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gospel is simply part of the privatization of religion by which modern culture has emasculated the biblical message.

- 3. Third, I would put the need for a doctrine of freedom which rests not on the ideology of the Enlightenment but on the gospel itself. The p. 368 world will rightly distrust any claim by the church to a voice in public affairs, remembering that the freedom of thought and of conscience which the Enlightenment won was won against the resistance of the church. But the freedom which the Enlightenment won rests upon an illusion—the illusion of autonomy—and it therefore ends in new forms of bondage. Yet we have no right to say this until we can show that we have learned our lesson: that we understand the difference between bearing witness to the truth and pretending to possess the truth; that we understand that witness (*marturia*) means not dominance and control but suffering.
- 4. Fourth, I would affirm the need for a radical break with that form of Christianity which is called the denomination. Sociologists have rightly pointed out that the denomination (essentially a product of North American religious experience in the past 200 years) is simply the institutional form of a privatized religion. The denomination is the outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual surrender to the ideology of our culture. Neither separately nor together can the denominations become the base for a genuinely missionary encounter with our culture.
- 5. Fifth, there will be the need to listen to the witness of Christians from other cultures. The great new asset which we have for our missionary task is the presence among us of communities of Christians nourished in the cultures of Asia, Africa, and the West Indies. We need their eyes to see our culture afresh.
- 6. But finally, and this is fundamental, there will be the need for courage. Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers—realities to the existence of which our privatized culture has been blind. To ask, 'Can the West be converted?' is to align ourselves with the apostle when he speaks of 'taking every thought captive to Christ', and for that—as he tells us—we need more than the weapons of the world.

Lesslie Newbigin was for many years a missionary and bishop of the Church of South-India, in Madras, now retired in Birmingham, England. p. 369

Mission in an Urban World

Eugene Rubingh

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The following article is an attempt at the theology of the city. It not only gives a brief summary of the growth of the megapolis of our time but also shows how the city was the centre of attention in Old Testament as well as New Testament times. In conclusion it scrutinizes certain peculiar characteristics of modern urban life and lists basic steps for any urban Christian mission.

Editor.

The world is moving to the city. While the numbers of mankind are said to be exploding, this explosion may be experienced most fully in the mushrooming of cities. The awesome trek of humanity to metropolis presents the city as an inescapable missionary frontier. For the Christian, the city is not a mere agglomeration of people and buildings, but a place where the Kingdom comes. The mission 'field' becomes a grid of city blocks.

The church of Christ is set in the world, not in some splendid isolation as a haven for those who might care to seek her out. Rather, the New Testament images are those of yeast and salt; her odyssey transpires precisely where people are found. God's people were always the apple of his eye, but the particular splendour of the New Testament church is displayed in the assembling and diversity of people. No longer are the tapestries and temples the significant treasures of the Kingdom, nor cushioned pews or weighty vestments. The treasures are *people*, and so the lot of the church is cast where people are. Increasingly in our days, they are in the city.

The church has not yet responded well to this imperative. Her mission overseas usually began in the countryside, and was almost always an overwhelmingly rural or village operation. Rural people seemed to be the needy ones, forgotten by governments intent upon making their cities into showpieces. The Gospel found more receptivity, too, among the rural poor, the despised and disdained. And it was cheaper for the mission to operate in the countryside; there seemed to be so much more clout per pound or dollar.

Nor has the mindset of the sending church been cordial to the city. She celebrates the idyllic rather than the urban and thinks of the city with antipathy as the most virulent locus of wickedness. Her face is p. 370 often turned with nostalgia toward the garden (where man's journey began) rather than toward the City, the New Jerusalem (the Christian destiny, the eschatological focus of man's journey). It is time to get in step with the drumbeat of God's unfolding plan.

RACING TO METROPOLIS

For all the centuries, except one, of man's life on this planet, his habitat has been overwhelmingly rural. Though he clustered somewhat for protection and commerce, his settlements could not grow very large because he needed access to the soil. The only metropolis in the ancient world ever to reach one million people was Rome, about the time that Paul lived there. Yet Rome, too, decreased drastically in the Middle Ages and was decimated by the Black Death around 1350. It was probably only a small town after that and did not reach one million again until 1930.

In 1800, a mere 1.7% of the population lived in cities of more than 100,000. In fact, only 3% lived in places exceeding 5,000. At that time there was only one city in the world with more than one million people, and that was Beijing. The first city in the Western world to reach this *megacity* status (i.e. one million inhabitants) was London, in the year 1806. By 1870 it reached four million; it had become what is now termed the *supercity*.

It is in the twentieth century that the rush to the cities has become a flood. At the opening of the century, 14% of mankind had become urban; by 1950 this percentage had doubled to 28%—an almost unbelievable transfer of population. Today well over two billion people, or 43% of us, are urban dwellers, and before the end of this century over half of all people will live in cities. In a single century mankind will have changed from being rural to being homo urbanis.

Until 1975 most of the world's urban dwellers were found in what are often termed the 'developed' countries. By the year 2000, however, the urban populations of the developing nations will comprise two-thirds of all the urban dwellers in the world. Hence

these cities are faced with the superhuman task of compressing into a few decades the same growth that was spread over a century in the cities of the developed nations. These third world cities are obviously not equipped to receive such masses of new settlers in such a short time. Thus there arises the phenomenon of huge belts of squatters surrounding many third world cities.

Mexico City, soon to be if not already the largest city in the world with 18 million people, now houses more people than half of Canada. p. 371 From now until the turn of the century likely 1500 new residents will flock into Mexico City *each day*! And half the inhabitants of Mexico City are under fourteen years of age: it is literally a city of children. Mexico City also illustrates what urbanologists call the push/pull effect. To the rural farmer life has often become a grim struggle to eke out a subsidence on a diminishing amount of land with fewer markets and signs of hope for himself and his family. These dire prospects symbolize the *push* effect, thrusting the hopeful into the city. The capital also offers the allure of success and excitement and *pulls like a magnet*.

Today there are 286 megacities on planet earth.

AN URBAN FAITH

In the face of all the dire warnings about cities and the negative imagery Christians often carry regarding cities, the surprising fact is that Christianity is very much an urban religion. Already in 1900, when only 14% of mankind lived in cities, 29% of the Christians were urban dwellers, while *only 5% of non-Christians lived in cities*. World urbanization has risen today, as we noted, to 43%, but now fully 62% of Christians are urban, while only 24% of non-Christians live in cities. (These are percentages; in terms of sheer numbers there are obviously more non-Christians both in cities and everywhere else.)

At the same time it is true that world population growth today outstrips the growth of Christianity, and so urbanization is moving *away* from any previous identification it may have had with the Christian faith. But this is the challenge we face! We are, in fact, an urban faith, a mostly urban people. The city offers to us enormous and unprecedented resources for evangelization. The opportunities to show the love and justice of Christ are greater than ever before. Love shines most greatly in the narrowest of streets.

SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVES

The Bible mentions some 119 cities and makes 1227 references to cities from varied perspectives. Strands of God's purpose appear in these references, and as these are interwoven, a tapestry takes shape. Yet urban missionaries have long had to contend with an anti-urban bias in the church, and this only now is the tapestry being seen in all its beauty. The Bible, it was said, exhorts us to beware of the city and to flee from it. Psalm 55:9–11 is cited as an example: P. 372

Confuse the wicked, O Lord, confound their speech, For I see violence and strife in the city.

Day and night they prowl about on its walls;

Malice and abuse are within it.

Destructive forces are at work in the city;

Threats and lies never leave its streets.

The accounts of Cain, Babel, and Babylon all contribute to the negative view many Christians entertain concerning God's perspective on the city. Jacques Ellul, in a brilliant overview, *The Meaning of the City*, finds in the city the epitome of human rebellion against

God, the apex of man's proud defiance of God's will. In Cain we already see the prototype of all who build cities. Ellul writes, 'The city is the direct consequence of Cain's murderous act and his refusal to accept God's protection.'

Thus historically, hermeneutically, and in their own experience, urban missionaries appear to be out of step. But let us take another look.

The Bible opens with man's creation in the countryside. As the pulsebeat of recorded history begins, it is clear that development and progression is in God's purpose with his creation. The potential for this unfolding is marvellously built into the creation, so that history will not be mere cyclic repetition, but will display an advancing rhythm, not a simple revolving, but in the term of Jurgen Moltmann, a *pro*volution, a rhythm that shows newness and destiny. Thus, man was created to have relationships, to God and family, but also to others as their numbers increased. Furthermore, man was endowed with a creativity that enables him to use resources in complex interdependencies. His talents can be pooled to achieve great communal purposes. The cultural mandate in its unfolding and development would require the founding of cities. Thus while man began in a garden, his destiny is the urban New Jerusalem. The whole Bible from beginning to end is a record of this tending toward the city.

As Ellul observes so well, instead of becoming the epitome of man's obedient response to God's gifting, the city became a symbol of man's self-deification and arrogance. In the city sin can be worked out to the most terrible depths of degradation and mutual rebellion against God's sovereignty. But what do these accounts of human horror tell us? That God is negative regarding the city as such? Much scholarly writing so contends. No, the city remains in God's glorious plan! It is the fallenness of the city, and not the city itself, which is the dolorous result of sin. The curses rained down by the prophets on evil cities do not happen because they are cities, but because they are evil. p. 373

ANOTHER LOOK AT ISRAEL

Let us apply this perspective to Israel. We are often presented with Israel as God's chosen (and rural) people. Her life was supposedly supremely agrarian; her sacrifices, ceremonies, feasts, tabernacle, were all non-urban. The building of cities was seen as a lack of trust in God and his protection. Ezekiel (7:23, 9:9) and other prophets berate the cities for the violence and injustice found there and often exult in pastoral settings. Thus the love of God for his special people is also easily interpreted as his special affection for her rural habitat.

Such reasoning is fallacious. God's people have no special claim on God's favour, then or now, because of their place of residence. Indeed, far from being called to be a desert people, the nomadic sojourn of Israel was in fact her punishment. The prophets do not present the desert wandering as ideal. Rather, they extolled the good of the city where the Lord dwells and spoke of it as the ideal. Ezekiel's last chapter, for example, is a paean of praise for the blessings of the city where dwells the Lord. This beautiful doxology confirms that God's anger at the sin of the city is not his only or final word. The marvellous name of the city will be: THE LORD IS THERE (Ezek. 48:35).

Thus God's perspective regarding the city as such is one of favour. This may be seen already in his establishment of 'cities of refuge' (<u>Joshua 20</u>), where both mercy and justice will be found as precursors of his everlasting rule. In the same vein the Psalmist waxes eloquent regarding Jerusalem (<u>Ps. 48</u>), 'Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God …' Isaiah reaches for the highest name for the restored people of God and proclaims, 'They shall call you the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel' (<u>60:14</u>). For God's people the city is their glorious patrimony.

NEW TESTAMENT MOMENTUM

The New Testament church is born of Israel and fulfills her as the unfolding of God's purpose continues. The movement is centrifugal; God's people are to go out to where the unsaved and needy are found. They are to penetrate every citadel claimed by the enemy. The greater the need and the more numerous the unsaved, the more compelling is the sending entrusted to the church. The sent ones do not identify with the evils of the city where they are sent, but they are the very signs of the presence of God's kingdom in the heart of the city, the living evidence of God's claims upon the city. P. 374

Pentecost clearly signals this centrifugal imperative, the imperative of permeation, of yeast and salt. The spiritual physicians are to move out among the wounded. And where the wounded are most heavily congregated, there their services are the most desperately needed.

Thus the strategy of the new age is that of incorporation: the sent ones enter the secular city and call upon it to obey. In this place of concentrated human encounter, they are at the cutting edge of God's plan. In their mind's eye, people are as beautiful as gardens, for *people* are the treasures of the new age.

The New Testament is replete with this urban momentum. It is instructive, for example, to see how urban is the writer to the Hebrews. He speaks to these troubled Christian Jews as to those who have now finally arrived at their destination: 'You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God' (12:22). He can reach back to speak of Abraham, who left distant Ur. He lived in tents then, but even in that far-off rural past 'he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God' (Heb. 11:10).

For us there is also a vision, clearer now, for the contours of the City have been painted in the revelation. Nothing yet matches the vision, but we struggle to bring to the city the life-changing shalom of God's kingdom. 'For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come' (Heb. 13:14).

THE URBAN HABITAT

Unfortunately at this point in time most of the literature on cities is Western and reflects Western categories and frameworks. For example, Western cities are generally ringed by fashionable suburbs and have a decaying 'inner city'. (The very centre of the Western city is currently resurgent and high-rent). In the case of non-western cities, however, the favellas, villas miserias, 'rabbit hutches', and slums ring the *outskirts* of the cities, and such cities function in a far different manner.

Also note that the militant champions of the poor are simply not allowed to speak and agitate with such impunity as in the West. Concern for 'human rights' is not accorded free rein. Poverty and authority are more deeply entrenched and a high degree of dissent is impermissible.

This situation is not due merely to the desire of tyrants to amass wealth and power. Ancient worldviews have contributed not only a sense of fatalism and resignation, but even a fear of change itself. Harmony and order in society is felt to be a reflection of the cosmic p. 375 harmony and should not be much disturbed. The cosmic equilibrium is an ancient heritage, and innovation is dangerous and even sacreligious. These beliefs are engrained in millions, perhaps billions of people and so change comes slowly. But as this worldview is eroded by modernity, change is coming with a crescendo. In that sense, as well as many others, cities the world over resemble one another more and more.

From the perspective of the social sciences, there are four major attributes of life in cities:

1. *Proximity*. However, while people and artifacts may be close at hand, they may be quite unavailable and hence still remote. The consequences are enormous. The privacy needed for personal reflection may be unavailable. Competition increases on every level. In close quarters there are limits on physical and psychic space and tempers flare as the ego runs into other egos.

At the same time, proximity means that there are resources and people nearby, with great potential for good. The greatest era of mission opportunity in terms of accessibility is certainly now at hand!

2. *Multiplicity*. In the city the clamour of stimuli and choices is multiplied. The number of changing images, contradictions, and unexpected occurrences increases. However, the city may also provide more monotony and sameness. For example, the assembly line may demand nothing more than mindless repetition. Life may be rigidly channelled by time-clocks, yellow lines, and officials who diminish or deny choice. But still there is a multiplicity all around.

An overload of stimuli and choices leads either to withdrawal on the one hand or superficiality on the other. There is just too much for one to savour properly. Crime flourishes where people are experienced shallowly. At the same time, we should remember that multiplicity means that the number and choices of avenues for mission is also vastly increased in the city. We should celebrate and utilize this abundance.

3. *Complexity*. In the city face-to-face relationships often give way to secondary relationships with agents and bureaux. Relationships become incredibly varied and each person makes contact with many unrelated circles. This feature of 'segmental roles' means that control over the wholeness of life dissipates. The sense of meaningful participation in life's issues is diminished when these contacts are fleeting and with unknown persons.

Furthermore, the bombardment of many styles and values has the p. 376 effect of breaking down traditions and encouraging questioning. Distinctives are gradually eroded; sociologists speak of the homogenizing effect of city life. The consequence of all of this is the creation of a vast interdependency. A host of people now influence and control our lives; police and firemen, vandals and bureaucrats, clerks and beggars. We experienced them all far less in the country.

Yet here again we note that interdependency is a gateway to service for the Christian. Avenues abound in the city, and Paul's picture of the body as mutually dependent becomes particularly real and incarnate in the city.

4. *Concentration*. The urbanite is at the bottom of a pyramid of people. The mayor may speak to the bishop, and the hospital director to the newspaper editor, and there the power is concentrated. The other individuals in the city lose personal power over their lives. Out of this distance arises the impersonality of institutions. Personal interaction becomes impossible; caring and time-consuming involvement must be sacrificed. In the impersonality of structures the temptation to yield to greed, to exploit, seems irresistible, especially if the victim is faceless and unknown.

But concentration is also a necessity. Structures in fact allow gifts to blossom and expertise to flourish. Without structures the city would face chaos and anarchy. The church, often itself splintered, has not developed well those skills of networking which deal most effectively with structures. And we must remember that it is in the church that

the care and love so lacking elsewhere may at last be found. In an impersonal world, the urban missionary carries into the city the potent force of Christ's love shown in his people.

BASICS FOR URBAN MISSION METHODOLOGY

Choices regarding method spring from basic missiological commitments. For the Reformed urban evangelist, the following are essential:

- 1. *Holistic ministry*. It is not enough to say that the Reformed evangelist utilizes a word/deed outreach. There are parameters on both the left and right:
- a. The programme must clearly show verticality. There is a sense in which every humanitarian effort strikes a blow at Satan's kingdom. Every call for justice evokes a satanic shudder. Yet for the Reformed evangelist such endeavours are incomplete unless somehow the name and purpose of Jesus Christ in it all is clearly articulated. p. 377
- b. On the other hand, it cannot be confined to church planting. When Donald McGavran writes that 'though men may be healed and kindly deeds done ... these never form the purpose of the mission', then we have passed the boundary on the right. People need to know that Christ is Lord and that his purpose embraces all of life. The new Christian and the emerging community live in a void unless they understand how their new commitment informs and manages all of their life. The spectre of Christian ghettos is real enough, those separate enclaves of Christians who talk only to themselves.
- 2. Circumscribing the target population. Is working according to the 'homogeneous unit principle' then a valid method for the urban evangelist? McGavran reminds us that people accept Christ more readily when there are few linguistic, ethnic, or cultural boundaries to cross. People simply like to be Christians with people like themselves. But is this a Christian methodology? Does not Christ enjoin us to repudiate every barrier and break down every wall that separates people? Is the tribal or minority ethnic church appropriate for the ministry of the urban evangelist?

McGavran has been criticized for elevating description ('people prefer this') to prescription ('it is therefore acceptable'). Surely the church in the city, of all places, should be ready to embrace everyone. This is certainly true for the dominant white culture of the West and for the dominant tribal or cultural church in other parts of the world. But still every congregation has its character: some are high church, some casual, some charismatic.

And what then of the minority ethnic churches everywhere? Are they wrong to provide a haven for their own kind in terms of their language, customs, music, and style? Of course not! These existing patterns of human relationships are indeed God-given bridges for communicating the Gospel. The homogeneous unit principle may indeed be provisionally accepted for minority ethnic churches. The ultimate aim of the ethnic church is also that some day she will embrace everyone. But a valid aim en route is self-discovery. When minority ethnic Christians have found that in Christ they do have respect and freedom, when they have faced the power structures and found acceptance, then one more barrier will indeed come down. Meanwhile these Christians find that their life in Christ is indeed meaningful in terms of their language and culture. Indeed, but for that, they would not be in the church at all!

3. *Incarnation*. The urban evangelist must become incarnate in the p. 378 city. The churches have too often abandoned the city, and the sin reeks to heaven. Only by physical presence with the target population can the urban evangelist be credible. Thus for both

domestic and cross-cultural missionaries, there are heavy lifestyle questions to be faced. There is risk to health and safety, and domiciling must be faced individually before God.

Every model must be tested incarnationally. At every point it asks how the church (in me individually and in the churches together) is present in the city. Servanthood is a constant dimension of the incarnational model and a crucial feature of urban mission methodology. Lordship and pretentiousness are the styles of the enemy kingdom, but the style of the incarnational model is service.

4. *Networking*. The scourge of the Christian mission is its fragmentation. Nowhere is this more emasculating than in the city where massive entities order life. The Christians could easily greatly influence these systems, but we are weakened by our divisions and parochialism. No one mission or church contains the resources or base for dealing with these large systems. Only through networking can these urban systems be made to listen and respond.

Not every facet of ministry requires networking, to be sure, but only in this way can most massive urban problems be approached. Since the powers really do belong to Christ (<u>Col. 1:15–17</u>), they must be put into his service. The best in structures can be put into that service through being in harness together.

Sometimes networking poses problems to missions that are reluctant to be joined with others of questionable orthodoxy. This is a legitimate concern for the testimony that will be given. Nonetheless, working together in cities is so crucial that it must be effected when possible. Our witness to the unity of Christ's body demands it. And we need it to get the job done.

5. *Prayer*. Surely, spontaneous and unorchestrated prayer must not be curtailed, but it is theologically unwarranted as well as shortsighted to keep prayer out of the mission strategy. The finest planning can be foiled by Satan's kingdom. Team members must put in effort in concerted prayer. It must be *written* right into the strategy. The sending church, too, must be involved. A regular listing of items for praise and intercession must go out to each supporting congregation. Let God's people join together for spiritual power in this great endeavour!

CONCLUSION

The cityscape, with all its heaped-up problems, is not a dismal grey, P. 379 but for the Christian, a panorama of colour and possibility. Satan's urban fortresses are being stormed as urban mission really gets underway at last, and as the church senses that the city, too, is God's turf. Let us count some of the ways:

- 1. The discovery of urban biblical themes is flourishing. We have today the revelations and theological base on which to found and build urban ministries. The goal of the history God is shaping for us is not the repristinization of earth to become Paradise again, but the goal is a city, a city of blessed community.
- 2. The social sciences, once replete with sombre statistics of urban misery, now uncover mines of rich cultural values and possibilities, treasures which may be possessed for the church and kingdom, and which explode hoary myths about the unremitting misery of urban life.
- 3. Urban mission is no longer simply a frightening frontier, but a force to be reckoned with in church and mission forums. Perhaps no challenge so greatly captures the imagination of mission thinkers today as that of our urban imperative.
- 4. The emergence of educated leadership in the churches of the two-thirds world suggests that an increasing role will be played by urban churches, for these educated ones are overwhelmingly urban. In the West, the ecclesiastical march to the suburbs and

countryside is apparently at an end. The depletion of resources for urban church work has halted and may be reversing.

5. There is light from the future, too. In the coming of the New Jerusalem, God again resides with man: 'he will *dwell* with them' (Rev. 21:3-4). This city will incarnate love as a bride adorned for her husband. The Holy Spirit is there, too, in the river of life. The divine symbolism is that of perfect community.

Though this is light from the future, already now the Spirit resolves the non-communication of Babel. Already now, Pentecost incarnates us as the bride, a tiny church, but a sign of salvation. With the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can proclaim and live out the message that in the cities, too, OUR GOD REIGNS!

Dr. Eugene Rubingh is the chairman of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod Committee on Missions and Evangelism. p. 380

Book Reviews

INTEGRATIVE THEOLOGY—VOLUME ONE

by Gordon R. Lewis & Bruce A. Demarest (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids: 1987) 394 pp. N.P.

Reviewed by Sunand Sumithra

Nowadays new theological books are a dime a dozen. In an era when ethics has replaced dogmatics and biblical theology systematics, it is well nigh impossible for any book on systematic theology to get the attention of theologians beyond the raising of an evangelical eyebrow. The stigma that theology divides has gripped particularly evangelical leaders the world over. That being the case the authors of this volume ought to be congratulated not only for their courage in attempting a well-argued defence of systematics but also for giving us—at last—an epoch-making, definitive work.

Ours is the age of the "How", rather than of the "What" or the "Why". The earthquake brought about by liberation theology has done permanent damage to the traditional way of doing theology. Though there have been beside liberation theology several other ways of doing theology, such as action-reflection method, inter-contextual method, method of correlation etc., evangelicals have been far behind in producing a viable alternative in theological methodology. "Integrative Theology" comes as fresh air in a suffocating atmosphere. In fact, the book is, as the authors claim, a response to Bernard Ramm's challenge to evangelicals to develop a new paradigm of doing theology: Ramm asserts that evangelicals "have not developed a theological method that enables them to be consistently evangelical in their theology and to be people of modern learning. That is why a new paradigm is necessary." Lewis and Demarest's offer is precisely what the doctor ordered for evangelicals.

The present volume is the first of the three-volume work on "Integrative Theology." Each volume deals with two themes: Volume 1 on "Knowing Ultimate Reality" and "The Living God", Volume 2 on "Our Primary Need" and "Christ's Atoning Provisions," and