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MISSION TO AN URBAN WORLD

The age of the pith helmet is past, and its associated mission mentality is obsolete too. When the population of the world was largely rural, as it was until the mid-twentieth century, Christian mission aimed mostly at reaching villagers, rural people, and tribesmen. That was wise strategy then, and it still is in some places. But what formerly was fitting and effective in most of the world is largely an anachronism today. It has lost its place in the flow of history.

Half the human race now lives in cities and the percentage grows higher every day. In the decade of the 80's alone, one billion people are expected to migrate to metropolitan centers in the Third World. Cities like Bogota, Sao Paulo, and Mexico City grow at rates of 4000 to 6000 persons per day. Ours is unquestionably the century when the world becomes urban.

This has enormous implications for Christian mission. The rural, pith helmet mentality can no longer dominate missions. The realities of an urban world must be addressed. Where once most missionaries were needed in the bush, they now are needed in growing numbers in the cities. Pastors once prepared to minister in villages and small towns, but now they must be ready for urban pastorates and urban mission.

That's why *Urban Mission* is here. The rural world heard the Gospel from missionaries whose message and ministry sought to be relevant to the tribes and cultures they were committed to reach. The urban world requires the same kind of informed, focused ministry. It is true that from an economic standpoint, this is a poor time to introduce a new publication. Well-established periodicals and missionary organizations are experiencing financial difficulties, and subscription money, for all of us, has to be meted out carefully. But given the realities of an urbanizing world, we believe that the need for this journal is urgent. Cities require their own advocate in the field of mission publications.

Urban Mission aims to accomplish at least three things: First, to work toward a biblical theology of the city which addresses the wide range of issues affecting urban life. The support of the Westminster faculty, with its commitment to biblical authority and application, offers assurance that this goal will be accomplished. The solutions which Christians bring to the city must be as theologically valid as they are sociologically relevant, or we have nothing of special significance to say to the city.

Second, *Urban Mission* is designed to be a practical journal, moving its readers from their studies to the streets. The fiercest battles for minds and hearts are waged on city streets. Satan launched his urban mission years ago, for he knew that cities were strategic for the conquest he had in mind. Now the church must challenge him to let his captives go. Theology must be translated into action, that Christ be crowned in the streets.

Third, *Urban Mission* will deal with the *global* task of the church in cities throughout the world. Articles and case studies will be drawn from Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as from Europe and North America. Everything urban is grist for our mill.

Will you join us in this venture with your prayers, suggestions, subscriptions, articles, and perhaps a gift? *Urban Mission* is launched by faith, with our faces toward God and the future. The future is urban, and the broad implications of that fact we will explore together.



Roger S. Greenway

Dedicated to the Advancement of Christ's Church and Kingdom in the Cities throughout the World

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New Urban Faces of the Church

Donald McGavran

Churches must fit the segments of population in which they are ministering. Each must read the Bible in and worship in the language spoken by its segment. At church suppers each must serve the kind of food which that group likes. The pastor must appear to the members and to potential members as "one of us." The house of worship must be one to which Christians can invite their pagan or worldly friends, knowing that they will feel at home there. The expositions of Scripture must speak to the actual inner life of that particular section of the population. If we wish to be *effectively* evangelistic, we must multiply congregations which, in these and many other ways, *fit their segments* of the citizenship.

Since urban mankind is a vast mosaic made up of innumerable pieces, my thesis is that the Church in the cities of the world must have multitudinous new urban faces. A significant part of the plateaued or declining membership of many congregations and denominations is that they have taken the image of the church in *their* segment of the population and imposed it on other segments where it does not fit and another model is required.

For example, an upper middle class denomination will build and maintain an urban face which suits upper middle class people. But as that comfortable denomination works at discipling the cities, it must expect to create and appear in