, the major source of new British jobs (with some shifting between the 1970s and 1980s) is the service sector.

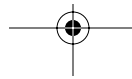
But outside the historically industrialized world, poverty speaks even louder. "Nowhere else is the economic, political, and social distance between the few rich and the masses of the poor greater than in towns of the Third World" (Gutkind 1974:35). And nowhere is poverty more visible than in the slums and shantytowns that spread out from the edges of Lima or Bangkok. In San Francisco and Philadelphia, Houston and Boston, the word *suburb* denotes home for the middle and upper classes. But in the Matheri valley of Nairobi and high on the hills above Caracas, the suburbs are where we find the poor and marginalized. It is estimated that half the urban populations of Africa, Asia and Latin America live in slums. Africa's cities have become what one author has called "centers of despair." An estimated 79 percent of Addis Ababa residents live in squatter settlements, as do 70 percent of Casablanca's residents and 65 percent of Kinshasa's. "More than one-third of the populations of Nairobi and Dakar are slum dwellers. In Nairobi, the population of the lowest squatter settlements has been growing more than twice as fast as that of the city as a whole" (Rondinelli 1988:304).

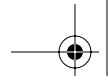
The overall pattern is staggering:

By the year 2000, 2,116 million, or 33.6 percent of the world population, will be in Third World cities, and 40 percent of these (a low figure) will be squatters (846 million people). This would indicate a world that is about 13.6 percent squatters by the year 2000—a bloc nearly the size of the Muslim or Hindu populations, doubling each decade. Squatters thus constitute an immense people group—a distinct entity deserving specific strategies for evangelization. (Grigg 1992a:25)

The picture becomes even more compelling if we include the decaying inner-city areas as well as the street people living in cities. That brings our estimate of the urban poor up to one billion by the year 2000, a figure totaling 30 percent of these cities, or 16.9 percent of the world's population.

Where is the church in all this? The picture is not uniform. In Latin America the majority of the churches are among the poor. In ranges varying from 60 to 90 percent, Mexico City's 1,200 churches, Sao Paulo's 5,294 congregations, Lima's 610 fellowships reach out to the marginalized (Grigg 1992a:102-7).





Leading the way in church planting in this social class have been Pentecostal churches. While mainliners and evangelicals have moved up the social ladder, Pentecostal churches have concentrated their evangelistic efforts on the lower classes in mushrooming cities:

Millions of rural-to-urban immigrants, their village life left behind forever, were ripe for new ideas, including religious teaching. The Pentecostals provided them the opportunity to hear the gospel free of intimidation from relatives or neighbors, to experience warm Christian fellowship in the impersonal city, and be treated with dignity as children of God. (Greenway 1994:190)

By contrast, “nowhere in Asia, with the exception of Korea, does the church in the slums make up more than four percent of the existing church in the city” (Grigg 1992a:95). In 1986 over 19 percent of Bangkok’s population lived in its 1,024 slum areas. Only three churches and two house groups were located there at the time. In Calcutta, between 48,000 (officially) and 200,000 (the generally accepted figure) live on the streets. No figures exist for residents of squatter areas, but some estimate that a million may be living there in tents and mud or thatched huts. Of the 132 churches in Calcutta, only one has targeted this population.

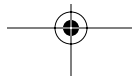
Also missing from the Asian church is the blue-collar factory worker. In patterns similar to the past in England and the United States, Christianity in Hong Kong and Taipei is perceived as a middle-class institution.

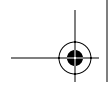
In Taiwan that perception is not far off. By 1984 almost 23 percent of Taiwanese church members had a college-level education (compared with 5.1 percent of the general population). It is easy to understand why the working class see most church programs as geared toward the needs of the intellectual or the middle class.

Three million strong by 1984 and increasing at the rate of ten thousand a month, working-class Asians tend to hang on to their folk religions. Living in company-built dormitories, their weekly work hours are long—fifty-two in Korea, forty-eight in Singapore (1979), fifty in Taiwan (1983). And their expectations are low. A high percentage are women, who enter the factories “as a means of liberation or as a new and exciting experience” (Tsai 1985:125). That optimism quickly turns to cynicism and passivity; women workers soon see themselves as mere assemblers who count for very little.

There are signs that the church* may be awakening to the needs of this

*Throughout this book when the word *church* is used with no referant to Roman Catholic, Protestant or universal church, it should be construed to mean both the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church.





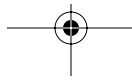
forgotten group. But the signs are still geographically isolated. In Hong Kong, visionaries like Agnes Liu of the China Graduate School of Theology saw the need years ago. And that awareness has spawned over one hundred lay-led factory fellowships. A dozen churches have started. In Taiwan the Fellowship of Covenant Churches initiated a church-planting project in the central part of the island among the more settled factory workers—those married or planning to stay in the area after marriage. Making initial contact through the factories, particularly those with Christian management, the Fellowship planned to create home meetings to meet the need (Fredericksen 1993:16-18).

The public arena. There is still another dimension to the urban world that the gospel cannot ignore: public life and the policies shaped by it.

Politics and economics, real estate matters and city planning, history and socioeconomic policies shape the directions of population demographics and cultural systems. Here global movements mold local responses to issues of poverty and development; powerlessness listens as power speaks. Political and military colonialism fades into the urban past, to be replaced by what many call economic neocolonialism. The global reach of the world-class city marginalizes rural and small-town interests—and now it is shifting even national concerns to the periphery.

Across the globe, urban realities require that Christianity develop an agenda that addresses more than church planting or evangelism. South Africa's explosive urbanization led to population shifts that helped topple the oppressive pass laws and the structures of apartheid. Human rights abuses, government corruption, sexism and racism have become urban questions in Kampala and Recife, Seoul and Chicago. Pressures mount on society and the family. New urban financial struggles strain human relationships. Roles shift as Korean immigrant wives in the United States find themselves transformed from rural homemakers to second-income earners. Families in Zaire and Thailand wrestle with splitting their time between the city and their country roots. New questions arise: kin obligations on narrowed incomes; conflicts between parents and children as rural value systems are challenged by urban values adopted by the children; newly emerging patterns of sociability, based now not only on family but on vocation. Children and youth encapsulate these challenges of rapid urbanization on more than simply a private level. As the poor become visible, they become younger. A Roman Catholic study notes that in Africa "youth are the most affected by the rural exodus and the consequent urbanisation" (Meeting on African Collaboration 1983:3).

City dwellers in the United States have a median age of about thirty. In





Mexico City the average age is 14.2. Sixty-eight percent of the urban populations of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Costa Rica are made up of young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. In Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela it is 75 percent. By the year 2010 more than 10 percent of the world's population will be children living in the urban slums and squatter settlements of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

How exploited are the children? Forty million abandoned children live on the streets of the poorest cities. In São Paulo, Brazil, for example, 700,000 live by their wits in that city's streets. Abandoned by their parents, they survive by begging, stealing or selling their bodies.

City children who work in order to stay alive number, worldwide, between 100 million and 200 million. Sixty percent of all children in Asian cities are full-time wage earners. Child prostitution is one of the principal means of making money. Forty thousand of the estimated 100,000 prostitutes in Bangkok are 14 or younger. In Manila, 15,000 children are in prostitution, most purchased from their parents to be sex slaves. (Linthicum 1994:21)

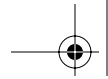
The West is not exempt from this victimization of children. In the United States "every day 15 children are killed by firearms; 2,660 babies are born into poverty; 8,493 children are reported abused or neglected and 3 die from it; 2,756 teens become pregnant; 2,833 students drop out of school; and 100,000 children are homeless" (*Rachel's Tears* 1996:4).

The Christian community faces a new urban generation. They are less idealistic and considerably more pessimistic. Jaded and old before their time, without hope and marginalized by broken promises, they become easy prey to the temptations of cynicism and meaningless violence. How do we respond to their needs?

In the recent past the church often found itself sharply divided in seeking solutions. The Anglo-Saxon church world expressed that division more quickly and sharply than the minority churches within its cities or the more holistically oriented congregations of the developing world. Mainline and Catholic voices have turned more easily to face the public side of these issues. Their agenda concerns incorporate with relative ease topics of homelessness, political power brokering, rapid social change. They call readily for a partnership of theology, politics and urban policy.

Evangelical bodies find themselves more comfortable with responses that reflect the private dimensions to these questions. Evangelism, church planting and traditional expressions of charity toward the poor, they argue, will ultimately effect "redemption and lift." Beyond this limit they are extremely reticent to speak.

Reinforcing these proposals is their legitimate concern for past capitulation to theological liberalism. Will a both/and mixture of the public and



the private lead once more to the theological reductionism that previously minimized the gospel and maximized the social? And further, is entrance into the urban public sector a legitimate role for the church in its institutional form? What, after all, is the calling of the church? Where does the limited competence of the church end?

These concerns and warnings have affected the daughter churches of the mission fields in a similar way. And reinforcing an inherited theological reluctance have been other contextual factors. How will the church speak to public issues in countries where it is often socially and politically restricted to a closet existence? In Muslim-majority countries where the church can exist only as a ghetto, forbidden growth by Qur'anic legislation? In the People's Republic of China and North Korea, where even its private life is subject to constant scrutiny and intrusive suspicion? How will a marginalized church of the poor in Latin America shift the weight of global power forces that shape local economies and larger development programs? How can African church leaders trained and experienced in rural settings carry rural-shaped worldviews of social connection into urban settings and styles of ministry (P. Fritz 1995:33-34)?

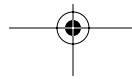
There are encouraging signs of change. Asia's evangelicals "recognize that our ministry demands a clear and intelligent understanding of the complexities of our economic, environmental, social and cultural context. . . . Our gospel must reach the poor, down-trodden and marginalized as well as the rich, powerful, and comfortable sections of urban population" (Ro 1989:1).

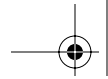
In Latin America many evangelicals support a holistic approach to the city. A 1988 consultation of the Latin American Theological Fraternity calls for the churches to be agents of transformation in the city. Five areas are targeted for that process: (1) better understanding by the church of the city's social and economic structures, (2) the incarnation of the church in those social and cultural realities, (3) sensitivity to all social levels in the city, and particularly affirmative action on behalf of the poor, (4) a clearer definition of the prophetic role of the church in the city and (5) a reemphasis on the church as a community of compassion by way of a Christ-centered message of hope and incarnation ("Seeking the Peace" 1989:22-24).

Agenda for Reflection

The challenges we have summarized are large and complicated. What kinds of questions flow out of all this for our mission reflection? What are some of the issues we must engage?

1. *What is the basis of urban mission?* What place does the city occupy within the total framework of Scripture's commands and promises?





The history of urbanization points to many motivations in the church's interaction with the city. Frequently that motivation was a Western desire to connect "Christianizing" with "civilizing." The city has been seen as the venue for spreading what was seen as a superior white culture. In more recent times the urban interests of the church often became tied to the colonial interests of the sending church's home base. Concerned over those very connections, some mission agencies have turned to rural areas for church planting, fearful of the watchful eye of government on urban activities.

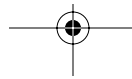
Also affecting the mission of the church to the city has been a growing antiurbanism in the mentality of Europe and North America. Overwhelmed by the impact of the industrial revolution, these traditional centers of evangelistic activity have turned with approval to a nostalgic rural ideology of mission. Remembering the recent rural successes of the gospel, an increasingly middle-class church is paying less attention to the sudden growth of the developing world's cities. The growing visibility of the poor in those cities reinforces middle-class suspicions of poverty and makes antiurbanism an obstacle to mission. God's providential opening of the cities becomes a secularized history of mixed motives and ideas.

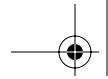
a. *How does Scripture view the city?* Is the Bible a rural book, promoting a rural understanding of mission? Where do we find the proper patterns to read that revelation? In sample models and case studies drawing principles from cities like Ur and Sodom, Jerusalem and Antioch, Athens and Rome? Or from the larger hermeneutical structures of the history of special revelation?

b. *How do we fashion a full-orbed urban mission from the Bible?* Is the work of urban mission to be restricted exclusively to the work of evangelism and church growth? What is the connection between urban mission and the kingdom of God? Is that kingdom emphasis fully exhausted by the preaching of Christ? Or is it more comprehensive? Does it also include urban social transformation? If so, does that transformation spread out to the life of the non-Christian? In what way?

2. *How do we understand the city as a process and urbanism as a way of life?* The city, we are learning, is a holistic system of networks. Those networks are geographical, social, institutional, political, cultural and religious. Through them social community takes on new forms.

a. *How are ties of ethnicity and kinship affected by the city?* What new challenges face them in secondary relationships such as friendships and work partnerships? How are human norms and values reexamined? How is the concept of neighborhood changed by the city? How do these new perceptions affect the congruity, the link, between neigh-





borhood and local church? How far does the impact of the city extend? How do new urban influences reinforce or question traditional patterns of religion and faith?

b. *Wrestling with these questions draws us deeply into definition of the term urban—and that definition will have a crucial effect on our perception of urban mission. We can make it an adjectival addendum. But this will add little to a radical, basic understanding of a theology of mission. A second possibility makes the term urban into a “definitive category, part of a new core that will create a new sub-discipline, urban missiology” (Conn 1994b:viii). The first choice can leave Christian discipleship as a calling to witness, church attendance, Bible study and prayer. The second choice can add to that list the practice of justice and love in every sphere of urban life.*

Will our vision for urban ministry be holistic enough to meet these new perceptions of the city? Will the theology of mission we develop be merely a theology of mission *in* the city or a theology of mission *for* the city? Will the first choice treat the city only as a place in which mission operates? Will the second choice go further and treat the city as a fundamental variable in the design of urban mission?

3. *What tools does God provide to help us see the city and urban church growth more clearly? How do we develop urban church growth eyes?*

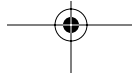
Urban mission studies in recent decades have followed earlier academic interests in focusing on demographics. The reasons may be different, but the bottom line has been the same. Built into the nature of the church, after all, is its deep yearning that men and women everywhere come to Christ in repentance and faith. It is a missiological concern that does not stop at any geographical or political boundary of the world.

Those boundaries expanded particularly in the world’s urban centers during the last half of the twentieth century. Massive urbanization has brought explosion of the cities of the so-called Third World.

a. *Demographics has taken a prominent place in mission research, given these population shifts. Discussions of unreached peoples and their size, number and location in this world has accelerated. Through its institutions, the church continues to expand its efforts to collect more reliable statistical information on these groups.*

More recently still, that search began to zero in on the least evangelized cities. Preliminary strategy plans are emerging, built around the transformation not merely of people groups but of cities (Grigg 1995). The term “gateway cities” is applied to the most significant entry points for evangelizing unreached people groups.

b. *But demographics alone is not enough. Other tools must be used also.*





What use can be made of the social sciences as we analyze class systems in city and church? How can urban ethnographies aid us in looking past statistical surveys to the cultural settings in which a church might grow?

c. How do we link all this research with God's plan for the evangelization of the cities? All truth, no matter where we find it, comes from God. But how do we prevent this search for truth from losing its Christian edge and becoming research exuberance instead of spiritual discernment? Recent Christian literature, wrestling with this temptation, calls for "spiritual mapping" as a key to the process of research and planning and praying. How should we evaluate this new appeal?

4. Where should our research and planning be directed? Where do we look to see signs of the kingdom of God in the city?

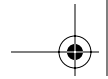
a. We must begin with a drive for new churches and their growth. Writing in 1970, Donald McGavran noted that "after a hundred and fifty years of modern missions, the plain fact is that churches have not done well in most cities" of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (McGavran 1970:280). Reinforcing that judgment is the decline of Christianity in the cities of North America and Europe.

In the twenty-first century the need for urban church planting is growing. "We will live in a world of seventy-nine supercities (fifty-nine of them in developing countries), each with over four million inhabitants. Our globe will have 433 mega-cities with over one million people in each. Our urban population will increase by 1.6 million people per week. Poverty in our urban areas will continue to expand, producing a 'planet of slums' " (D. Barrett 1987:84).

b. Where should we look to accomplish this task? How will the concept of reachable people groups aid us? What potential for church planting will we find among the world's poor, among the global movement of border-crossing migrants and immigrants? What of neglected industrial factory workers, or government employees who make up a large percentage of the world's primary cities, or new ethnic and tribal groups settling in urban areas?

c. What unmined treasures can we still find in the Scriptures to help us shape new contextual forms of worship and message for these peoples? How can Spirit-directed promptings stirred by these new cultural encounters with the gospel help us look at the Bible in a fresh way? What new theological light still waits to break forth with evangelistic force from the cities of Brazil and Japan, from the slums of Philadelphia and Cairo?

d. The theological paradigms that have shaped the church's self-under-



standing in its dialogue with the city can create a measure of distortion. Hidden behind stone and mortar are the philosophies of ministry that have shaped the urban church. And basic to these are unseen assumptions that dictate those church statements of purpose. Our image of the city and of urban ministry is affected by the paradigms, the presuppositions, out of which we create our models for mission.

Can we construct a historical typology of paradigms fashioned by the church's perception of the city? What are the paradigms available to us in the dialogue of church and city? How do the paradigms shape the models that shape self-understanding? How many of these paradigms are shaped by an antiurban bias? Where are the boundaries we cannot cross and remain the people of God in urban mission? What are the boundaries we must break down to be the people of God?

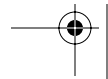
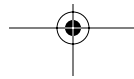
5. *Most of the boundaries of our paradigms are structured to define church Sunday morning. Where are those boundaries Monday morning?* Can we look for signs of the kingdom in the public sector of the city?

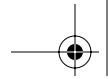
Across the globe, cities have become concentration points for problems not exclusively urban. Massive poverty, human exploitation, government corruption and the abuse of human rights cry out for answers. Racism and ethnic cleansing devastate East Los Angeles and Lusaka. Sydney wrestles with a massive influx of non-European immigration. Prostitution becomes a major tourist industry for Bangkok. Trade imbalances create joblessness in Houston, put people to work in Shanghai, and accelerate shouting matches between Tokyo and Washington, D.C. Industrialization in Seoul marginalizes rural and small-town interests.

a. *What is the responsibility of the people of God in this public sector?* Will the pursuit of some sort of social calling leave evangelism in the dust? Does biblical shalom incorporate social justice activities in the task of urban mission? Is mercy, not justice, our part in social transformation? Should the church be only a servant of righteousness? Can it also be an advocate for righteousness? Prison Fellowship, set up by Charles Colson, carries on Bible studies for inmates and helps the families of prisoners. Should it also press, as it does, for changes in social legislation to bring prison reform?

b. *Where do the agenda boundaries end for the church as an institution?* Should Christians alone or in community take action in the public square? How does our holistic understanding of the kingdom of God affect the boundary lines of the church's work? Can we shape a legitimate public theology?

c. *How do we determine where we can establish incarnational ministries?* Many churches are incarnating their social conscience in Christian com-





munity development. Free medical clinics for the poor, reconstruction of deteriorating housing in the inner cities, legal services for the “underclass” and food distribution programs are appearing in the world’s cities. Base Ecclesial Communities are reshaping perceptions of the nature of the church and its relation to the poor and to the community.

How do we determine what we can and cannot do? How are Christian community development projects related to the shalom of the kingdom of God?

6. *How do we prepare Christian leaders for these tasks? What shape should discipleship training for the city take?*

Experts warn us that “when training Christian leaders for ministry in the city, the church is going to have to abandon assembly-line, denomination-oriented, systems-associated ministries” (Elliston and Kauffman 1993:135). People and task orientation, rather than institution orientation, they tell us, will have to carry the day.

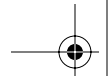
Spiritual formation and technical skills must be shaped to meet new demands and confront new needs—worldview adjustments, increasing ethnic diversity, more easily discernible differences between the classes, moral demands that cannot always be addressed by traditional patterns of behavior, the growing visibility of the poor, urban openness to change and the accumulated effect of new ideas.

Past models of decision making will face adjustments. Hierarchical patterns of African group thinking will cope in the city with the pressure of a more individualistic style of choosing. First- and second-generation Koreans in the United States will struggle to cross a gulf of alternate leadership models as wide as that between Japanese and Anglos.

a. *In the cultural and social diversity of the world’s cities, how will we discern leadership gifts? Where do we look to find gifts that are appropriate to the cultural context and faithful to biblical demands? How will those gifts be tested in ministry?*

b. *How will the training of leaders be carried on? The formal schooling model of learning has severe drawbacks in cultural settings where education moves on nonformal lines. Can mentoring avoid the one-way concept of learning, where instruction is deposited in student receptacles as money is deposited in a bank? How can we develop mentoring models in which content is not detached from the real world of the learner, where every mentor/teacher is also a learner?*

c. *How do we develop a model for mentoring laity that equips unpaid as well as paid leaders of the church? That instructs every Christian in equipping skills? That leaves out no generation in the church—youth or adult? How do we create a holistic program of discipleship that*



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encourages the people of God to take their ministry outside the church into the urban public world?

The agenda just outlined is the focus of this book. It is what might be termed a calling to spiritual warfare and ultimately to the urban mission of God himself. We cannot improvise; we may only ask at each step what it is that God demands (Bavinck 1960:5). How does God see the mission of his people in this world of cities?

