The Church and the City

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It was predicted by Rafael Salas that by the end of the 20th century the world would experience radical and overwhelming change with the majority of people living in urban centre, primarily in the cities of Asia, Africa and Latin America.\(^1\) Harvey Cox goes further when he says, ‘Future historians will record the twentieth century as that century in which the whole world became one immense city’.\(^2\)

Urban growth is more than a sociological reality, it is the fulfilment of God’s intentions since the beginning of time. The cultural mandate given to Adam and Eve in the garden to fill, rule, and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28) was nothing more than a mandate to build the city.\(^3\) The missiological side of this coin is that the nations are coming to our cities to become new citizens and not just temporary residents. Immigrant churches from Asia, Africa and Latin America will continue to grow at an increasingly rapid rate.

The missionary movement is exploding in these nations as they send out missionaries. Recently, in an article in the Christian Mission Journal, it was noted that ‘Spanish-speaking missionaries [are] reaching Latin immigrants in London and Paris ... [and are] taking the gospel to Muslims in Spain ... it’s European missions the South American way!’\(^4\) These churches are ignited by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news of Christ throughout the world. This mission action will continue to enter our North American cities, and it will be an ongoing factor as the new missionary era takes place. We must take note that the dominant role of western missions is slowly disappearing since the modern mission movement. We will need to consider the following challenges

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which will require several shifts in our thinking: (1) the church as mission; (2) the pastor as shepherd and church planter; (3) the new relationship between sending and receiving churches; (4) old and new models for missionary enterprise.

The Church as mission

In this century there must be a greater engagement between the church and the city. In the early 20th century the church and the city were distant in their concerns and mission. Dr Harvie Conn, one of the pioneers of urban mission and ministry, noted, ‘Churches appear to be in the city but not really of it. City and not church occupies the periphery’.5

Why must the church be engaged in mission? First there is a theological reason – the church is the community of the kingdom of God.

The Church can never possess the King so as to monopolise the Kingdom. The Church is communities resulting from the preaching of the Kingdom. They serve the Kingdom as symbols which show imperfectly what the Kingdom is like. The Church is to bring to visibility for the world fellowship with Christ as King and obedience to him. The Church is to be ‘God’s colony in man’s world, God’s experimental garden on earth’. She is a sign of the world to come and at the same time a guarantee of its coming.6

The church is the people of God in society. It is also the agent of the kingdom. God will use the church as king, prophet, and priest to bring societal transformation. The prophetic role7 will give witness to the truth and declare our faith in public. We will admonish each other towards a resurrected lifestyle. We are priests (Matt. 27:51) and therefore pray and intercede for our community. We have access to our great mediator, Jesus (Heb. 4:14–16). We are admonished and equipped to provide mercy (Heb. 13:16) to a wounded world. We are kingly and will rule (Eph. 2:6); the world will recognise our authority over evil and this world as instruments of justice. We rule as those overcoming the world already, but not yet.

The present rule of Christ is the basic theme of the church and the kingdom. The church brings the people of God together in worship as they acknowledge Christ’s reign as King. The church is God’s colony. The church is the body of Christ, that community in which Christ dwells, turned in action toward the world (1 Cor. 12:12–27).8 We also

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7 Joel 2:28–29, Num. 11
8 Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 143.
recognise that Jesus Christ is the head of the kingdom, and this will bring great growth to the church in the city as it did in the early stages of the NT church (Eph. 1:10, 22–23). The Lord is the evangelist who announces his coming, and is the herald of the gospel that is the word of the kingdom. As a result the church grows and reproduces (Matt. 13:3, 23). The great missionary is Jesus, who is sent by the Father. Jesus is the great shepherd (John 10:11–30) who gathers the people of God from every corner of the earth and promises to deliver them from the evil one. Jesus ministered the gospel of the kingdom, his rule over all of life, and was moved with compassion as he saw people who were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36). ‘Shepherding is the mission of the church – crossing frontiers in the form of a servant.’

9 Edmund Clowney states,

Jesus came to gather, and to call gatherers, disciples who would gather with him, seeking the poor and helpless from city streets and country roads ... Mission is not an optional activity for Christ’s disciples. If they are not gatherers, they are scatterers. Some suppose that a church may feature worship and nurture, leaving gathering as a minor role .... Mission is reduced to a few offerings, the visit of several exhausted missionaries on fund-raising junkets, and the labours of an ignored mission committee. Such a church is actively involved in scattering, for the congregation that ignores mission will atrophy and soon find itself shattered by internal dissension.

10 We follow the example of Christ who was sent and in obedience came (John 1:1–14), so we are sent into the world. ‘Mission expresses the purpose for which Christ came into the world.’

11 The second reason the church must be engaged in mission is that people from every corner of the world are entering the cities. Urbanisation and urbanism is the way of life and the new wave for missions. This has been in process for the last century, but the church has been slow in responding to this challenge. ‘A book by James D. Hunter in 1983 notes that “evangelicals are grossly under represented in the large cities”. Only 8.6 percent surveyed by Hunter were in cities of one million or more.’

12 Dr Conn realised that he was in a battle to convince the larger North American evangelical community about this urban wave, that God is interested in the cities of his world, and that Pauline theology was profoundly nurtured in urban mission. Pauline missiology was centred in the great urban centres of the Greco-Roman world.

In Acts the Pauline missionaries almost unfailingly go first to the Jewish synagogue and find opportunities to speak and debate at the regular Sabbath services. When they

11 Clowney, The Church, 161.
meet resistance there, or even if they do not, they sometimes take up residence in the households of individuals: of Lydia in Philippi (16:15), of Jason in Thessalonica (17:5–9), of Priscilla and Aquilla in Corinth (18:2–4).  

Conn asks, “How can we recruit personnel for reaching our urban generations when the rural and suburban areas have nurtured their visions of the church?” The church must take on this challenge with vigour and confidence in the power of the reigning Lord. When reading the NT, you cannot help but be struck by the fact that most of it was quite purposefully written within a missionary context, and that context was mostly urban.

The NT made it impossible to note any distinguishing differences between church and mission. There were no denominational or extra-church structures other than the synagogue that issued strategies for mission. Certainly no para-church mission organisations were to be found. Dr Conn noted that ‘after the first century, there were not even separate apostles or evangelists for the unreached’.  

The apostolic nature of the church has been diminishing, as can be seen as we trace a number of shifts in the church’s relationship to mission. First, the apostolate in the Roman Catholic Church went from sending out missionaries to apostolic succession. Then the shift in the Reformation went from mission and the sending of called men and women to orthodoxy and the maintaining of truth. Here again the sending into mission is lost. Second, the teaching on the Holy Spirit in the Roman Catholic Church made a dramatic change from the empowerment of the church for prayer and mission to ecclesiastical incorporation. This had also affected the Reformers as they focused on the Holy Spirit taking on the major role of the interpreter of Scripture. The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches moved towards the empowerment of the believer through the charismata. Once again we see a shift that divorces the Holy Spirit from the spirit of mission.

A third shift along the lines of mission and the church has to do with the church’s role as a sending community. In the 19th century the calling was primarily a calling of individuals who were motivated by God to participate in ‘foreign’ missions. It was an individualistic calling. In other words individuals rather than the church were awakened to the call of the mission frontier. The individual was called and sent, which led to a mission focus on saving individual souls. The individual became the agent of the kingdom and of the Spirit, which then limited church planting strategy. It may be noted that it was the individual that also became the agent of mission. ‘This results in a low view of the church.’  

This changed in the middle of the 20th century, and the church

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13 Acts 16:13–15; 18:2
15 Conn, Clarified Vision, 17.
17 Conn, unpublished notes, 2.
became much more aware of the ecclesiastical responsibilities in matters of church planting.

The establishment of missionary societies by Protestants was due in part, but not totally, to the inactivity of missions emanating from the local church. One reason for the shift in mission responsibility from the local congregation to mission agencies and denominational structures was that the theology of the church became church-centred and not necessarily centred on Christ and his kingdom. This was not a kingdom response but rather a truncated locus. On the whole the church in Europe was very slow in getting involved in mission work. Another barrier was the overwhelming responsibility of maintaining the church with the upkeep of mission activity. There was a maintenance approach that became stagnant rather than one which was centred on mission and allowed the church to become more dynamic. There was therefore a shift from church to mission agencies.

On a practical level we might agree with this move. The church was too involved with its members so a survival ideology was formed. The churches could not handle the challenge that they perceived as being too cumbersome. They found that it was too inefficient to carry on the mission mandate; therefore, there was a divorce in the church that tossed missions to a more efficient and pragmatic structure which was focused on 'one thing'. The move from mission to maintenance became a primary core value in the local church. There was a shift from the NT understanding of the church as a body prepared and enabled to serve and become involved in the crossing of the city frontiers to the self-enhancement and solidification of the church.

It is important to realise that this divorce did not happen among immigrant and language churches in North America. The Spanish-speaking churches continued to exercise the sending mandate, on a faith basis, and mission from the United States was launched primarily into Latin America and the Caribbean. Other language churches from Africa and Latin America continued this cross-ocean mission of planting churches in their own homelands. This webbing of connecting the North American mission enterprise with the two-thirds world mission is a spontaneous movement that is now taking place in a more organised and intentional manner. We have much to learn about mission from the Spanish-speaking church in North America.

Towards the middle and latter part of the 20th century the Holy Spirit was at work in the United States, igniting a vision in local churches that initiated an urban mission agenda. This would break the isolationist aspect of the church or what might be called a ghetto mentality – caretaker rather than husbandman. It would also shatter the manifestation of the church in mission as one that is out to conquer the world and incorporate others into its own domain. In this movement local churches, some independent, but many that belonged to a larger body of churches such as denominational churches, the sending of Christians from local congregations revived the apostolic nature of the church. Some viewed these churches as innovative, creative and risk takers. However others, especially those administering denominational agencies, did
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not see these churches in a favourable light but rather as being disloyal and possibly subversive. Yet these churches were moved by mission history founded in the first century as well as the modern mission movement. They were for the most part following the NT teaching, and the application of the biblical principles enabled and empowered the church to pursue this mission challenge. It seemed irregular to see churches reproducing churches, yet they were considered as refreshing new models of ministry.

In this ever-changing world, the agency of the kingdom and catalyst for societal transformation is the church. The church must embrace its commitments to the Great Commission in a demonstrative way. The local church must be equipped to handle the numerous missiological challenges that are presented in this increasingly global society. Ray Bakke often speaks about the 52 nations living in London. East London is basically becoming Asian; South London Afro-Caribbean, housing West Indians, Jamaicans, and Ugandans; and the Arab community is filtering into West London. This global phenomenon is forming in the cities of the world. We are finding the world in our own neighbourhoods. This pluralism of religion and culture is now localised in our urban communities, and the mission field has skipped across the ocean into our neighbourhoods and local church communities. Look again and note the hand of the missionary God. If we are to approach our mission responsibility effectively and biblically, the sending nature of the church must be restored.

Mission cannot be allocated to others just because they may have the means or the resources. This is not a pragmatic issue but one that is centred on the concerns of the Lord of the harvest and the church’s faithfulness to the Great Commission to gather the nations:

The Christian answer in face of the urban complexity of life is not a return to the simple lifestyle of rural communities of the ‘good old days’. God is at work in the world’s urban situation and calls for a lifestyle accountable for his kingdom coming and which he will complete in his time.¹⁸

Churches will have to strategise for a mission movement in their city. It will have to take place in their context and move from that point of reference to other mission frontiers. Churches will become much more the sending platforms for mission activity than ever before. They will plan with multiple models rather than one form. They will go further than the zone of expectation dictates. In other words, they will be biblically faithful to the gospel and sensitive to the context in which they plant their churches. In the same way leadership will be trained through different vehicles. Multiple models of theological training are essential for the task. Discipleship will take a high priority and will be much more thorough than we have seen in years past. The church is the redeemed redeeming the world for Christ.

¹⁸ Christensen, ‘Church Renewal,’ 12.
The Pastor as shepherd and church planter

In order to accomplish the enormous task of mission, churches must review the preparation and selection of pastors and other leaders. The renewal of local churches is essential for this task and it will take place when kingdom principles are applied, radically restructuring the existing models of leadership into a lifestyle modelled after the servant minister/ministry in the midst of a dynamic and at times impersonal urban context. In North America churches have become more regional and less local, and location has not been taken as seriously as it should for the mission enterprise. Churches look for locations with suitable facilities that are reasonable and accessible to transportation and provide sufficient parking space, but they show little concern for the immediate mission context. Certainly there is a need for churches that might be regional, especially in city centre communities, but this has become all too common. Often this is done because churches focus on the wrong group of people. Most churches are primarily concerned for the people within the church and the people most like ‘us’. In part they ignore what is in reality their mission context, which could represent a different ethnic, racial, and socio-economic group. This means that we have directed our attention to a church model absent from a mission context. We have not seriously strategised with the community in mind and have become too pragmatic, getting the pews filled at any cost and the leadership already prepared and finances already allocated through transfer. In this pragmatic move the mission of the church is short-circuited.

Churches need to strategise with the local community in mind. The tension is healthy – it may be difficult in the short run but will be healthier in the long term. We have segregated our lives to the context of sameness and comfort while living in a global community that may be distinctly different and in need of the gospel. The bottom line is that there is no clearly defined mission context for most churches. This process is too often left in the hands of the pastor who may have a rural, suburban nostalgic vision of the church and therefore lacks a missiological dynamic and vision. The pastor and leaders may be in the city but not of it.

The role of the pastor is being challenged from being one that is primarily focused on maintaining the basic needs of the congregation – preaching, teaching, counselling, administering and ruling – to one that has an increased responsibility for those of the surrounding community who are more and more culturally distant. This does not mean that pastors will be the ones who are actively doing all the ministry or starting the new churches, but they will be the strategists, visionaries and initiators for this calling. We now need to equip our pastors with missiological tools so that the Scriptures are biblically interpreted and communicated to our new neighbours in the process of contextualisation. Charles Kraft refers to his theological training in his book, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*.
[An] important insight that came to me was that my understandings concerning God and his works, including how I understood the Bible, needed to be culturally adapted if they were to speak to the people God had called me to. It came as a bit of a shock that most of what I had learned in Christian college and seminary, in the forms in which I learned it, was inappropriate or irrelevant to the Nigerians I worked with.19

William Dyrness also expresses concerns about ongoing training. 'After three years of ministry in North America and this new experience in Asia, I began to suspect that the study of theology in the West was several steps removed from people's lives.'20

Pastors need skills in interpreting the city and the mission context so that they and their congregations are able to form effective philosophies of ministries. Getting acquainted with mission history will alert pastors to mission strategies. They need to re-read Scriptures to see that mission and church growth principles are really biblical principles properly applied. This ability to be fluid and missiological will give local churches standing power in a transitioning society.

Pastors are placed in the context of mission whether they know it or not. If not the churches will decline and continue to move further from their context because of the imminent and rapid change of communities. Where will we run unless we take on the missionary heart of Christ and handle the challenges of transitional communities? These transitions are primarily ethnic, racial, generational and socio-economic. Ray Bakke states.

My urban pastor colleagues could best find meaning in their otherwise buffeting and discouraging circumstances if they understood the true significance of their roles. They needed to concentrate on their local congregations or neighbourhoods, but they also needed to widen their visual lenses in order to see that the whole world was coming to their cities. For the first time in nearly 2000 years of Christian history, we could speak realistically of the global mission of local churches.21

Here we should emphasise that the understanding that we are to work from the Scriptures as the authority for all of life in a mission context is the call for contextualisation. In this age when a continued flow of biblical distortion is entering our churches, it is in the Word of God that we find the transforming power for our communities. Not only is Christ being ignored as the only means and way of salvation (John 16:1–2), but attached to this is the subversion of the authority of Scripture. Syncretism and liberalism are not founded in the mission enterprise, as is often thought, they are founded in the unbiblical view of Christ and his Word, where evangelism and mission are distorted and omitted.

McGavran once told us that syncretism was not found where evangelism and the saving power of Jesus was proclaimed. There must be a steady watch and care for our communities. Pastors, both as gatherers and watchers, must know their communities. This will entail reading the community formally through census and demographic work and also informally through constantly walking through the community. Visitation is a lost art that must be revived in the city. Technology will not and should not replace the need for face-to-face relationships. It is extremely important that pastors learn to interpret community in a way similar to how they interpret and exegete Scripture. In a community where there is a growing population of East Asians, the pastor must know what that transition will mean. Will it mean decline for the church or will it be a mission challenge that will bring growth and renewal to the church? How we approach people in our context of service will determine the outcome. God desires growth.

How do we apply the Word in light of this sociological phenomenon? How do we communicate the gospel to a people of a different culture and worldview? How do we as the church of Christ become the church as agent of the king in this new milieu? The dialogue between the social sciences and theology is rarely reviewed in our learning institutions, but it has to take on greater importance.

Pastors will have a more urgent and profound responsibility in missions. They cannot be divorced from their function of gathering the flock from within the mission context of the church:

The city, which is the ultimate extension of earthly man and which is therefore capable of evil and good, is both the scene and goal of the Christian pilgrimage. It is therefore the arena of the Christian mission and consequently the context and strategic base of influence for the planting and development of Christian churches throughout the earth.²²

Pastors, along with servant leaders in the local church, must be trained to model the gospel of the kingdom. Pastors will have to be equipped to understand and apply the holistic vision of the gospel.

The New Relationship between sending and receiving churches

In this essay we will be using terms that may cause some difficulty but the intent is to point out that some nomenclature that is used at present should be abandoned or at least examined. One such set of terms is certainly the older and younger church categories. These terms have a history, and at times this has been a negative history. These categories continue to be used today but seem to have a slightly different edge to them. The terms younger and older church are difficult to define, and this will be brought to light in this section. We have also used such terms as mother and daughter churches. The mother church is a church that sends while the daughter church is the new start of the church that is being ‘born,’ but these are not biblically defensible categories. Another term we use is ‘mission’ church, which is one that is not quite ready to be a ‘full’ and ‘complete’ church. Often denominations do not consider a new start to be a full church until there is more of a self-supporting and self-governing dimension and a number of families are counted. Therefore, a mission church is not considered to be a church and is looked upon as having less in substance and quality than a church.

As the sending church in the West becomes more and more dominated by the mission enterprise of the two-thirds world church – those in Africa, Latin America and Asia – the language of younger/older church is being utilised. Ironically, these younger churches are being started in what is considered as the new nations. The older churches are mainly western and eastern orthodox churches. How do we define this order? Is it geography that determines this distinction? Is it based on the historical time line, the chronology of the church? Can we determine the distinctions on the basis of dependency? Which of the churches are more dependent on the others? Dependency is a regretful basis for definition or drawing conclusions. It may be best for us not to define this global movement as older/younger churches.

My concern has to do with inherent paternalistic attitudes that continue to promote dependency and, therefore, a superior/inferior clash. If we are to take modern mission history seriously, we will note that the early development of missions with the sending church coming from the West was to be in several phases. The first of these is that the western sending church was in complete control over the receiving church. The sending church had ultimate power and authority over the mission. There was very little conflict or personal tension, at least in any visible manner, because one was dominant and the other subservient. This was a colonial pattern that was oppressive and problematic. The new Christians were considered the people being evangelised or the object of the mission group. The leaders, teachers and experts were those being sent from the dominant mission or sending church. This continued until the early and middle part of the 20th century when a second phase took place.

This second historical period was also frustrating for the national churches because there was still a carry-over in which the sending church was dominant and in control, yet there was some consideration for indigenous leadership. National leaders were not
ignored but rather tolerated. They were part of the process of mission, but there existed a lingering disrespect for their value in the ongoing mission of the church. Indigenous Christians felt impotent in making a meaningful contribution. This also led to a sense of an employer/employee relationship. The mission acted as employer and the national Christians were employees.

We are currently in the third phase and the ‘younger’ or emerging churches are now clearly in charge and are carrying the major responsibility of the national church. In this process the development of the national churches had some correlation with the political climate of the time – independence or limited civil unrest. This formula produced a greater opportunity for autonomy for the national church. Allan Anderson states,

Africa has witnessed a century of rapid social change with its accompanying industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as a transition from a pre-colonial period through a traumatic colonial era to an equally traumatic post-colonial order. These factors have affected the formation of new religious movements all over the world, and those in Africa are no exception. 23

It will also lead to organisational tension and conflict between the sending and receiving church. In 1971 John Gatua from Africa called for a moratorium. At times this conflict has caused difficulty and sluggishness to the missionary enterprise. We may still be practising a phase of mission that is inappropriate. It will limit complementary service in this missiological shift from the dominant sending/receiving to one of partnership. If we consider the more recent literature in mission journals, mission textbooks and class lectures, we recognise that most of this material is still authored and published by those from the West.

As we begin the 21st century, how shall the process unfold? What should be the response to the new sending churches? Will there be a mutual sharing of resources? Will dominant/inferior attitudes or employer/employee relationships be corrected by the church, pastors and mission societies? It is difficult to speculate and to plan intelligently as to how we will respond to each other, but we must read history and realise that there is much for us to learn from our previous mistakes. David Barrett speaks of the ‘reaction to mission’ principle. 24

Barrett thinks that the main cause for the rise of the (African Initiated Churches) AIC movement is socio-political, for he sees AICs as one manifestation of many African protest and resistance movements that arose in the colonial period. He

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says that the ‘common root cause’ for the whole AIC movement is a reaction to European missions, which exhibited a ‘failure in love’ in their attitudes to African people.25

Will those in the West see the sending church from the two-thirds world as intruders, insensitive to the existing mission enterprise from the West? Will control or embracing the opportunity for ‘our’ mission to grow and expand be a priority? It is our view that we will have to rely on a profound spirituality that embraces the mission of God sacrificially and promotes the family of God, unity and reciprocity as high values. It is a call to humility in Christ. There will be a need for a spirituality that understands the sending God’s compassion as we carry out the missionary mandate to reach all nations in partnership with all nations. There must be a reciprocal model of missionary work that breaks the many years of colonialism and has been limited to one that has become one of service, but no sharing of the partnership from the churches. The churches must find dependency in each other,26 a koinonia that is significant and presupposes not independence but interdependence (1 Cor. 12:26–27). No longer can one be the donor and the other the recipient.

Another concern will be the status of new missionary work coming from other countries and reaching people of their language and culture in the West. How will they be treated by their denominations and church fellowship? A recent ethnographic work done by Delia Nüesch-Olver indicated that as Latino missionaries reach their particular subgroups in the North, they are stigmatised by their degree of adaptation or assimilation. Many of the denominational leaders who take these leaders to the United States do not realise that Latinos will have to do cross-cultural work even among their own groups and that they are unprepared and have few if any support systems. The difficulty among the incoming leaders is discussed in Nüesch-Olver’s article called ‘Immigrant Clergy in the Promised Land’.27 Pastors speak of losing their ministerial status. She notes, ‘‘A Hispanic like me’’, said Pastor Hablante, ‘‘will never be elected in this country to the positions of church leadership I had before coming here’’.28 There is much conflict and loss as the new immigrant missionaries come to the west.

The western church cannot be the answer to resources and theological training to the non-western church. We need each other and must find ways to mutually share our gifts and talents for the advancement of God’s kingdom. The gifts and resources are different and should not be compared one to the other. There must be a change of heart and mind so that we can see each other differently and accept one another. We must

26 1 Cor. 12 – I have need of you.
overcome categories such as mother/daughter, adopted, donor/recipient and have/have-not.

We must also make mission structural changes. Mission agencies must have personnel from the minority, national and international churches involved in their decision making process. Long term relationships should be built leading to mature relationships. It is important to note in this reciprocal model that we are not offering similar gifts but rather gifts that are necessary and important to each other in the context of evangelising the world together. There must be more complementary offerings and learning from each other.

Twenty-five years ago, the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism stated that the global Christian mission is a responsibility of the global Christian church and not just a western missionary responsibility. The call at the conference, as well as for us in the 21st century, was for the worldwide Christian church to participate in worldwide mission. We need new partnerships in mission, a global-urban partnership in the spirit of humility. Conn and Ortiz note,

The new wave is distinctive in its location and its accelerated velocity. The wave is breaking on the shores of Africa, Asia and Latin America. And urban metropolises like Mexico City, Seoul and Kinshasa are compressing into a few decades growth that took North American cities over a century to achieve.

The future of mission is dependent on humility, mutuality of service, resources, and love for one another as the church globally engages missions in the 21st century under the lordship of Christ.

Old and new models for missionary enterprise

In my opinion the new models will not arise out of this mission era but rather will come from a reforming of old models, models that are biblical but contextually sensitive. For one thing, it is important to realise that single models – the one-type, one-context model – will not accomplish the urban mission call for the 21st century. We must consider multiple type models as the standard. We must think in multiple forms of church planting, leadership development, community development, leadership selection, stewardship, evangelism approaches, worship, preaching, Sunday School, small groups, and economic development for church plants in the city.

We must keep in mind that the city is dynamic, like culture, and is in constant flux. The urban dynamic needs to help in forming strategies for the city yet we need to keep

30 Conn and Ortiz, Urban Ministry, 65.
our biblical ecclesiology as the authority and principle for all contexts. In the city there
is a diversity of both people and needs. Change and cities go together. The Western city
is a phenomenon which can only be described in terms of process. The city is a set of
interacting systems – political, economic, technological, and sociological – which is
constantly changing. This gives us a hint as to why we need multiple church models for
ministry in the city.

The basic foundation and structures are found in the NT. First, the church in the NT
was a new community. The members of this new community transcended all earthly
barriers – language, culture, socio-economic status, nationality, vocation and
occupation. It was a community whose members were concerned for others rather than
for themselves. The community was salt, light, body, new creation.

This image of the church challenges the cities that are filled with such diversity. This
biblical image of the church should translate very well into our modern society. How that
translation takes place might require different forms. It will certainly require a church
that is incarnational in its lifestyle. Its members are part of the community in a
meaningful way. It is probably multi-ethnic and multi-socio-economic and may be multi-
lingual. It will take on issues of injustice – such as racism, sexism and oppression – as
part of its core values. The new community model is prophetic in that it speaks against
evil and social injustice.

The second image of the church is that of priest. Peter tells us that the whole of the
church is a priesthood.\textsuperscript{31} There may be multiple gifts in the body with each individual
displaying various unique gifts, but the church – both as individuals and corporately –
has the office of priest. It will have mercy and compassion ministries as its major thrust.
It will display a lifestyle of prayer, sacrificial giving, incarnational living, and simplicity.
The life of the church is one of libation.\textsuperscript{32} Small groups will be an image of the church
in miniature.

The church is also a pilgrim (Heb. 13:13). It paves the way, living on the border line
between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’. This church is innovative and missiological,
giving away its best and seeing the community transformed. It is first local, but it aspires
to reach out beyond its boundaries. The regional aspect is missiological in that it wishes
to plant new churches in locations where members reside. Small groups are also driven
by a mission directive. The church is not to be defined in terms of itself but in terms of
God and the world. It has to cross boundaries into the world.

The church and the city end with a glamorous picture painted by John (Rev. 21:1-6).
It is a ‘Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as
a bride beautifully dressed for her husband’ (Rev. 21:2). The city is people; the city is
dressed as a bride; the city is being transformed; the city is not going up but coming
down. It is where the nations will be healed because the Lord is making everything new

\textsuperscript{31} 1 Peter 2:9
\textsuperscript{32} Rom. 12:1, Phil. 2:17, 4:18, 2 Tim. 4:6
(Rev. 21:5). It is already happening, but not yet. God is transforming the city already and will complete it at the coming of the Lord.

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