Cities and Towns

Christian Reflection
A SERIES IN FAITH AND ETHICS

BAYLOR
UNIVERSITY

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The Sign of Jonah

Jesus' mysterious invocation of "the sign of Jonah" became, for Christians facing persecution and death in the early third century, a promise of God's ultimate act of grace and deliverance: resurrection from the dead.

Prayer

Scripture Reading: Matthew 12:38-41

Responsive Reading

The LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish:

I called to the LORD out of my distress and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.

Then I said, "I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?" The waters closed in over him; the deep surrounded him; weeds were wrapped around his head at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you raised me up from the Pit, O LORD. As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple; what I have vowed I will giving, will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!

Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

Reflection

"In their speaking, art, and writing, in their music, hear God's voice. Why composer, painter, poet, why the note and color choice?" begins Terry York's new hymn (*Prophetic Ethics*, p. 51). The Jonah marbles, which are a rare artistic creation dating to the third century A.D., and the many appearances of Jonah scenes on early Christian sarcophagi and catacomb paintings, indicate this story was one of the first narratives depicted in Christian art. These artistic expressions reveal important clues about the early church's theological imagination.

"Early Christians interpreted Old Testament prophecies and events as announcing and prefiguring the ministry of Jesus or the church," writes Hornik. Their interpretation of the book of Jonah was inspired by Jesus' mysterious rebuke of some religious leaders demanding a prophetic sign.

Their demand followed Jesus' healing of a man's withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14), curing crowds of sick people (12:15), and returning speech and sight to a demoniac (12:22-23). By asking for a "sign," the religious leaders were not seeking additional miraculous healings; even Beelzebul can perform miracles and wonders, they charged (12:24)! Instead, they demanded an

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Focus Article:
☐ The Sign of Jonah
(*Prophetic Ethics*, pp 54-59)

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STUDY GUIDES & LESSON PLANS

These six study guides integrate Bible study, prayer, worship, and reflection on themes in the *Cities and Towns* issue.

DYSFUNCTIONAL CITIES: WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?
Many cities are deadzones, warehouses for those too poor to leave. With streets mean and shabby, stores boarded up, and schools closed, they are permeated by fear and despair. Must we choose between deteriorating urban cores and degrading suburban landscapes? Which policies and cultural ideals led to the deeply anti-urban physical form of the suburbs?

CITIZENS OF ANOTHER CITY
Scripture contradicts the modern view that religion is a private affair, something we do in the solitude of our "inner selves." God creates a new pilgrim people who promote their own laws and patterns of behavior, and resemble nothing so much as a distinct nation. How then do we live as citizens of another city, but sojourners and pilgrims in earthly cities?

SALT IN THE CITY
In Elisha's work of mercy for stricken Jericho and Jeremiah's commitment to captured Anathoth, we glimpse God restoring cities and towns. These prophets inspire us to become "saltier" disciples, reclaiming communities with holistic ministry to individuals and well-considered structural reform.

THE NEW URBANISM
The New Urbanists are reviving the ancient practice of civic art. They are bringing together experts, residents, and stakeholders to articulate a vision for their communities—based on historical models of blocks, streets, and buildings that form a coherent and aesthetically pleasing urban fabric.

THE CHURCH BUILDING AS SACRAMENTAL SIGN
If the Church is to be a witness to the Heavenly City, Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism. Heralding the City of God is only made more difficult by acquiescing in the Suburb of Man.

ST. BENEDICT IN THE CITY
A new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity, is emerging among Christians who are gathering in intentional urban communities. What are these "new monastics" teaching us about faithful discipleship?

Introduction

BY ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

How should we care for the built environment in the cities and towns where we live? If we are to "witness to the Heavenly City," architect Philip Bess writes, "Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism."

How should we care for the cities and towns where we live? "Unfortunately, if we were to take a hard look at how Christians in this country have come to view their cities, we would have to conclude that our views have not necessarily been shaped by the Bible, prayer, or meaningful discussions among fellow Christians," Eric Jacobsen has noted in *Sidewalks in the Kingdom*. "It might be more accurate to say that the fear of cities, or the fear of one another, or possibly the love of convenience has been the actual basis of much of our current perceptions about the city. Not surprisingly, our perceptions have tended to be largely negative."

Our contributors explore our responsibilities for the *built environment*—the combination of public spaces and ordered neighborhoods that can enrich our shared lives or be a source of suffering and injustice when it is neglected or selfishly abused.

"Many North American cities are deadzones, warehouses for those too poor to leave," laments Lee Hardy in *Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?* (p. 11). "With streets mean and shabby, stores boarded up, and schools closed, they are permeated by fear and despair." After tracing the public policy decisions and cultural ideals, including the Anglo-evangelical disdain for the city, that emptied urban populations into degrading suburban landscapes after World War II, he urges us to "rediscover urban neighborhoods, live in them if possible, and try to make them once again good places for others to live. Many of them are neglected and distressed. But they continue to offer the best built form for human community."

The image of the city was once central to how Christians understood the Church. "Jesus introduces an alternative pattern of communal life, a distinctive set of personal habits and relations, and a different story in terms of which to make sense of things—in short, our participation in another city," Barry Harvey reminds us in *Citizens of Another City* (p. 20). Faithful disciples, then, cannot withdraw into private religious experience or worship in sectarian congregations that are functionally equivalent to gated communities. So, how can we live today as responsible "sojourners and pilgrims in earthly cities," yet also living witnesses to and "citizens of another city"?

In *The New Urbanism* (p. 28), Eric Jacobsen probes in a very practical way the prophetic call to care for cities and towns. "Jeremiah's message to 'seek the *shalom* of the city to which you have been called' includes peace, wholeness, and restored relationships," he observes. "We have interpreted this too abstractly—setting up programs to benefit individuals, but neglecting the shalom of the physical city." Jacobsen urges us to be discerning partners with the New Urbanists in traditional neighborhood development, for both their process of urban planning and their designs for the built environment can foster community in cities and towns.

"If the church is to be a witness to the Heavenly City, Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism," writes New Urbanist architect Philip Bess in *The Church Building as Sacramental Sign* (p. 74). "Heralding the City of God is only made more difficult by acquiescing in the Suburb of Man." Bess challenges congregations to be agents of neighborhood renewal in cities and towns across America. "Instead of building a church and a parking lot on their six to ten suburban acres," he wonders, "why couldn't a congregation build a church, a public (not private) square, perhaps a school, and the beginnings of a mixed-use neighborhood?"

Among the Christian singles, married couples, and families who are returning to live in cities, some have formed intentional communities to support one another in a new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity. Often they are affiliated with a local congregation. What can these "new monastics" teach us about discipleship? "In a culture of consumption, we often present the gospel as a consumer product to acquire," Bryan Hollon notes in *Saint Benedict in the City* (p. 37). "The new monastic communities show us a deeper understanding of following Jesus—as giving up our lives of self-interest so God can create something new in and through us."

"The depressing (and usually one-sided) news that flows from city to suburbs can make us despair of the possibility for city renewal," admits Amy Sherman in *Salt in the City* (p. 69). "But there are no God-forsaken places," and she draws inspiration from the prophets Elisha and Jeremiah for congregations today "reclaiming communities through holistic, relational ministry with individuals and well-considered structural reform." In *Moving to the Carpenter's House* (p. 64), Elizabeth Benton recounts the story

of Briggs Church, her home congregation. When its dream of being a suburban neighborhood center was not realized, God opened a way to more intentional discipleship and ministry to its neighborhood, but without the church's "beautiful but increasingly empty building."

That our dual citizenship—in God's city and an earthly city—cannot license withdrawing from our urban problems is a theme coursing through the worship service written by Ann Worley (p. 46). "Like Israel in exile, still we hope for our homecoming in the city of God, where there will be no more tears," she writes. "Let us hope not in closed communion, in isolated sanctuaries, apart from the Babylon-world." In their hymn, *Crate and Castle* (p. 43), Terry York and Bob Kruschwitz explore the import for our own building of Christ's humble birth and earthly station as a carpenter. David Bolin provides a haunting new melody for congregational singing.

Edward Hopper captured the beauty of rare quiet moments in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City in remarkable paintings like *Early Sunday Morning* (cover) and *Nighthawks*. On the one hand, the artist employed "elements of the shared community life—a barber pole and fire hydrant—[as] the main 'characters'" in his paintings, "yet he also was intrigued with the City's ability to isolate its inhabitants," Heidi Hornik writes in *An Ordered Neighborhood* (p. 56). In *Blinded* (p. 54), Hornik interprets Pieter Bruegel the Elder's discomforting *The Blind Leading the Blind* as a visual parable of the temptations that can "lead us away from community, the Church, and the common good."

"Until quite recently, Christians who were concerned about the condition of American cities have confronted a choice between two bodies of work, each of which more or less ignores the other," Benjamin Bruxvoort Lipscomb observes in *Building a City That Honors God* (p. 83). Urban theology, on the one hand, was focused on poor and marginalized people, and urban planning was more interested in the form and function of the city. Two books, Eric Jacobsen's *Sidewalks in the Kingdom* and T. J. Gorringe's *A Theology of the Built Environment*, helpfully break this pattern. "Carefully attentive to how buildings 'behave,' they are insistently grounded in Scripture and its narrative of creation, fall, reconciliation, and redemption."

How can congregations help to restore urban neighborhoods? Lissa Schwander reviews three fruitful approaches in *Restoring Urban Communities* (p. 89)—life in an intentional community in Atlanta described in Robert Lupton's *Theirs is the Kingdom*; John Perkins's "three R's" (relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution) for congregations in *Restoring At-Risk Communities*; and J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early's model in *Taking it to the Streets* of transforming neighborhoods through celebrating the work of local artists. These distinctive ways "remind us to be wise—by connecting with work that is already in progress across racial, ethnic, class, and generational divides—and to be hopeful—by remembering that we are rejoining a long process of renewal and redemption that God has begun." ✛

Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?

BY LEE HARDY

Our cities are deadzones, warehouses for those too poor to leave. With streets mean and shabby, stores boarded up, and schools closed, they are permeated by fear and despair. Why have we given up on public space, both urban and suburban? Must we choose between deteriorating urban cores and degrading suburban landscapes?

In 1990 I spent a sabbatical year with my family in the German city of Cologne. Despite all the things that make living in a foreign country difficult, it was for us a year of unalloyed urban joy. We did not own a car. But that didn't matter in the least. I rode a bike to the university. The church we attended was but a four-block walk from our apartment. The elementary school my children attended was similarly close by and required no bus. The main street of our neighborhood, three blocks away, offered all we needed on a daily basis—a grocery store, a bakery, a flower shop, a newsstand, a stationery store, two bookstores, and several restaurants. The *Stadtwald*, a ten-mile-long semicircular park that rings the western edge of the city, was just a ten-minute walk along a canal, putting playgrounds, tennis courts, tearooms, lakes with boat rentals, a petting zoo, and ice-cream vendors within our family's pedestrian reach. On weekends we often took the bus downtown. On the plaza before the great Cologne cathedral there was always something free and festive going on—church choirs, street musicians, sidewalk artists, magicians, mimes, and acrobats. There were no neighborhoods to avoid. There were no slums. German society may have its share of problems, but putting together humane and coherent cities is not one of them.

How painful to return home and be reminded of the sorry state of our cities in North America. So many have been abandoned and converted into deadzones, warehouses for those too poor to leave. With their streets mean and shabby, stores boarded up, and schools closed, their atmosphere is permeated by fear and despair. As a member of the American middle class, of course, I did not have to deal with those urban realities. I was to return to my home in the suburbs, driving everywhere I needed to go along gritty commercial thoroughfares and featureless arterials, past junky strip malls, gas stations, big box retail, and fast food joints, hunting for advantageous parking spots in paved lots large enough to accommodate an entire European village. Granted, our four-bedroom single-family detached house was nice, larger than any German family's we knew. Most of them lived in apartments. But why have we in America given up on public space, both urban and suburban? Must we choose between deteriorating urban cores and degrading suburban landscapes? Where did we go wrong?

> Federal housing policies virtually guaranteed that the middle class would abandon urban neighborhoods. They promoted socially segregated middle-class residential neighborhoods made up exclusively of detached single-family homes. And that's what we got.

The answer to that question is, of course, long and complex. Part of the answer, written from a sociological perspective, can be found in Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, a study of the post-World War II fate of Detroit, poster child of urban abandonment. The story I want to tell takes a different tack, focusing on the policy decisions and cultural ideals that led to the development of the deeply anti-urban physical form of the suburbs, especially those built since the 1970s.

UNCLE SAM'S INVISIBLE HAND

It is tempting to think that the current disposition of our built environment is the simple result of pristine market forces. But such is not the case. Since the 1930s the federal government has skewed the housing market in favor of suburban home construction. In an effort to prevent foreclosures on homes during the depression, the Roosevelt administration created in 1933 the Home Owners Loan Corporation, which refinanced over a million short-term home mortgages with fully amortized mortgages stretched over twenty to thirty years. In the year following, President Roosevelt signed the National Housing Act, thus creating the FHA (Federal Housing Administration). The FHA was designed to stimulate the housing market by insuring

long-term low-interest private home mortgages, mortgages that made the purchase of a home cheaper, in many cases, than renting. But the FHA was not about to insure mortgages indiscriminately. It had guidelines. And these guidelines clearly favored single-family homes of recent construction. The FHA did not insure loans for the repair of existing homes; nor was it interested in supporting the construction of multifamily units; nor did it smile upon classic urban row housing. Even for the construction of new single-family houses it had definite ideas, specifying suburban lot sizes and setbacks for any home it would consider an ideal candidate for an insured mortgage. And the home industry built accordingly—especially after the Second World War when the 1944 GI Bill of Rights authorized the Veterans Administration to guarantee zero down payment home loans for sixteen million returning GIs.

New Deal measures for putting the economy back on track not only shaped the style of postwar residential buildings, they also promoted social separation by race, class, and ethnicity in the name of sound investment. The Home Owners Loan Corporation rated residential areas for risk at four levels, color-coded on secret "Residential Security Maps" in green, blue, yellow, and red. The highest rating (green) was given to newly constructed neighborhoods populated by white middle-class professionals. If such residential areas were "infiltrated by Jews," they were automatically dropped down to the next rating tier. The worst rating (red) was invariably given to black neighborhoods, making it unlikely that anyone could obtain a low-interest federally insured home loan there—hence the term "redlining."[1] In its appraisal system for determining housing value, the FHA downgraded traditional urban neighborhoods that were old and dense and that incorporated nonresidential elements such as offices and retail establishments. It also downgraded neighborhoods harboring "inharmonious racial or nationality groups."[2] Until 1948 the FHA's *Underwriting Manual* advocated the use of restrictive covenants to prohibit the sale of homes in predominately white neighborhoods to black families.[3] Federal housing policies virtually guaranteed that the middle class would abandon urban neighborhoods. They promoted socially segregated middle-class residential neighborhoods made up exclusively of detached single-family homes. And that's what we got.

IN EVERY GARAGE A CAR—NO, MAKE THAT TWO CARS

We associate the suburbs not only with low-density single-family residential development but also with the exclusive reliance on the private automobile for transportation. Again, we might think that the relative lack of public transportation in vast reaches of our built environment is the simple result of pristine market forces. But once more we would be mistaken. Our disproportionate use of the automobile has been encouraged by federal spending priorities since the Second World War, along with some very clever market strategies on the part of the automobile industry.

Cars need good roads if they are to be an attractive transportation option. Automobile manufacturers would be happy to supply the cars, if only the government would supply car-worthy roads. In the 1920s America's road system was not in good repair. Most Americans moved by rail. Two hundred fifty thousand miles of heavy rail were in use across the nation; extensive inter-urban lines served regional travel needs; and within the cities electric streetcars were the principal form of conveyance. At the time, American public transportation was second to none. During the depression era of the 1930s, however, FDR had already envisioned a federal job-making project of constructing six interstate highways, three running north to south and three running east to west. A version of that project was aggressively marketed by General Motors in its stunning Futurama exhibit at the 1939 New York World's Fair, designed to sell America on a glorious vision of a nation crisscrossed by fourteen-lane limited access superhighways. Once the Second World War got underway, the project was bumped up the federal priority list, given the eminent need to employ millions of returning GIs once the war was over. Funding, however, was a problem. When President Dwight Eisenhower came into office, an Advisory Committee on a National Highway System was formed. Eisenhower appointed his war colleague, retired general Lucius D. Clay, to head the committee. Clay, as it turned out, was a member of the Board of Directors for General Motors. It should come as no surprise that the committee found effective means of financing the interstate highway project. The federal government would pay ninety percent of the cost through a hidden gas tax. In 1956 Eisenhower signed the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways Act, authorizing the construction of 41,000 miles of roadway, the largest peacetime public works project in the history of the world.

In the meantime, while Europe was wisely rebuilding its rail systems, our rail systems received little support. In fact, they had been under attack for some time. In 1921 Alfred P. Sloan, president of General Motors, had become convinced that the automobile market was saturated. Sales were stagnating. Although only one in nine American households owned a car at that point, demand was limited by the extensive use of electric railway systems that served our nation's cities. In 1922 Sloan formed a special task force within GM dedicated to replacing the local and regional passenger railways with cars, trucks, and buses. By 1936 GM had acquired New York Railways and run it into the ground. In the same year it formed, together with Firestone and Standard Oil, National City Lines, a holding company that proceeded to acquire and dismantle one hundred urban rail systems in forty-five cities across the country. In 1949 GM was found guilty of criminal conspiracy for its actions by a U.S. District Court in Chicago—and fined a token $5,000.[4]

The dramatic downgrading of our public transportation systems, together with the construction of the interstate highway system, did much to fuel

the suburban boom of the 1960s. That boom turned into an explosion in the 1970s when combined with two other factors: functional zoning and the street hierarchy. Both of those factors have their roots in the early twentieth century. Zoning ordinances are powers of municipal and county governments to abridge the property rights of some citizens to protect the property values of others. For the most part they limit land use. First invoked in the United States by New York City in 1916, zoning codes were in wide use by most localities by the late 1920s. Initially land use restrictions were used to keep heavy industry out of residential areas, which makes perfect sense. Since then, however, they have gotten completely out of hand in many cities and towns. Residential areas are separated not only from heavy industry, but also from commercial, office, and civic land uses as well. In addition, zoning ordinances separate residential areas according to different residential typologies (single-family, duplex, multifamily, and so on). It is now illegal to build an apartment over a retail establishment, an office next to a duplex, or a duplex next to single family home. Mixed use is taboo.

Since the various land uses are now separated into distant and distinct areas, or "pods" as they are called, it is no longer feasible for us to move among them by walking. We have to use the car. This is where street hierarchy comes in. Invented by Ludwig Hilberseimer in the 1920s, the street hierarchy was intended to prevent automobile through traffic in developed areas. Rather than laying streets out in a grid pattern (with variations, of course), the street hierarchy envisions a dendritic system of major arterials flowing between discrete land use pods, the pods themselves being serviced by cul-de-sacs that empty into collector roads that in turn empty into the major arterials. The suburbs of the 1950s and 1960s were usually laid out on a variation of the grid pattern. They allowed for some embedded civic land uses such as churches and schools, and they were oriented to the center of town as a place of

> We are embarked on an unprecedented form of human settlement: the "exurb," a centerless sprawl that makes the private automobile the only viable mode of transportation. We no longer commute between city edge and center, but from edge to edge.

employment, entertainment, and administration. Since the 1970s, however, we have embarked on a historically unprecedented form of human settlement: the "exurb," a centerless sprawl that has made the private automobile the only viable mode of transportation, where various land uses—residential, commercial, office, civic, and industrial—are scattered across the countryside, and where most commutes are no longer between edge and center,

but from edge to edge.[5] If there is any center to this system, it is arguably the home—where all trips originate, and to which they return. That is to say, there are many centers, and they are all private. Public space—built, formed, used, and valued—has virtually disappeared.

EVERY HOME A COUNTRY VILLA

The technical means of transportation, land development, and road building have made the exurb *possible*. But the exurb became *probable* only with the push of a cultural ideal that valued the private domestic sphere over the public life of the city. In the Anglo-American tradition, that ideal had its birth in the industrial age of the nineteenth century. Prior to the industrial revolution, most middle-class families lived in the city centers; and for most, work and home were combined in the same building. As the middle class benefited from the wealth generated by industrialization, and as that same process filled the cities with smoke, grime, and hordes of working class people, many members of the middle class built country villas on the outskirts of town as weekend retreats for the family, emulating the life of the landed gentry. Eventually the family was moved out to the country villa full-time and the male head of the house commuted into the city for work. Thus were home-life and work-life divided between the private domestic sphere of the family in the country, managed by the female, and the public sphere of work in the city, run by the male. The story of the growth of suburbia is the story of the gradual democratization of this arrangement, made possible by increasingly affordable transit and homes. The entire middle class, and a good deal of the working class, could now live in downsized versions of the country villa in a naturalistic setting provided by a yard.

For the Anglo-evangelical community, the move to the suburbs was not only a privilege afforded by wealth, it was also a religious duty. William Wilberforce, a leading British evangelical of the Victorian period, is rightly remembered and revered for his central role in the abolition of slave trade in the British Empire. But he was equally dedicated to what he called the "reformation of manners." To that end he advised Christian families to remove themselves from the corrupting influence of the cities and devote themselves to the nurture of religious virtue in the suburban enclosure of the home. The religious valuation of city and suburb received a gender overlay as well: men, morally compromised by the involvement in the dog-eat-dog world of the city, were to have their "languid piety" revived by their wives, who, Wilberforce maintained, are "naturally more disposed to Religion than men."[6]

The suburban ideal, together with its religious interpretation, was imported to the United States in the nineteenth century by Catherine Beecher and Andrew Jackson Downing. While her sister's book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, advanced Wilberforce's antislavery agenda, Beecher's own work, *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841), vigorously promoted the reformation of man-

ners. And it did so by way of the same cultural strategy: the home, as a source of Christian morality, was to be physically separated from the evil influences of the city. Author of *The Architecture of County Houses* (1850), Downing too believed, "above all things under Heaven, in the power and influence of the individual home."[7] A cottage in a picturesque setting "shall breathe forth to us, in true earnest tones, a domestic feeling that at once purifies the heart and binds us closer to our fellow beings."[8]

The domestic ideology of Beecher and Downing represents a dramatic relocation of the appropriate site of human flourishing from the public to the private domain. Urban historian Delores Hayden deftly notes: "The dream house is a uniquely American form. For the first time in history, a civilization has created a utopian ideal based on the house rather than the city or nation. For hundreds of years, when individuals thought about putting an end to social problems, they designed model towns to express these desires, not model homes."[9]

HEALING THE URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

There is a deep and perennial human tendency to blame evil on one part of creation and seek salvation in another. This piece of bad theology informed a good deal of Victorian cultural understanding. There the city is represented as inherently bad (the source of sin) and the family as inherently good (the source of salvation). Consider a couple telling lines from William Cowper, a Christian poet who was popular with the Victorians: "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss / of Paradise that hast survived the Fall!"[10] Did the family really escape the effects of the Fall? Wilberforce himself wrote of the high priestly function that women fulfill as the "medium of our intercourse with that heavenly world."[11] The last time I checked, that role was reserved for Christ. Consider again Downing's claim that the suburban home breathes forth a spirit that purifies the heart. In orthodox theology, that is the sanctifying work of Holy Spirit.

> We tend to blame evil on one part of creation and seek salvation in another. This piece of bad theology informed the Victorian view of the city as inherently bad (the source of sin) and the family as inherently good (the source of salvation).

What is needed here is a good dose of the Calvinistic doctrine of "total depravity," if not for its own merit, at least as an antidote. The Fall has deeply affected all parts of creation—nature and culture, men and women, reason and emotions, cities and families. It is not that one part fell, and now threatens the unfallen part; not that one part remains pure, and provides

redemptive leverage over the impure part. Both families and cities are fallen structures and both are candidates for restoration in Christ. There is no need to play them off against each other. Families can be a source of joy and a source of pain—and we should not ignore the pain; likewise, cities can be a source of joy and a source of pain—and we should not ignore the joy. Christians are called to work for the substantial healing of brokenness in both domains. Moreover, good families and good cities need each other. Families are the basis of human growth and development, cities the economic and cultural contexts in which families can flourish. Cities, however, as Aristotle reminds us, establish the final context for the flourishing of human life in general. And it would seem that the biblical tradition agrees: redemption takes us not back to the family in the Garden of Eden, but forward to the New Jerusalem, the City of God.

How should we work for substantial healing in the cities? It is remarkable to me how little theological reflection has been devoted to this issue. There is a lot of advice in the Christian community about how to have good marriages and families. Do we have any advice about how to have good cities? We have a Focus on the Family; why not a Focus on the City?

In the absence of much competition, here is my suggestion: work for good urban neighborhoods. Cities are made of neighborhoods—the basic units of place-based communities. Ideally, and traditionally, they are compact and walkable. They contain a variety of land uses and housing types. They are inclusive, not exclusive. I suggest Christians rediscover urban neighborhoods, live in them if possible, and try to make them once again good places for others to live. Many of them are neglected and distressed. But they continue to offer the best built form for human community.

NOTES

1 Here I follow Kenneth Jackson's account in his classic study, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 197-199.

2 Ibid., 208.

3 Ibid., 209.

4 See Jane Holtz Kay, *Asphalt Nation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 231-233; Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 249-250; James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), 106-108; and Bradford Snell, U.S. Counsel, "American Ground Transport," in *Industrial Reorganization Act, before the Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly of the Committee of the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Ninety-Third Congress, Second Session on S. 1167, Part 4A* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974).

5 August Comte Spectorsky coined the term "exurb" (for "extra-urban") in his book *The Exurbanites* (1955) to describe the rural bedroom communities that surround cities and are made possible by super highways that link the countryside to city centers.

6 William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*, eleventh edition (London: Cadell and Davies, 1815), 365.

7 Andrew Jackson Downing, *Rural Residences* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1853), xxviii.

8 Andrew Jackson Downing, *Victorian Cottage Residences* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), ix.

9 Delores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream* (New York: Norton, 2002), 34.

10 William Cowper, *The Task* (1785), Book 3.

11 Wilberforce, 366-367.

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Citizens of Another City

BY BARRY HARVEY

Scripture contradicts the modern view that religion is a private affair, something we do in the solitude of our "inner selves." God creates a new pilgrim people who promote their own laws and patterns of behavior, and resemble nothing so much as a distinct nation. How then do we live as citizens of another city, but sojourners and pilgrims in earthly cities?

We always "live in the description of a place and not in the place itself," writes the poet Wallace Stevens.[1] In other words, we live, move, and have our being in terms of some particular account of why things in life are the way they are. Depending on when and where we are born and raised, we learn to see the world in a certain way and not others. Though this process of moral and intellectual formation is both natural and necessary (no one is raised in a social vacuum), we too often remain oblivious to other descriptions that may more truthfully account for the world in all its complexity. As those who have been instructed by the Apostle Paul not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), such ignorance can have serious repercussions for our faithfulness to Christ.

For example, many of us simply take it for granted that politics and religion occupy very different places in human affairs, but in fact this assumption only makes sense within the context of the larger story of modernity. In this regard we are faithful disciples of John Locke (among others), who states that it is "above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the Business of Civil Government from that of Religion, to settle the just Bounds between one and the other…[between] on the one side, a Concernment for the Interest of Mens [sic] Souls, and on the other side, a Care of the Com-

monwealth."[2] Politics, according to this modern view, has to do with public matters under the purview of the nation-state. Since the state is the only recognized form of political association in modern society, it has virtually unlimited sovereignty over the activities and relationships of its citizens. It bears the final responsibility for adjudicating conflicts of interests between individuals. Yet, because this modern view also excludes any substantive conception of the common good, it reduces politics to procedures for protecting and promoting the pursuit of individual self-interest in the marketplace of desire and consumption.

Religion, by contrast, is something that men and women attend to in the solitude of their "inner selves." It has to do with private beliefs about what individuals see as ultimately true and important in their lives, since, as Thomas Jefferson so famously puts it, "it does me no injury for my neighbour to say that there are twenty gods, or no god."[3] As Jefferson implies, the object of religious beliefs typically transcends both the material world and the limits of human reason—the world of eating and drinking, passing laws and prosecuting offenders, acquiring and disposing of property, making war and making peace, and producing and exchanging consumer goods. Such matters have been handed over to the purview of the state (in conjunction with the market). Though some religious beliefs may have an indirect bearing on one's public life, an individual must not take them so seriously as to be unwilling to sacrifice them on the altar of public expediency.[4]

"A PRIESTLY KINGDOM"

When we turn to the story narrated in the Bible about the nature of things, we notice something at odds with this way of dividing the social landscape. The formative images in the biblical story depicting God's activity in the world are overwhelmingly political in character, with relatively little resembling what we call "religion."[5] At the heart of the Old Testament we read that the creator of heaven and earth chooses a "people" over whom he plans to rule as "king." Though the idea of divine kingship does not by itself denote a specific political realm, the reality of God's sovereign rule can only gain traction among the tribes, monarchies, and empires of the world through the actual gathering together of a people who profess allegiance to the king as loyal subjects.

This divine king "liberates" his chosen people from their bondage in a foreign land, gives to them a "law" that spells out the directions of and dangers to the practice of everyday life within their "covenant," secures for them a "land" of their own, and once in this land raises up leaders, or "judges," to administer life under the covenant. The Lord's claim to sovereign rule over this particular people finds historical expression as a distinct regime—"a priestly kingdom and a holy nation"—established in the covenant at Sinai. The God of their ancestors would forever be their king ruling over a kingdom unlike that of any earthly king (Exodus 19:6).[6]

Once in the land, the tribes of the Lord succumb to the temptation that to survive they must become like the other nations. God grants their request to give them a human "king," but one that is essentially a vassal, still subject to the divine rule. Thus begins Israel's turbulent and tragic experiment with the ways and means of ancient monarchies. The covenant relationship is handed over to a regime (the sort that formerly had been regarded as anti-thetical to Israel's constitution on Mt. Sinai) perhaps under the belief that the institutions, offices, and practices of human kingship could be accom-modated while remaining true to Israel's identity as God's priestly people. And though this attempt ultimately fails, it establishes in the memory of the Jewish people a hope that will burst forth in messianic fervor with Jesus' pronouncement that the Kingdom of God was drawing near.

Though the circumstances change radically, after the exile the political cast of biblical imagery unfolds even further, with Israel's king now pro-claimed as the ruler of all peoples and nations. In their synagogues and the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, the Jews thus profess

For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome,
    a great king over all the earth….
Sing praises to God, sing praises;
    sing praises to our King, sing praises.
For God is the king of all the earth;
    sing praises with a psalm.

Psalm 47:2, 6–7

There is no king but God, they declare, whose dominion admits no rivals and no partners. As one might expect, such convictions generate a good deal of animosity with the Gentiles, who claim privileges and prerogatives that the chosen people reserve for God and God's rule alone. According to the Roman poet Virgil, for example, the gods had "set no limits, world or time" to Rome, "but make the gift of empire without end."[7] These rulers and authorities idolatrously challenge divine sovereignty at almost every point, proclaiming that the constellation of political institutions and peoples over which they preside is the true, real, and rational order of things and that there is no choice but to act in accordance with it.

It is out of this context that Jesus of Nazareth emerges, proclaiming to his fellow Israelites, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). Through his life, death, and resurrection, God's messianic rule promised to Abraham and Sarah's offspring becomes a present reality, not in some kind of private "religious" experience or utopian ideal, but in connection with the day-to-day concerns and celebrations of life. Over against the forces and powers that formerly had governed the course and content of life in the ancient world virtually uncontested, Jesus introduces an alternative pattern of

communal life, a distinctive set of personal habits and relations, and a different story in terms of which to make sense of all things on earth and under heaven—in short, participation in another city, one that God would set on a hill for all to see and share. The meaning of all other political figures, events, and institutions no longer resides in themselves. They are now derivative signs, the significance of which can only be discerned in their relationship to this one Jewish man and the body politic of the church over which he rules as head.

THE EKKLESIA AS ANOTHER CITY

Jesus' followers came to refer to their fellowship as an *ekklesia*, a Hellenistic term for the assembly of those holding rights and privileges of citizenship in the *polis* or city. Many may find this description of the church as a city puzzling, since it draws on a conception of politics that is outside the normal frame of reference. In classical antiquity politics is the art of human community, the *telos* or end of which is living well, that is, in accordance with our highest good as rational beings. Political institutions are a principal means to this end, tasked with cultivating activities and habits that will direct women and men toward that which gives life its meaning, its purpose.[8] As the dominant form of ordered social life, the word "city" functions at the start of the Christian era as the standard trope denoting the shared practices, dispositions, and relationships that enable a people to flourish in accordance with their highest good.[9]

The twofold mission of God in Jesus and the Holy Spirit thus results in the creation of a people who are "looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Toward that end they promote their own laws and their own patterns of behavior, resembling nothing so much as a distinct nation, albeit one without its own land or ancient traditions to back up its peculiar customs.[10]

The institutions, activities, and habits of this body politic, however, are not those of the Greek *polis* or the Roman *imperium* (nor that of the modern nation-state). The assembly of God's messianic regime orders the life and activity of its members in ways that explicitly call into question prevailing political assumptions. In the Gospel of Luke, for example, Jesus tells his inner circle, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called bene-factors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must be-come

> Jesus introduces an alternative pattern of communal life, a distinctive set of personal habits and relations, and a different story in terms of which to make sense of things—in short, our participation in another city.

like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves" (22:25–26). This comparison locates the nature of the church community squarely within a political frame of reference while at the same time distinguishing the shape of its common life from that of the nations.

The church thus retains for its self-definition the classical *telos* of politics (enabling a people to flourish in accordance with their highest good), and the practices and institutions of social life are likewise understood as means to this end. But it gives these structures new content, namely, "the art of achieving the common good through participation in the divine life of God."[11] Christians therefore regard the builders of earthly kingdoms and empires with a wary eye, because they invariably lay claim to an authority that belongs to God alone.

> Like the Jews who have been dispersed throughout the world, Christians who take to heart their membership in the heavenly commonwealth (Philippians 3:20) will find themselves hard-pressed between competing claims for their allegiance.

Ancient Rome understood itself to be "*the City*, a permanent and 'eternal' City, *Urbs aeterna*, and an ultimate City also. In a sense, it claimed for itself an 'eschatological dimension.' It posed as an ultimate solution of the human problem." The empire proclaimed itself a universal commonwealth, embodying the decisive expression of "Humanity" and offering to all over whom it exercised authority the only lasting and genuine peace, the *pax romana*. As such it claimed to be omnicompetent over human affairs and it demanded the complete and unconditional allegiance of its subjects. "The Church was a challenge to the Empire," writes Georges Florovsky, "and the Empire was a stumbling block for the Christians."[12]

COMPETING POLITICAL ALLEGIANCES

Though some might worry that describing the church as a political association implies that Christians must create their own separate social enclaves, this is not the case. Any such separation is impossible, for there is literally no place for the church to go to remove itself from all transactions with the world. The intrusion of God's messianic reign into the world in Jesus and his followers cannot help but interact with virtually every aspect of a fallen world. As it does so, the reorganization of human existence around this new and distinctive set of loyalties and loves will invariably disrupt established regimes of life and language that are subject to the rule of death and sin.

Indeed, like the Jews who have been dispersed throughout the world, Christians who take to heart their membership in the heavenly commonwealth (Philippians 3:20) will find themselves hard-pressed between competing claims for their allegiance. They will need to cultivate the difficult and precarious art of living in-between these competing demands on their loyalty, so that they might forge forms of life befitting their identity and vocation as the people chosen by God to serve the peoples of the earth as members of "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation," while at the same time formulating a workable *modus vivendi* with the established ways of their hosts.

Christians therefore will need to cooperate with their fellow creatures in obtaining those things that belong to their mortal nature—what they shall eat, what they shall drink, what they shall wear. But as Augustine observes, they will seek these things according to a faith, love, and hope that is different from those affirmed by the citizens of the earthly city, which is governed by the *libido dominandi*, the lust to mastery. The claim of the powers of this world to the moral authority to determine the kinds and order of goods men and women should pursue is thus predicated on the possession, threat, and use of coercive force, and thus on death and the fear of death. By contrast, Christians are is called upon to acquire those virtues that will allow them to use prudently those earthly goods that are necessary to life in this age, directing this use towards that alone which can truly be called peace, "a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God."[13]

When we describe the world this way as Christians, we can distinguish between the fact that a government happens to dominate public life and all of the after-the-fact justifications it employs to persuade its subjects that it is acting in their best interests (e.g., in our case, "We hold these truths to be self-evident…"). We can judge how to make the best use of both the goods over which these authorities have charge and their vocabularies of legitimation. These powers of discernment enable us to make relative distinctions among nations and rulers; we can recognize that certain regimes (e.g., liberal democracies such as the United States and the European Union) are somewhat less oppressive in their pursuit of the goods necessary for life in this age, without succumbing to the false claim that they constitute a fundamentally new or different kind of political order.

SOJOURNERS AND PILGRIMS

The anonymous author of a letter to someone named Diognetus, writing around the middle of the second century, vividly describes the nature of this "pilgrim city." Christians live in both Greek and barbarian cities, following local customs in clothing, food, and the other concerns of daily life. They nonetheless cultivate habits and relationships among themselves that reveal the peculiar character of their *politeia,* or commonwealth.[14] Christians

thus dwell in the various lands of their birth, but do so as though they are sojourners and pilgrims in them. They share all goods with their fellows, yet they endure life's sufferings as strangers. Like everyone else, they marry and bear children, but they do not expose their children.[15] They show hospitality to those in need, but they protect the sanctity of marriage. In short, "Their lot is cast 'in the flesh,' but they do not live 'after to the flesh.'"[16]

The mission of this peculiar "regime" is not for its members to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, nor is it for them to fill all the slots of leadership so that the world will run smoothly. Instead, the author writes, Christians are to relate to the world as the soul relates to the body. As the soul permeates all the members of the body, so Christians are scattered throughout all the nations

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of the world. And as the soul indwells the body but is not of it, Christians are in, but not of, the world. As we have seen, this relationship creates tensions between the church and the world, and thus Christians must bear the enmity of that for the sake of which they have been gathered together.

> The flesh hates the soul, and wages war upon it, though it has suffered no evil, because it is prevented from gratifying its pleasures, and the world hates the Christians though it has suffered no evil, because they are opposed to its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh which hates it and the limbs, and Christians love those that hate them. The soul has been shut up in the body, but itself sustains the body; and Christians are confined in the world as in a prison, but themselves sustain the world.[17]

Christians exist in and suffer for the world as citizens of another city, so that all women and men might learn "what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:18–19).

NOTES

1 Wallace Stevens, *Letters*, edited by Holly Stevens (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1966), 494.

2 John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, edited by James H. Tully (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), 26.

3 Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* Query XVII, "Religion," in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by William Peden (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 159.

4 Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," in *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom: Its Evolution and Consequences in American History*, edited by Merrill D. Peterson and Robert C. Vaughn (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 258.

5 To be sure, the language of interiority has a long pedigree in the Christian tradition, but its sense has changed substantially over the centuries. With Augustine, for example, the boundary between inner and outer does not fall between the mind and the body, but between that part of the mind which is dependent on the body for the exercise of its powers, including imagination, and that part which is not so dependent, viz., reason. See Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90–92.

6 N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, volume 1 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 307.

7 Virgil, *The Aeneid*, I.278–279, translated by Robert Fitzgerald (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990), 13.

8 See Aristotle, *The Politics*, III.9, and Cicero, *On the Republic*, I.25.39.

9 More precisely, "city" functions as a synecdoche, where a species (the city) stands in for the genus (political association).

10 Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 119.

11 Michael Baxter, "'Overall, the First Amendment Has Been Very Good for Christianity'—NOT!: A Response to Dyson's Rebuke," *DePaul Law Review* 43 (Winter 1994), 441.

12 The Very Rev. Georges Florovsky, "Empire and Desert: Antinomies of Christian History," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 3 (Winter 1957), 135, 137.

13 Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, I.Preface, XVIII.54, and XIX.17, edited R. W. Dyson (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3, 908, 947.

14 The author uses the Greek term *politeia* that typically refers to a particular type of political regime, e.g., a republic, monarchy, or aristocracy, etc.

15 In the Roman Empire, parents would kill unwanted newborns (usually females) by exposing them to the elements and wild animals.

16 *The Epistle to Diognetus* V.4–8, The Apostolic Fathers, volume 2, translated by Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 359, 361.

17 Ibid., VI.1–7, 361, 363.

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The New Urbanism

BY ERIC O. JACOBSEN

The New Urbanists are quietly reviving the ancient practice of civic art. They are bringing together experts, residents, and stakeholders to articulate a vision for their communities—one based on historical models of blocks, streets, and buildings that form a coherent and aesthetically pleasing urban fabric.

Following the destruction by Hurricane Katrina of eleven municipalities stretched out along 120 miles of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Governor Haley Barbour invited architect and cofounder of the Congress for the New Urbanism Andres Duany to help with the rebuilding. The governor instructed him to "do what you do and do it well."[1] Duany responded by gathering 100 fellow New Urbanists and about the same number of Mississippians in Biloxi for a week to formulate a coherent plan for recovery.

To many observers, this meeting revealed a different side of Duany and his cohorts. Prior to the publicity from this event, many who had heard of New Urbanism believed it was a specialty niche within the real estate development industry, providing a charming (if somewhat nostalgic) alternative to the ubiquitous suburban subdivision that has dominated the market for much of the post-World War II era. In some respects, their impression of the New Urbanism is not entirely inaccurate. Much of the demonstrable impact of this movement on the built environment consists in their roughly 650 developments in various stages of completion throughout the United States and around the world.[2] Many of these projects are popular with middle- and upper-class clientele and reflect a distinct similarity to the charming pre-WWII neighborhoods that many remember from their childhoods.

Despite this quaint reputation, the speed and effectiveness with which Duany and his New Urbanist collaborators were able to respond to the rav-

ages of Katrina reveal a deeper significance of this movement for the future of all American communities. While the majority of private developers have been offering individualized products to autonomous clients, and government planners have been focusing more on the needs of automobiles than people, New Urbanists have spent the past twenty-five years quietly reviving the ancient practice of civic art. They have recovered some of the historical models for blocks, streets, and buildings that together form a coherent and aesthetically pleasing urban fabric. They have advocated a planning process, known as a "charrette,"[3] that encourages experts, residents, and stakeholders to work together to articulate a vision for what they want their communities to look like.

The upshot of this more fundamental approach is that when a New Urban project succeeds it does so not by selling customers a product or pushing legislators toward a policy. New Urbanism gains momentum by winning converts to their vision one community at a time. People involved in the planning process come away committed not only to a particular plan, but also to a new paradigm for looking at the physical form of their communities. As the number of those converted have continued to grow, it was just a matter of time before a prominent neophyte like Governor Barbour was in a position to invite leaders of the movement to play a role of national significance. The post-Katrina rebuilding effort is just one dramatic example of how the ideas generated by New Urbanism have begun to shape the built environment far beyond the confines of their particular projects.

THE NEW URBANISM

Although New Urbanism has been an organized movement since 1993, its beginnings can be traced back to the development of Seaside on the Florida panhandle in the early 1980s. Developer Robert Davis had acquired an eighty-acre parcel of land that he wanted to develop differently than the beach resorts that were being built up and down the coast. Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, architects who were toying with the idea of planning traditional towns, had not yet had an opportunity to put their ideas into practice. Davis hired them to help him with Seaside.

Since Walton County, Florida, did not have any zoning codes to speak of, Duany and Plater-Zyberk wrote their own and set about laying out the town. They developed a coherent network of streets radiating out from a town center. The public spaces and civic buildings got the best locations and the private residences were allowed to fill in the spaces that were left over. Street parking was allowed but there were no parking lots for cars. Houses were built in relative proximity to one another and were placed close enough to the sidewalk that one could carry on a conversation from front porch to sidewalk without raising one's voice. There was a network of alleys to allow parking behind the houses, which meant that instead of a sea of garages, there were welcoming front doors and porches fronting the

houses. Housing types ranged from large mansions to small cottages, and small apartments were allowed above the stores.

In short, they broke every rule in the private developer's and governmental planner's rulebook. For this reason they were expected to fail miserably, but just the opposite happened. It turns out that people will trade some private space for an improved public life and that giving pedestrians as much consideration as automobiles can lead to a functional and charming environment. In the first decade of its existence, house values at Seaside outpaced those in the surrounding areas, sometimes as much at ten to one.

Following the success and publicity of this project, the firm of Duany and Plater-Zyberk was flooded with work. New projects implementing Seaside's Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) philosophy began sprouting up all over the country. In time a number of other developers, planners, and architects were working along the same lines and (when they could get their projects built) were experiencing the same kinds of success as Seaside. Not all counties were as unregulated at Walden, however, and most TND projects faced significant hurdles from unyielding municipal planners and anxious lenders. In 1993, the veterans of these various battles met together in Alexandria, Virginia, and founded the Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU). Three years later, they drafted the Charter for the New Urbanism and have met annually ever since.

Rather than pursue a radical utopian agenda, CNU has worked to expose the faulty logic behind post-WWII suburban development. In the suburbs everything is separated geographically by its function. Housing is separated from shopping, shopping from offices, large houses from small houses. One of the many implications of this arrangement is that one needs a car to get from one function to the next. Density in the suburbs tends to be low, which further discourages pedestrian activity (as well as public transit) and the public realm is so undervalued that the experience of getting about tends to be demeaning as well as frustrating.

In contrast to this recipe for the abdication of citizenship, the CNU has called for a rediscovery of the notion of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors that can "form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution."[4] Such high aspirations for their projects distinguish the New Urbanists from other developers who are mostly interested in selling a product. It also helps explain why New Urbanists were so quickly chosen to help rebuild the Gulf Coast.

Despite such elevated goals, New Urbanists are not utopians. They tend to be adept at articulating a concrete vision. They insist, for instance, that traditional neighborhoods have a particular form. Unlike a suburban subdivision, a neighborhood has a clear center and edge, is about a five-minute walk from center to edge, is mixed-use (includes places for living, working, shopping, playing, and worshiping), and gives priority to public places (sidewalks, good public buildings, parks, and plazas).

Over time, the CNU has become increasingly careful to avoid an exclusively urban frame of reference. They developed a transect scheme which articulates six levels of gradation from the dense urban core to a true rural setting.[5] For each level of gradation, there is a corresponding set of requirements to maintain an environment that fosters human connection and community. This transect zoning model allows New Urbanist projects to function in a variety of settings from typical suburban densities to high-rise condos. In fact, the New Urbanist transect is forcing us to redefine what does and does not constitute a suburb.

Besides defining the neighborhood and gradating transects, the most helpful contribution of CNU to the practice of community building has been their promotion of the charrette planning process. For anyone who has ever been frustrated at a public review meeting where developers or policy makers pretend to listen to community concerns and where people come to read angry speeches, the most important point to grasp is that a charrette is a completely different experience. One factor that makes a charrette work is the breadth of participation.

Organizers take great pains to encourage everyone who has a stake in the outcome to come and join the process. On hand are architects who can quickly draw ideas as they come up and technical experts who can offer definitive answers to questions about culverts and fire codes. Most of the work is done by multiple small groups around tables who collaborate on ideas and then share them with the group as a whole. By the end of the week-long charrette, there is usually a focused idea that is better than anyone's personal agenda. As the trust level increases during the charrette, players who had been at loggerheads for years are surprised to find themselves engaging in real dialogue and adapting their views and making concessions. The energy and sense of civic ownership following a typical charrette can be a salve to a wounded public process.

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With each New Urbanist project that exceeds the expectations of residents, bankers, and policy makers, the next project has an easier time gaining a hearing. As successful projects become known, New Urbanist ideas gain wider acceptance. Government planners and private developers now routinely adopt New Urbanist techniques. Mixed-use development that

allows residential and commercial activity in one neighborhood (or building), which was almost unheard of ten years ago, is now standard practice in the industry. Parking requirements that typically require surface parking in front of every building (think of your local K-Mart or 7/11 convenience store) are being relaxed to allow businesses to share parking so buildings can come right up to the sidewalk as they would on a typical main street. These are just a few examples of how the movement is having an impact beyond its 650 projects.

RESPONDING TO CRITICS

New Urbanism emerged among a group of architects who were frustrated with the architectural establishment. Andres Duany, who was trained at the Princeton University School of Architecture, provides this pointed critique of his discipline:

> In response to their growing sense of insignificance, some architects have tried to regain a sense of power through what can best be described as mysticism. By importing arcane ideas from unrelated disciplines — such as contemporary French literary theory (now outdated) — by developing illegible techniques of representation, and by shrouding their work in inscrutable jargon, designers are creating increasingly smaller realms of communication, in order that they might inhabit a domain in which they possess some degree of control. Nowhere is this crisis more evident than in the most prestigious architecture schools.[6]

It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the most vocal critics of New Urbanism are in the architectural establishment. For instance, in response to the news that Duany's team had been invited to participate in the post-Katrina rebuilding efforts, Eric Owen Moss, director of the Southern California Institute of Architecture, predicted that New Urbanists would deliver a "'canned response' to rebuilding the Mississippi coastline and that their traditional designs would appeal 'to a kind of anachronistic Mississippi that yearns for the good old days of the Old South as slow and balanced and pleasing and breezy, and each person knew his or her role.'"[7] Besides exemplifying a rather nasty and unsubstantiated bit of mudslinging, Moss's comment reveals a common misunderstanding about the New Urbanist movement. New Urbanism is not primarily about favoring any particular architectural style, but about promoting good urbanism. Whereas architecture is about buildings — often treated as isolated objects — urbanism is concerned with how the spaces among the buildings shape the public realm. Urbanism involves making streets feel like hallways and plazas feel like welcoming rooms that invite people to explore, rest, and enjoy social interaction with one another. For urbanists, the architecture of the individual buildings *is* significant, but it is definitely secondary to the central task of urban planning.

Another critique often leveled against New Urbanism is its supposed complicity in the process of gentrification. As middle- and upper-class Americans rediscover the pleasures of downtown living, prices in redeveloped urban neighborhoods are climbing and poorer residents are being priced out of their homes. Frustrated over this demographic trend, Glenn Smith, professor of urban theology at McGill University, offers a common charge about the movement's support base: "New Urbanism is essentially a white, elitist movement."[8]

Gentrification is a serious issue and should not be taken lightly. However, gentrification is part of a much larger social process wherein the poor are forced to live where no one else wants to. New Urbanists are not causing gentrification nor are they able to stop it by some sort of authoritative decree. Gentrification can only be tempered by government policies that protect the rights of the poor or by the work of churches and other institutions of compassion. Market-dependent actors (such as developers, architects, and urban planners) are very limited in what they can do to reverse this trend.

The general principles advocated by the CNU encourage the use of less resources, support public transportation, and lead to a better functioning and more beautiful public realm. All of these things ultimately serve the poor better than the suburban alternative. Often the price for a home in a New Urbanist project is higher because people are willing to pay a premium for something different than suburban sprawl. New Urbanists have been cursed by their success.

A third critique of New Urbanism comes from libertarians who are concerned that New Urbanism is colluding with the government to curtail property rights and prohibit Americans from driving cars. In order to address this concern adequately, we need to draw a distinction between New Urbanism and Smart

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Growth. These movements often get confused because they share many of the same goals. Both are interested in supporting a more sustainable, less automobile-dependent, and ultimately more enjoyable way of developing the built environment. In general, New Urbanists are pursuing this goal within the private sphere using the market mechanism as their engine.

When New Urbanists do become involved with issues of public policy,

it is often to seek a variance from zoning laws or parking regulations that they feel have been too tightly inscribed. Our automobile-dependent sub-urbs are not, after all, the product of unrestricted development, but of strict government regulation and targeted subsidies.[9] In general, the New Urban-ists stand to benefit if government were less involved in the development process. Smart Growth, on the other hand, represents an attempt among planners to achieve some of the same goals as New Urban-ism through the mechanism of government policy.

> Jeremiah's message to "seek the shalom of the city to which you have been called" includes peace, wholeness, and restored relationships. We have interpreted this too abstractly—setting up programs to benefit individuals, but neglecting the shalom of the physical city.

New Urbanists are not against cars; they simply want to create viable alter-natives to using a car for every trip. This agenda strikes me as being strongly in favor of freedom. Many New Urbanists actually want to reclaim the ro-mance (of driving on an empty highway or parking before a grand build-ing on an urban plaza) that car commercials promise but rarely deliver.

The final critique that I will consider is the charge that New Urbanists have not fully escaped the ghost of Modernism, which has bedeviled the architectural profession for much of the last century. As David Harvey puts it, "The movement does not recognize that the fundamental difficulty with Modernism was its persistent habit of privileging spatial forms over social process."[10] In other words, a fundamental tenant of Modernism is that human behavior can be controlled through the proper manipulation of physical spaces. Almost every example of this philosophy being carried out in the twentieth century—from the failed utopian experiments early in the century to the housing 'projects' of the 1960s and 1970s—have served to disprove this basic belief.

New Urbanists believe that Modernist projects failed because the abstract physical forms they took were fundamentally flawed. By looking to traditional forms of buildings, blocks, and neighborhoods that give shape to urban life rather than some kind of radical new model, New Urbanists are exhibiting more wisdom than their utopian predecessors and have been able to create more humane urban spaces. However, Harvey's point is a good one. Because of their particular area of expertise, New Urbanists will tend to be more comfortable working with the physical form of community devel-opment than with the social process that is needed for long-term success.

This is precisely why the charrette process is so strategic for New

Urbanism. The charrette is an effective mechanism for enabling the kind of social process that brings cohesion *and* community ownership to a plan. The New Urbanists' liberal use of the charrette process is one of the movement's greatest strengths, for it prevents the New Urbanists from repeating the fundamental errors of Modernist planners. However, the charrette alone will not inoculate the movement from formalism. The charrette as a social process deals mainly with the initial stages of a particular project. Once the project gets built, there continues to be a need for a social process that encourages residents to become neighbors and neighbors to become citizens. But instigating such a process may be more than we can expect from architects and developers.

SHALOM AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

If we build new traditional neighborhoods that attract homeowners who have lived their entire lives in the privatized world of a suburban subdivision, will these people automatically act more neighborly toward one another? This is a central question as we think about the long-term impact of the CNU on the experience of community. It also provides a good place to begin thinking about the role of the Christian community in this movement.

The answer to this question begins by acknowledging that authentic community usually requires a combination of what I call good 'hardware' and good 'software.' Good hardware is precisely what is on offer from the CNU—buildings, streets, and blocks that dignify daily life, connect us to the physical realities of our local context, and encourage (or, at least, do not discourage) spontaneous social interaction. But hardware alone is not enough. We know this because in some new traditional neighborhood designs the most inviting public places are devoid of vibrant activity, just as in some older traditional neighborhoods the residents do not make eye contact on the street. What is needed in such situations is improvement in the 'software,' the patterns of interaction among the residents. Some TNDs have hired community coordinators to encourage people to get out of their homes and to invest in one another's lives. As the CNU movement develops, I think more creative ideas will be implemented along these lines.

The Christian community can lend support to this effort. If church members are sensitive to the different perspectives represented in their community, a congregation can be an effective catalyst for community development. Members can invest their lives in the neighborhood by enjoying its amenities and advocating for its improvement. The church building itself can be a welcoming public space for both sacred and secular functions.

Jeremiah's message to the Babylonian exiles was to "seek the *shalom* of the city to which you have been called" (see Jeremiah 29:7). Shalom includes peace, wholeness, and restored relationships. In the Church we have interpreted this prophetic call too abstractly; we have set up programs to benefit individuals, but neglected the shalom of the physical city.

The eleven Mississippi cities destroyed by Hurricane Katrina are not the only North American cities that need an infusion of shalom, but their dire situation is helping us to see some interesting realities more clearly. The CNU has shown it is prepared to undertake the challenge of shalom when invited. May the Christian community, likewise, find a unique role to play in the restoration of cities and towns.

NOTES

1 "Rebuilding," *The Bradenton Herald* (March 7, 2006), 8C.

2 Information about many of these projects is available online at the Congress for the New Urbanism's website, *www.cnu.org*.

3 "Charrette" (French for "cart") refers to an intense session in which one completes an art or architecture project. This usage probably derives from when tutors at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in the nineteenth century sent a hand-drawn cart to gather final drawings from students.

4 "The Neighborhood, the District and the Corridor," in *The Charter of the New Urbanism* (1996), online at *www.newurbanism.org/pages/532096/* (accessed May 11, 2006).

5 For a description of the six patterns of human environment in "transect zoning," from the unpopulated "preserve" to the highest density urban "core," see "Transect Applied to Regional Plans," *New Urbanism News*, 5.5 (September 2000), online at *www.newurbannews. com/transect.html* (accessed May 11, 2006).

6 Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York, NY: North Point Press, 2000), 213.

7 Blair Kamin, "Mississippi Rocks the Boat with Bold Coastal Designs," *The Chicago Tribune* (October 18, 2005), 11.

8 K. Connie Kang, "New Urban Model Becomes Article of Faith," *Los Angeles Times* (June 25, 2005), B 2.

9 Lee Hardy briefly summarizes the story of government planning of suburbs in "Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?" on pp. 11-19 of this issue of *Christian Reflection*.

10 David Harvey, "The New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap," *Harvard Design Magazine* 1 (Winter/Spring 1997), online at *www.gsd.harvard.edu/research/publications/hdm/ back/1harvey.html* (accessed May 11, 2006).

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Saint Benedict in the City

BY BRYAN HOLLON

The Church's outreach to abandoned urban centers must go beyond soup kitchens, child care facilities, and social service programs. A new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity, is emerging among Christians who are gathering in intentional urban communities. What are these "new monastics" teaching us about faithful discipleship?

We can learn an important lesson from the fifth-century Christians who survived the fall of Rome, suggests moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. As the western territories of the Roman Empire were conquered by successive waves of barbarian invaders, Christians did not pour their energies into preserving the Empire's crumbling culture and institutions as though they were of ultimate value. Instead, he notes, they turned their attention to creating new forms of community that could sustain moral and civil life in an age of uncertainty. What they created in large numbers were monasteries—intentional communities gathered around a shared vision of the good life and governed by a common moral rule, like the influential *Rule of Benedict*. Because MacIntyre believes we desperately need new "local forms of community" today, he concludes his groundbreaking study, *After Virtue* (1981), with the provocative idea that we are waiting for "another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict."[1]

MacIntyre believes that contemporary western civilization has not been overrun by barbarian invaders, of course, but by a thoroughgoing moral and intellectual fragmentation. We have become, in large measure, morally illiterate because we have rejected the "conceptual scheme"—of human nature, virtue and vice, and the common good—that once made our moral language comprehensible.[2] It is not simply that we now live in a pluralistic age where various moral and intellectual traditions coexist and compete

with one another. Rather, more and more of us consciously reject the need for any long-standing moral or intellectual tradition at all.

We share no authoritative vision of what constitutes a good life. No grand narrative signifies where we have come from and where we are headed in the end. Consequently, we have reduced issues of morality and truth to personal preferences and our public debates have become intractable.[3]

This fragmentation has not spared Christian institutions, which often merely reflect rather than transform the surrounding culture. Thus, we need a new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity, which enables us to minister faithfully to society while preserving our distinctive identity as a people "called out" and "set apart." Just

> The New Monasticism Gathering drew young and old, celibate and married participants. All were from communities that live among the poor in cities where the fragmentation of civilization is felt with the greatest intensity.

such a movement is gaining momentum in urban centers across America. Indeed, a gathering of intentional urban Christian communities recently formed an informal network called "the new monasticism."[4]

WHO ARE THE NEW MONASTICS?

The first New Monasticism Gathering in June 2004 drew a varied crowd. There were young and old, celibate and married participants. Several young married couples brought their children. Some participants came from intentional Christian communities with long histories, such as the traditional Catholic religious orders and the Catholic Worker movement, or the Bruderhof Communities in New York and Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston and Chicago. Others represented newer communities like The Simple Way in Philadelphia, New Jerusalem community in North Philadelphia, and Rutba House in Durham, North Carolina, which hosted the event. All of the "new monastics" were from communities that live among the poor and oppressed in the center of American cities where the fragmentation and moral decline of western civilization is felt with the greatest intensity.[5]

These new monastics hope both to serve the Church and to shape society at large. With the origin of western Christian monasticism in the fourth through sixth centuries as their model, members of this emerging movement aim not only to serve the urban poor, but also to reinvigorate traditional church institutions and become salt and light to a civilization in moral and spiritual disarray. To this end, they have adopted a kind of contemporary monastic rule, or statement of "twelve marks," that all communities associated within the movement share:

✣ Relocation to the abandoned places of Empire
✣ Sharing economic resources with fellow community members
   and the needy among us
✣ Hospitality to the stranger
✣ Lament for racial divisions within the church and our communi-
   ties combined with the active pursuit of a just reconciliation
✣ Humble submission to Christ's body, the church
✣ Intentional formation in the way of Christ and the rule of the
   community along the lines of the old novitiate
✣ Nurturing common life among members of intentional com-
   munity
✣ Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married cou-
   ples and their children
✣ Geographical proximity to community members who share a
   common rule of life
✣ Care for the plot of God's earth given to us along with support of
   our local economies
✣ Peacemaking in the midst of violence and conflict resolution
   within communities along the lines of Matthew 18
✣ Commitment to a disciplined contemplative life[6]

SERVING THE CHURCH

Will the new monasticism, with its communal rule and self-understand-
ing informed by the history of traditional monastic communities, succeed in
reshaping the Church and American society for good? Even asking this
question may seem grandiose, for it is doubtful that many Christians will
embrace the movement's radical commitments. History shows, however,
that movements with relatively small numbers have had a major influence
within the Church. The monastic communities that spread across Europe
during the medieval era are again instructive.

Though monks and nuns were never more than a small percentage of
the total population of Christians, they had a major influence on the devel-
opment of the Church and European civilization as a whole. The monastic
communities carried the gospel into non-Christian lands. They served as
hotels and hospitals making Europe safer for travelers and more humane
for the sick and elderly. As is well known, they played a significant role in
preserving the philosophy and literature of the great thinkers of Greece and
Rome. Monastic communities served as schools and some eventually man-
aged large estates, employing hundreds of people and providing the eco-
nomic base around which cities developed.

Importantly, the medieval monasteries were an integral part of the
Catholic Church and maintained strong institutional connections to its hier-
archy.[7] Thus, although the majority of Catholic priests, bishops, and laypeo-
ple were not directly involved in the monastic life, the Catholic Church as a

whole counted the ministries taking place within and around the monasteries as her own and drew much inspiration from them. The monastic life provided an ideal of Christian spirituality that medieval laypeople, priests, bishops, and even popes aspired to. Because monks and nuns were totally devoted to God and neighbor, their communal lives signified, even if imperfectly, the ultimate consummation of God's redemptive work when humans will once again live at peace with each other and praise God without ceasing. The monastic ideal helped to provide medieval Europe with a distinctively Christian vision of the goal of human existence.

> In a culture of consumption, we often present the gospel as a consumer product to acquire. The new monastic communities show us a deeper understanding of following Jesus—as giving up our lives of self-interest so God can create something new in and through us.

Thus, the intentional communities that make up the new monastic movement will do well to nurture their ties with local congregations, denominations, and other church groups. It is very encouraging that one of the movement's "twelve marks" prescribes submission to wider Christian communities. This rule indicates the movement's desire to serve the Church and to be accountable to it.

REFORMING OUR DESIRES

These new monastic communities can help us reform Christian practices that have been diluted by accommodation to the surrounding culture. They are a fresh witness to what it means to be the Church—the *ekklesia*—a people "called out" of captivity to a fallen world in order to serve those who suffer under the weight of its broken systems. Sister Margaret McKenna of Philadelphia's New Jerusalem community compares the urban centers of American cities to deserts: "abandoned" largely by the powers of this world, they are some of the "loneliest places on earth."[8] By choosing to live and minister in these urban deserts, new monastic communities are explicitly rejecting the consumerism and materialism that is so characteristic of suburban life.

In the process, the new monastics are restoring the theological language that has been corrupted by our eager accommodation to a consumerist culture. Many congregations do not proclaim a gospel that challenges the culture and transforms people morally and intellectually; instead, they accommodate the wider culture by packaging themselves in ways that will appeal to personal preferences and disordered desires. They are "seeker-sensitive" rather than seeker-transformative. Within a therapeutic culture where people are obsessed with emotional and physical well-being, their

worship services resemble "a kind of mass therapy session" and their church buildings offer the same resources as health clubs and strip malls.[9] Too many people come to church desiring comfortable and prosperous lives, and too many congregations respond with a gospel of health and wealth that does not probe how those consumerist desires should be challenged and transformed by the Christian faith.

In a society that revolves around material consumption, we too often present the gospel as though it were one more product that people can acquire and add to their busy lives. By moving into the abandoned inner cities, the new monastic communities show us a deeper understanding of following Jesus — giving up our lives of self-interest so that God can create something new in and through us. With the biblical metaphor of the potter's wheel, McKenna describes the new monasticism's commitment to redeeming community life in America's inner cities as "a no-saying and a yes-saying: No to an old way of life and Yes to the search for a new one…. It gives up on patching the pot thrown off balance on the whirling wheel, re-kneads and throws again the clay, centers it carefully this time, and realizes afresh the reworked clay's potential for beauty and service."[10]

As McKenna's rich metaphor suggests, not only must we say "No" to materialism and disentangle ourselves from consumerist yearning, but also we must say "Yes" to a new life in Christ guided by rightly ordered desires. Jesus tells us that the law and the prophets are summed up in the commandments to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:34-40). Our other desires are legitimate when they do not contradict or distort these first loves.

The medieval monasteries were communities where human desires could be disciplined and properly directed toward communion with God and neighbor. Monastic practices — prayer, singing psalms, confession, penance, fasting, celebration, manual labor, mutual service, and more — ordered daily life in a way that continually challenged and redirected inordinate desires. Monasteries called people *out of* inordinate worldly attachments and *into* a fellowship of communal love in Christ. In describing themselves as "schools for conversion," therefore, the communities associated with the new monasticism are not attempting to be novel. They are embracing the need to discipline and direct human desires in the hope that communities of Christian friendship and service will be birthed by the Spirit of God.

CONCLUSION

The Church's outreach to abandoned urban centers must go beyond soup kitchens, child care facilities, and other social service programs. America's inner cities need Christians who are willing to offer themselves completely in the hope that God will create vibrant faith communities in long-abandoned places. Why shouldn't all Christian church organizations sponsor new monastic orders committed to inner cities as a mission field?

During my years as a student at Fuller Theological Seminary, I was priv-
ileged to serve as a pastoral intern in a Mennonite church that sponsored
several intentional Christian communities in poor urban neighborhoods of
Los Angeles. While no more than twenty of our congregation's 120 members
lived in these communities, they had a profound influence on the rest of us
through their preaching, leading worship, organizing neighborhood events,
and educating us on the difficulties of inner-city life. Those members who
lived among the poor were a kind of monastic community for our congre-
gation. Their faithfulness, commitment to one another, and service to their
inner-city neighbors gave all of us a better sense of what it means to be
"called out" of a life of self-interest in order to love God and neighbor.

The new monastics have much to offer to the poor neighborhoods where
they live and minister. And they have much to offer the Church that is sore-
ly tempted to conform to the materialist and consumerist spirit of the age.

Perhaps a new St. Benedict is in our cities.

NOTES

1 Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, second edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of
Notre Dame Press, 1984), 263.

2 Ibid., 2.

3 Ibid., 6-13.

4 The designation "New Monasticism" comes from Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully
in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre's AFTER VIRTUE* (Harrisburg, PA:
Trinity Press International, 1997), 68-78.

5 Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, in the "Report on New Monasticism Gathering: The Un-
veiling of a Contemporary School for Conversion," describes the 2004 conference (online
at *www.newmonasticism.org*, accessed May 23, 2006).

6 For essays on each of the twelve marks of the new monasticism, see Rutba House, ed.,
Schools for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2005).

7 The nature of these institutional connections changed over the years and became much
stronger with the papal reforms begun by Gregory VII, who served from 1073 to 1085. For
an interesting yet accessible history of medieval monasticism, see C. H. Lawrence, *Medie-
val Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, third edition
(New York, NY: Longman, 2001).

8 Sr. Margaret M. McKenna, "Mark 1: Relocation to Abandoned Places of Empire," in
Schools for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism, edited by Rutba House (Eugene, OR:
Cascade Books, 2005), 16.

9 Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*, 34.

10 McKenna, "Mark 1: Relocation," 16.

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Crate and Castle

BY TERRY W. YORK

ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

Crate and castle, kept and keeper,
poor and privileged side by side,
when God chose the humble stable
entry to the inn denied.

Still the monuments we worship,
buildings, silently stand and shout,
"Raze the stables, raise new structures,
built to keep the Savior out."

Carpenter and caring craftsman,
nails and splinters are in your hands;
housing hope in earth and heaven,
your lone cross-beam, silent, stands.

Gather us within your city
filled with mansions on streets of gold.
New Jerusalem, God's village;
Bethlehem's full story told.

Crate and Castle
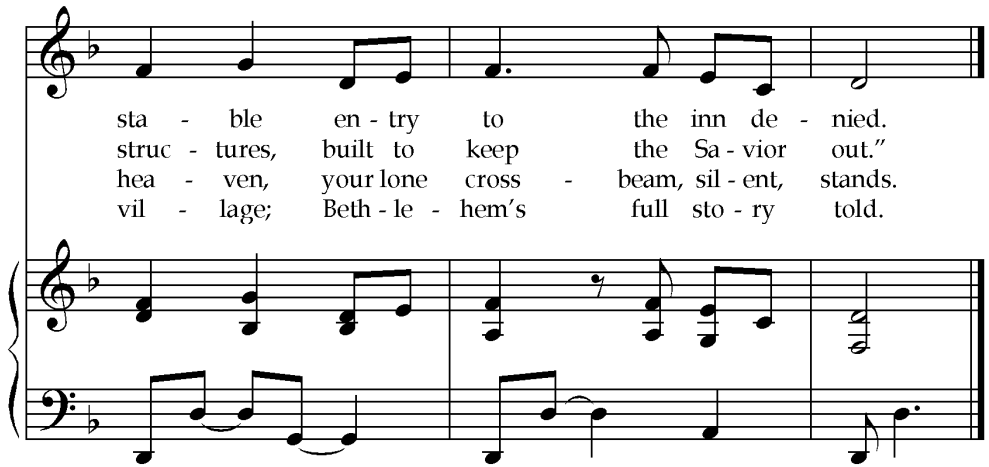
TERRY W. YORK
ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ   C. DAVID BOLIN

1. Crate and cas - tle, kept and keep - er, poor and
2. Still the mo - nu - ments we wor - ship, build - ings,
3. Car - pen - ter and car - ing crafts - man, nails and
4. Ga - ther us with - in your ci - ty filled with

pri - vi - leged side by side, when God chose the hum - ble
si - lent - ly stand and shout, "Raze the sta - bles, raise new
splin - ters are in your hands; hous - ing hope in earth and
man - sions on streets of gold. New Je - ru - sa - lem, God's

Tune: KAUHALE
8.8.8.7.

sta - ble   en - try   to   the inn de - nied.
struc - tures,   built to   keep   the Sa - vior   out."
hea - ven,   your lone   cross -   beam, sil - ent, stands.
vil - lage;   Beth - le - hem's   full sto - ry   told.

Worship Service

BY ANN BELL WORLEY

Prelude

Chiming of the Hour

Call to Worship: Psalm 122:1-2, 9

>   I was glad when they said to me,
>   "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"
>   Our feet are standing
>   within your gates, O Jerusalem.
>   For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
>   I will seek your good.

Processional Hymn

>   "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" (verses 1-3)

>   Glorious things of thee are spoken,
>   Zion, city of our God!
>   God, whose word cannot be broken,
>   formed thee for a blest abode.
>   On the Rock of Ages founded,
>   what can shake thy sure repose?
>   With salvation's walls surrounded,
>   thou mayest smile at all thy foes.

>   See, the streams of living waters,
>   springing from eternal love,
>   well supply thy sons and daughters,
>   and all fear of want remove.
>   Who can faint, while such a river
>   ever flows their thirst to assuage?
>   Grace, which like our God, the Giver,
>   never fails from age to age.

>   Round each habitation hovering,
>   see the cloud and fire appear

for a glory and a covering,
showing forth that God is near!
Thus deriving from their banner
light by night and shade by day,
safe they feed upon the manna
which God gives them when they pray.

John Newton (1779), alt.
Tune: AUSTRIA (Haydn)

Invocation

Almighty God,
across the ages you have guided your people through the wilderness,
    assuring us of a home in your eternal city.
Strengthen us along the way,
    that we might not neglect our call
    to serve the cities and towns where we live.
Help us to trust in your unfailing presence amid all of our fears.
Grant us wisdom to discern your way in this world
    even as we hope for the next. Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.... Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Meditation

"Babylon"

Not simply an evil territory
    or a dirty word,
    as we are prone to believe.
But a place where God's people were sent
    in exile

on purpose
on mission
    to offer their culture
to the culture there
in love.
For God so loved the world.

Like Israel in exile, still we hope
    for our homecoming in the city of God,
    where there will be no more tears.
Let us hope not
    in closed communion
    in isolated sanctuaries
    apart from the Babylon-world.
Rather let us hope
    in the fullness of God's love
    in the life of the cities and towns
        where we work
        and love
        and worship
        and play.
And remember
    that God so loved not only us,
        but the world.

Let us hope for Babylon
    as we hope for ourselves.
Let us embrace
    its people
    its buildings
    its streets
    and fill them with the beauty
        of God's temple.
Let us hope
        with doors wide open,
    welcome the city in
    and pour ourselves out.
For God so loved the world.

Ann Bell Worley

New Testament Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 18-21

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has
died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who

live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them….

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hymn

"Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life"

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
where sound the cries of clan and race,
above the noise of selfish strife,
we hear your voice, O Son of man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
on shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
from paths where hide the lures of greed,
we catch the vision of your tears.

From tender childhood's helplessness,
from woman's grief, man's burdened toil,
from famished souls, from sorrow's stress,
your heart has never known recoil.

The cup of water given for you
still holds the freshness of your grace;
yet long these multitudes to view
the strong compassion of your face.

O Savior, from the mountainside,
make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
among these restless throngs abide;
O, tread the city's streets again.

Till sons of men shall learn your love,
and follow where your feet have trod;
till, glorious from your heaven above,
shall come the city of our God!

Frank Mason North (1903)
Tune: GERMANY

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1, 13-16

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Sermon

Prayer of Confession

Pastor: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(The congregation prays antiphonally — one half reading the statements in bold and the other half responding.)

Merciful God,
we confess that we have hidden our light
and failed to share the love of Christ.
We have walked away from the people Jesus came to serve,
from the cities and towns where he carried out his ministry.
We have chosen instead to make our home
in the isolated places where Jesus retreated for prayer.
And even there,
our prayers have been mostly for ourselves.
We have deemed our church an escape from *(name of city or town)*,
rather than a sanctuary for it.
We have deemed ourselves your chosen people
but forsaken the ministry of reconciliation.
In your infinite mercy,
forgive us our sins
and set us on the path of true righteousness,
that we may find the joy of our salvation
as we seek the welfare of the world around us,
especially our city of *(name)*. Amen.

Prayers of the People

In peace we pray to you, O God,

(*Observe silence between each petition.*)

for the Church and all of its members in cities and towns across the globe:
    may we witness to Christ as we serve the common good;

for all who hold authority in national and local governments:
    may they use their power wisely to benefit the people and the land.

for our city, (*name*), and for our mayor, (*name*):
    may we seek the welfare of this community
    and the just and proper use of the resources in our care;

for our congregation, as we respond to these needs of our city
    (*list specific concerns as appropriate*)
    may we be faithful to our calling as God's people in this place;

for all who are sick, and for the poor, the oppressed,
        and the forgotten who walk our streets:
    may they find in us the hope of Christ;

for all of the saints who preceded us in this work,
        and for all who will follow;
    may we share together in the joy of your heavenly city.

Offering for Urban Ministries

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:21

Choral Anthem

 "Prayer of Saint Francis"[1]
Allen Pote (1986)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
    where there is injury, pardon;
    where there is doubt, faith;
    where there is despair, hope;
    where there is darkness, light;
    and where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
    to be consoled as to console;
    to be understood as to understand;
    to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
    it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
    and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Passing of the Peace

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People: And also with you.

Celebration of Communion

Words of Institution: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Unison Prayer

In the breaking of this bread and drinking of this cup,
    we accept your forgiveness, O God,
    and renew our commitment to serve the people and places within our
        reach,
    in the name of Christ. Amen.

Recessional Hymn

"All Who Love and Serve Your City"[2]

All who love and serve your city,
all who bear its daily stress,
all who cry for peace and justice,
all who cure and all who bless:

in your day of loss and sorrow,
in your day of helpless strife,
honor, peace and love retreating,
seek the Lord, who is your life.

In your hour of high decision,
seek the things that serve your peace,
lest the night of your confusion
overtake your day of ease.

For all days are days of judgment,
and the Lord is waiting still,
drawing near to all who spurn him,
offering peace from Calvary's hill.

Risen Lord! Shall yet the city
be the city of despair?
Come today, our Joy, our Glory:
be its name, "The Lord is there."

Erik Routley (1966)
Tune: CHARLESTOWN

Dismissal

Pastor: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord in (*name of city or town*)
  and the world.
People: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

N O T E S

1 Prayer of St. Francis (SATB, soprano or tenor solo, keyboard, HMC888). Words and Music: Allen Pote. Copyright © 1986 Hinshaw Music, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Phone: 800-568-7805. Website: *www.hinshawmusic.com*.

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This image is available
in the print version of
Cities and Towns.

What leads us away from community, the Church, and the common good? Bruegel engages viewers by his image's powerful relevance to their individual lives—a purpose for art that is rooted in his Renaissance humanism.

Pieter Bruegel I [the Elder] (c. 1525-1569). THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND, *1568. Tempera on canvas, 34 ½ x 60 5/8". Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy. Photo: © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.*

Blinded

BY   HEIDI   J.   HORNIK

T hough Pieter Bruegel was so well-known for painting landscapes and peasant life that his contemporaries called him "Peasant Bruegel," he was a highly educated townsman and astute observer of social reality. He may have been an Anabaptist. Only minimal records survive regarding his life—even the year and city of his birth are debated—but we know that he became a master in the Guild of St. Luke (the painters' guild) in Antwerp between October 1551 and October 1552. Among the early influences on his style were the Flemish painters Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, and Hieronymous Bosch. Though he traveled throughout Italy from 1551-1554— a common practice for artists working north of the Alps—his style remained distinctively Northern Renaissance.[†]

Bruegel painted *The Blind Leading the Blind* after he had settled in the cosmopolitan city of Brussels in 1563. This work combines his mature understanding of composition and acute observation of human behavior. Because the image is based on Jesus' warning to his disciples about following certain hypocritical teachers—"And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:14; cf. the parable in Luke 6:39-42)— many interpreters agree the figures represent not a physical disability, but the spiritual blindness of humankind. Notice that the church steeple in the background is prominently placed between the leader and his "followers"; it has been suggested that our spiritual blindness has an ecclesiastical basis.

Yet details of the figures and composition point to another reading. Bruegel had great sympathy for rural people, like the figures in this painting. Even when he traveled to major artistic cites like Rome, Naples, and Munich, the artist always sought out the peasant. Instead of returning north after visiting Rome, for example, he continued south to visit the town of Calbaria and then Messina and Palermo on the island of Sicily. In *The Blind Leading the Blind*, the peasants are being led away from the village and the church. Perhaps the artist is warning us of the peer pressure that can lead us away from the community, the common good, and faithfulness to God. If this was a warning for village peasants, it was even more relevant for city dwellers, like the artist and his intended viewers.

NOTE

† Alexander Wied, "Pieter Bruegel I [the Elder]," Grove Art Online (Oxford University Press, 2006), (*www.groveart.com*, accessed 4 June 2006).

This image is available
in the print version of
Cities and Towns.

Elements of the shared community life—a barber pole and fire hydrant—are the main "characters" in this glimpse of Hopper's beloved neighborhood, Greenwich Village in New York City. Yet he was intrigued with the City's ability to isolate its inhabitants.

An Ordered Neighborhood

BY HEIDI J. HORNIK

E dward Hopper grew up in the small town of Nyack, New York, in the Hudson River Valley about thirty miles north of New York City. The handsome white-framed house where he and his sister were born is in a neighborhood just a few blocks from the river. It has been restored by the Hopper family as a community cultural center and gallery space that maintains the memory of the artist.[1]

After graduating from Nyack High School in 1899, Hopper went to New York City to study commercial illustration at his parents' urging (to have a more secure economic future in fine art). Yet he returned to Nyack each weekend to offer art classes in the family house. He often painted scenes of Nyack or elsewhere in rural Rockland County, and the town's main indus-try—boat building—figures prominently in many of his paintings.[2]

Hopper entered the New York School of Art in 1900 to study commer-cial illustration, but after only a year he began studying painting and draw-ing with William Merrit Chase and Robert Henri. He toured Europe for the first of three times in the summer of 1906, visiting Paris, London, Haarlem, Amsterdam, Berlin, and Brussels before returning to New York in August 1907. Though he moved to New York City in 1910 and never lived in Nyack again, the picturesque structures and sense of community in his hometown continued to influence his artwork.

Early Sunday Morning and *Nighthawks* reflect the next phase of the artist's life in the Greenwich Village neighborhood on Lower Manhattan Island. In 1913, he moved from his room on 59th Street to a Village apart-ment and studio, Number 3 on Washington Square North, where he would live the rest of his life.

Hopper began selling his paintings that year at the famous Armory Show. His *House by the Railroad*, in 1925, was the first painting acquired for the Museum of Modern Art. Five years later when Hopper painted *Early Sunday Morning*, critics were praising his paintings as "American Realism."

He painted in his free time while he continued to work as an illustrator for several trade magazines in New York. Yet he came to detest illustration to the point that he would not discuss it in his later life.

His trips to Paris had an enormous influence on his work. Hopper read French Symbolist poetry and emulated French painters like Degas. He espe-cially enjoyed painting *en plein air*, as the Impressionists did.

In 1924, he married Josephine Nivison, an artist in Greenwich Village whom he had met years before in art school. She became the model for many of Hopper's pictures. The couple spent their summers painting seascapes and architecture along the coasts of New England, and it was Jo who encouraged Hopper to begin painting watercolors there in the open air.

MORNING CALM

In *Early Sunday Morning*, Hopper captures a personal moment in his neighborhood. In an empty street, the strong raking light illuminates the façade of stores on the ground level and apartments above. Although no human beings are depicted, the presence of the individual city dwellers is evident in the details—the varying types of curtains, heights of shades, and colors in the windows—of their personally decorated homes. The calmness of this scene may be due to the morning hour or the day of the week, though some interpreters think it is frightening in its uncanny quiet and emptiness.

Elements of the shared community life—a barber pole and fire hydrant—become, along with the building façade, the main "characters" in the composition. Hopper highlights them in a way traditionally reserved for human figures, in an almost theatrical manner. The artist clearly enjoyed Greenwich Village and the city of New York in the 1930s, yet he was intrigued with the City's ability to isolate its inhabitants.

"Hopper claimed that he was inspired to paint *Early Sunday Morning* in 1930 by shops on Seventh Avenue and *Nighthawks* in 1942 by a restaurant on Greenwich Avenue where two streets come together (Eleventh Street and Seventh Avenue)," a few blocks west from his studio, Gail Levin reports. The building in the background of *Nighthawks* closely resembles this one in *Early Sunday Morning*. Yet the exact inspiration for the two images is not known, because the diner that inspired *Nighthawks* no longer exists and, as Levin notes, the commercial building in the two paintings seems "to resemble many places, none exactly right."[3]

UNUSUAL PEACE

Nighthawks, Hopper's most well-known painting of city life, is often adapted and parodied in popular culture. Maybe you have seen the online version with characters from the CBS hit series *CSI: Crime Scene Investigators* gathered around a corpse in the famous corner diner.[4] More famous is Gottfried Helnwein's spoof, *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*, where Elvis, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, and Humphrey Bogart substitute for Hopper's nighthawks. At one time this poster was among the most popular in college dormitory rooms. How could *Nighthawks* be transformed into an icon of the college experience? For some it may capture the desolation and loneliness of dorm life, where one is surrounded by peers, but isolated from family and neighborhood for the first time. Or, on the other hand, it may depict experiencing life in a new and exciting way.

Hopper's painting instructor, Robert Henri, a member of the Ashcan School of New York artists, had urged him to depict the gritty realities of the city. Yet Hopper did not choose to paint rough or dirty scenes, but rather the calm mornings and late evenings in his neighborhood. Perhaps he chose to depict these moments because they were so unusual—moments when a person could be alone in a place with thousands of people, and when the city was quiet and peaceful. (The appeal to the stressed-out college student makes even more sense now!)

"Hopper denied that he purposely infused any of his paintings with symbols of isolation and emptiness, yet he acknowledged of *Nighthawks* that 'unconsciously, probably, I was painting the loneliness of a large city,'" according to the Art Institute of Chicago's study guide for this painting.[5] This theme of loneliness and isolation has been overplayed, however, especially in the parodies of the painting.[6] In Hopper's image, after all, the woman and man are clearly together and have the attention of the server.

This image is available in the print version of *Cities and Towns.*

Edward Hopper, American (1882-1967), NIGHTHAWKS, *1942. Oil on canvas, 84.1 x 152.4 cm. Friends of American Art Collection, 1942.51, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago. Used by permission.*

Lighting creates the mood in the painting. Fluorescent lights had just become popular in the 1940s, and Hopper combines their strange glow with the thick window glass of the Art Deco style in fashion at this time. While the glass separates the figures from the darker street outside, it invites the viewer into the diner to contemplate the four "nighthawks" there.

CONCLUSION
Edward Hopper's birthplace, which is a suburb of New York City today, was a small riverside town in the nineteenth century. As a boy he was drawn to the beauty of the Hudson River and he never lost that desire to be near the open water.

Yet Hopper was also drawn to the bustling, creative environment of New York City, a place were world events affect people in a forceful way on an almost hourly basis. The stock market crashed in 1929 and Hitler came to power in 1933, but *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) is serene. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the Allied army landed in Normandy on D-Day in 1944, yet three individuals quietly drink coffee on Greenwich Avenue in *Nighthawks* (1942). Hopper was able to communicate the American Realism of an ordered neighborhood at a time when the rest of the world was looking to the United States for solutions to chaos.

N O T E S

1 For information on the Edward Hopper House, see *edwardhopperhouseartcenter.org*.

2 Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper," *Grove Art Online* (Oxford University Press, 2006), (*www. groveart.com*, accessed June 4, 2006). For more about the life and work of the artist, see Gail Levin's *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (New York, Knopf, 1995) and *Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonnè* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1995).

3 Gail Levin, *Hopper's Places,* second edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 20.

4 The image advertises the concluding episode in the 2006 television season of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (*www.cbs.com/primetime/csi/diner*, accessed June 8, 2006). While the visual reference to *Nighthawks* is clear, the Las Vegas nightscape has replaced the New York City façade and slot machines take the place of the drink dispensers in the diner.

5 See the Art Institute of Chicago's online study guide for *Nighthawks* at *www.artic.edu/ artaccess/AA_Modern/pages/MOD_7.shtml*.

6 Some imitations show a total lack of interaction among the figures. This exaggeration is most evident in the *CSI* parody where a dead body is slumped over the counter among the show's characters who pose on either side of the corpse!

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❧ Other Voices ❦

What is the meaning of this city?
Do you huddle together because you love each other?
What will you answer? 'We all dwell together
to make money from each other'? or 'This is a community'?

T. S. ELIOT, *"Choruses from THE ROCK"* (1934)

It bears repeating that there is nothing inherently flawed about cities in the Bible. Cities are not set in contrast to the country…. The first city is built by Cain in Genesis 4 and named after his son. It represents the desire for protection and shelter, for oneself and in the name of one's children. The city has no name, no other purpose, than that.

CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ, *Word Without End* (1997)

The twentieth century…has been called "the century of the homeless." Remember, we are witnessing the greatest migration in human history. Hemispheres are blending, and cities are filling up and growing. Only 9 percent of the earth's population lived in cities in 1900; by the year 2000 about 50 percent of our more than six billion people will be in urban centers.

RAY BAKKE, *A Theology As Big As the City* (1997)

Whenever and wherever societies have flourished and prospered rather than stagnated and decayed, creative and workable cities have been at the core of the phenomenon; they have pulled their weight and more. It is the same still. Decaying cities, declining economies, and mounting social troubles travel together. The combination is not coincidental.

JANE JACOBS, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)

Faithfulness demands a critical rather than a docile partnership with the agencies of regeneration and development—be they government or commercial. This means that some fundamental questions need to be asked about the criteria for successful urban redevelopment. Individual prosperity, growth and land value are not sufficient on their own. Happiness, well-being and public space, for example, all need to be accounted for and valued. All these make for a good city.

The experience of the faithful on the ground is that the poor—if not getting quantifiably poorer – are the losers in a widening gulf between themselves and those who were growing more prosperous. There is a supreme

irony in the way that when redevelopment and regeneration take place, too often it is people experiencing poverty who are moved or stranded….

(Church of England) Commission on Urban Life and Faith, Faithful Cities: A Call for Celebration, Vision and Justice **(2006), 1.24-25**

The problem of the 21ˢᵗ century is how to live good and just lives within limits, in harmony with the earth and each other. Great cities can rise out of cruelty, deviousness, and a refusal to be bounded. Livable cities can only be sustained out of humility, compassion, and acceptance of the concept of "enough."

D O N E L L A   M E A D O W S , *"Can Los Angeles Learn to Live with Limits?"* **(1994)**

We are God's demonstration community of the rule of Christ in the city. On a tract of earth's land purchased with the blood of Christ, Jesus the kingdom developer has begun building new housing. As a sample of what will be, he has erected a model home of what will eventually fill the urban neighborhood. Now he invites the urban world into that model home to take a look at what will be.

H A R V I E   M .   C O N N , *Planting and Growing Urban Churches* **(1997)**

Heavenly Father, in your Word you have given us a vision of that holy City to which the nations of the world bring their glory: Behold and visit, we pray, the cities of the earth. Renew the ties of mutual regard which form our civic life. Send us honest and able leaders. Enable us to eliminate poverty, prejudice, and oppression, that peace may prevail with righteousness, and justice with order, and that men and women from different cultures and with differing talents may find with one another the fulfillment of their humanity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer **(1979)**

The tragedy of modern urban life is not only that so many in our cities are oppressed and powerless, but also that so many have nothing surrounding them in which any human being could possible take sensory delight. For this state of affairs we who are Christians are as guilty as any. We have adopted a pietistic-materialistic understanding of man, viewing human needs as the need for a saved soul plus the need for food, clothes, and shelter. True shalom is vastly richer than that.

N I C H O L A S   W O L T E R S T O R F F , *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* **(1980)**

Unfortunately, if we were to take a hard look at how Christians in this country have come to view their cities, we would have to conclude that our views have not necessarily been shaped by the Bible, prayer, or meaningful discussions among fellow Christians. It might be more accurate to say that

the fear of cities, or the fear of one another, or possibly the love of convenience has been the actual basis of much of our current perceptions about the city.

ERIC O. JACOBSEN, *Sidewalks in the Kingdom: New Urbanism and the Christian Faith* **(2003)**

The ideal of almost all urban Americans is to acquire enough money to live out in the country; failing that, to live in the suburbs; failing that, at least to escape from the city on weekends and holidays. Throughout the ages, mankind has wished to flee the city; but usually it was for a time only, and then mainly to escape its smells, its dangers, its busyness. The Midwestern American has abhorrence for what is absolutely indispensable to a city—shaped space.

NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* **(1980)**

Christians are not their own, but they belong to God, and the Lord has assignments for all his servants. The question of where one selects a home and establishes residence is a religious question…. It must not only be compatible with, but a result of one's understanding of God's will for his life and the task God expects him to carry out in the society…. To the extent in which individuals, families, and churches are convinced that urban presence is God's will for them, they will accept the challenge to remain in the city and bear witness there.

ROGER S. GREENWAY, *Apostles to the City* **(1978)**

One of the most interesting developments to emerge over the last 20 years has been an increasing number of 'intentional' communities, especially in poor urban areas. These initiatives enable people of faith to express a lifestyle which some call a 'new monasticism.'… They have a structure that enables a deeper commitment (a total lifestyle informed by gospel values) than is usually expressed by membership of a local church; are responsive to local challenges; emphasize both devotion and active involvement; have flexible arrangements to enable people both to join and to leave; build an 'esprit-de-corps'; maintain a positive relationship to a local church, although the vocation of the group is not necessarily expressed through the church…. The challenge to longstanding local churches is to rejoice in the exceptional commitment that is emerging in so many diverse expressions.

(Church of England) Commission on Urban Life and Faith, *Faithful Cities: A Call for Celebration, Vision and Justice* **(2006), 8.25-27**

Moving to the Carpenter's House

BY ELIZABETH M. BENTON

By the time Briggs Church moved into its new building, the congregation no longer needed the extra space. Through twists and turns in its suburban life, the congregation continues to discover new opportunities for disciplined membership and faithful service.

When I teach English at the high school and college level, I concentrate on helping my students learn to write and think persuasively. The classical term for this discipline is "rhetoric." Rhetoric, according to a standard text in the field, aims to help us "close the gap between assent and action."[1]

In teaching students and talking with colleagues over the years about rhetoric, I have teased out a distinction that makes sense in many areas of life. It is the difference between simply eliciting a commitment or assent from someone and persuading that person to act. *Commitment* is satisfied when the other person makes a mental or emotional agreement with the issue at hand. *Persuasion* entails action.

This distinction has helped me understand the story of Briggs Church, formerly known as Briggs Memorial Baptist Church, in Bethesda, Maryland—my church home since 1992, except for brief sojourns in San Angelo, Texas, and Manhattan. The congregation, from its inception in 1951 down to the present day, has given witness to the power of persuasion and the infirmity of mere commitment.

CHASING THE SUBURBS

The church traces it roots back to the years following World War II when a group of Christians, primarily young adults, from a prominent

downtown Baptist church in Washington, DC, yearned for a more dynamic and socially challenging church experience. They were willing to leave the inner-city neighborhood and church where many of them had grown up. Some of the young men in the group had recently returned from service in the war, and many were newly married to spouses from other parts of the country. Together they felt persuaded to seek a fresh start in a new church.

After diligent prayer and careful analysis, they selected a piece of property between the capital city and the swiftly expanding suburb of Bethesda, Maryland. In time, the fifty or so individuals and families cobbled together $20,000, a staggering sum at the time, to purchase the land. After meeting in a department store's community room, and then a small auditorium at American University, they broke ground for a building that would house their worship, Sunday school, church meals, and other social gatherings.

Like many other churches that have been started or replanted in a rapidly expanding part of the city, the Briggs congregation grew until it became necessary to contemplate building a much larger facility. "Bigger and better" dominated American culture at the time, including the church culture, and the deeply committed congregation felt persuaded to attach a new sanctuary to their existing structure, which was converted to a social hall. The result was a handsome colonial-style place of worship.

Ironically, by the time they moved into their new building, the congregation no longer needed the extra space. Like many other churches in the greater Washington, DC, area, Briggs had not understood the bewildering demographic equations coming into play; the church had located, fixed its boundaries, taken on a considerable mortgage, and settled in for the long haul, but only to watch the city's population keep pushing outward to new suburbs.

The downtown church had been the spiritual, as well as geographical, hub of its membership; however, the new location never achieved that same level of magnetism. The region around the church became increasingly affluent, and many young families who joined the church to take up the work of aging members could not afford to live near the church. Furthermore, as the original founders retired and moved away, the neighborhood did not feel drawn to the established Baptist church worshiping in a beautiful but increasingly empty building. In part this was due to the unfortunate "right-wing" connotation that the word "Baptist" acquired in Bethesda during the 70s and 80s as many evangelical groups, including the Southern Baptist Convention, became closely associated with political conservatism.

The original members remained committed to staying with the evolving congregation, for they loved Briggs Church and its history, memories, and buildings. But they did not have a persuasive vision to draw enough others to join the congregation and stem the decline in membership.

Fortunately, the church members skillfully managed their resources over the years. In the early 80s, they opened the church building to a com-

munity-based music conservatory and a Montessori preschool. The schools not only provided a needed source of income for the church, but also increased the church's visibility in the community and attracted many talented music teachers and students to grace its worship services. With careful shepherding of resources and faithful giving, the congregation remained on solid financial ground and poised for a rebirth of its founding dream.

Ironically, or providentially, because our church's membership was decreased yet had a deep desire to serve the world, a disciplined and ministry-oriented community became possible at Briggs.

In 1992, my father, Robert Maddox, came to be pastor of Briggs after he had served several pastorates in Georgia, a two-year stint on Jimmy Carter's White House staff, and an eight-year tour as Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. A host of young adults joined the church about this time, and we, the new generation of Briggs members, like those who launched the congregation in the early 50s, boldly set about to generate a fresh and viable faith community. Yet we encountered the same problems as the church's founding members: we came from all over the region and, try as we might, we did not succeed either in making the church a strong emotional hub or in attracting members from the surrounding neighborhoods. Soon, many members from this young generation drifted on to other churches due to job changes, marriages, and housing moves. Evolving styles of church life also took their toll.

Yet, as before, the commitment of the core group remained firm. To do more than simply survive, however, we needed a persuasive vision for the future of the congregation.

A NEW BEGINNING

Today the church bears little resemblance to the faith community of the early 1950s. Briggs Church's persuasive vision, its "call to action," is to be a new form of church in a new millennium. Just as my rhetoric students might draft a prospectus and explore issues in groups before they can effectively communicate a viewpoint, Briggs Church began brainstorming ways to refocus the church and then call others to act in a way that is faithful to our community and to our Lord. In a roundabout way, the serendipitous outcome of this prayerful process would be the creation of the Carpenter's House.

Our path to the Carpenter's House can be traced back to my father's dissertation written at Emory University in the 70s. He had studied with

interest the Church of the Saviour, an ecumenical inner-city congregation founded by Gordon and Mary Cosby in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC, in 1947. The Church of the Saviour is organized around an "inward journey" of loving God through specific disciplines of prayer, personal and corporate worship, study, use of money, and so on, and an "outward journey" of ministry to the community. New members have intern membership for up to three years before becoming covenantal members, and their covenantal responsibilities are renewed annually. Through the years, after much study, prayer, and meditation (the inward journey), the Church of the Saviour has launched numerous ministries to meet the profound needs of the city (the outward journey).[2]

Though belonging to a disciplined fellowship was always my father's dream, it had been practically impossible to realize his vision in the established congregations where he had served. Ironically, or providentially, because our church's membership was decreased yet had a deep desire to serve the world, a disciplined and ministry-oriented community became possible at Briggs.

For years, my father and the church leadership had "sounded a call," to borrow a phrase from the Church of the Saviour, for members to discern what God wanted them to do. Recently, several members began to listen for their own call with new intensity. For instance, one man with a gift for teaching English as a second language organized a week-day language program for immigrants, which is staffed almost entirely by volunteer teachers (many are retired professors from nearby schools) who in their own way have heard and answered a call to service. Another couple sounded a call for the congregation to support the Johenning community center in a distant, deprived area of the city. Older members of the congregation said, "We cannot drive over to the center but tell us what we can do." So, the seniors at Briggs began preparing holiday goodie bags and party fixings for the forty children at the center.

In August 2003, our small congregation at Briggs was straining to maintain its handsome building along with these and other ministries, when my father received a phone call from the pastor of a newly organized Korean Baptist congregation. Since "Briggs Church" was at the top of the phone book listings, Pastor Soon Choi had taken a chance and called to inquire if my father knew of any church congregation that would be interested in selling its buildings. Eighteen months later, in the providence of God, Briggs sold its building to Pastor Choi's congregation with the provision that Briggs could rent worship and program space in perpetuity.

As we prayed and labored our way through a bewildering array of denominational and financial thickets to close the deal, a house next to the church's parking lot became available. Mrs. Renee Carpenter had lived in the house for forty years. Recently she had worked in the weekday ESL program and established warm friendships with several church members.

When, due to severe illness, she needed to move to Florida, we immediately met her offer to purchase her house. Today Briggs Church conducts its day by day activities out of this renovated property, appropriately named "The Carpenter's House."

CONCLUSION

Language ministries continue to expand and possibilities for literacy training beckon. The seniors do not miss a beat providing long-distance care for children at the community center across town. Systematic interfaith dialogues are on the calendar. Progressive Bible and issue-oriented studies take place regularly in the Carpenter's House along with a children's ministry.

In the wake of the Katrina hurricane, Briggs opened a furnished two-bedroom suite to a mother and her daughter left devastated by the storm. From extra office space in the Carpenter's House, important national ecumenical work is conducted.

Recently the Briggs congregation joined in several endeavors with a neighboring church with a shared vision of outreach. Giving the cup of cold water in Jesus' name to a thirsty world is a more alive, energized possibility as the two congregations remain *persuaded*, as the United Church of Christ watchword proclaims, "God is Still Speaking."

As I participated in this transforming process at Briggs, I often remembered Martin Luther King's insight that "Human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability, [but] it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God." Therefore, he urges us to "use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."[3]

NOTES

1 Timothy W. Crusius and Carolyn E. Channell, *The Aims of Argument*, fifth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities, 2005), 7.

2 Elizabeth O'Connor's *Call to Commitment* and *Inward Journey/Outward Journey* (available from *www.pottershousebooks.org*) tell the story of how the Church of the Saviour responded to the social and racial changes in Washington, DC, after World War II. For more information about congregations and ministries associated with the Church of the Saviour today, see *www.inwardoutward.org*.

3 Martin Luther King, *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, 16 April 1963.

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Salt in the City

BY AMY L. SHERMAN

In Elisha's work of mercy for stricken Jericho and Jeremiah's commitment to captured Anathoth, we glimpse God restoring cities and towns. The prophets inspire us to become "saltier" disciples, reclaiming communities through holistic, relational ministry with individuals and well-considered structural reform.

A little story about the prophet Elisha captures some important themes about how Christians should think about community engagement:

> Now the people of the city said to Elisha, "The location of this city is good, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went to the spring of water and threw the salt into it, and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it." So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

2 Kings 2:19-22

This miracle occurs in the city of Jericho. We think we know all about Jericho from our third grade Sunday School song: "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, and the walls came a-tumbling down." Yet it is likely that our teacher did not mention that God had Joshua put a curse on Jericho after the victory:

> Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying,
>   "Cursed before the LORD be anyone who tries

> to build this city — this Jericho!
> At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation,
>   and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!"

Joshua 6:26

As we read the narrative of Elisha in the city of Jericho, we are to see a sobering picture: a city under a curse, with a river of death flowing into it. The city's water source was polluted and harmful, bringing sickness, death, and barrenness. In this context, Elisha performs a miracle. God tells him to throw salt in the water. God, in His mercy, then uses the salt to heal the water so that it becomes wholesome and life giving.

BECOMING SALTIER DISCIPLES

Notice the interesting way in which the town leaders, despite their city's obvious deficiency, present the prophet with more information than simply their need. Their first remark about their home is that Jericho is "well situated." In short, they state an asset about their community before they direct Elisha's attention to their problem.

That kind of "asset focus" is often missing from a typical church's view of its city. As congregations consider community ministry, we tend to think in categories of "ministry to" or "ministry in" the city, instead of "ministry with." We see needs, but we fail to recognize the assets God already has in place — people, facilities, and neighborhood associations. But an asset-based approach is vital if congregations are to avoid paternalism and arrogance. When church leaders present parishioners only with the needs of "those people out there," they risk emphasizing a false us-versus-them dichotomy and cultivating, inadvertently, an attitude on the part of church members that they have all the resources and answers, while those they go to serve have only problems. This inhibits mutually transforming ministry.

Nevertheless, the residents of Jericho do have a big need and they are not embarrassed to ask for help. Elisha responds quickly and decisively — or, better put, God responds mercifully and definitively through the prophet. The waters of death are transformed for good.

But note the agency of the healing. It is salt. That is not an accident. Nor is Jesus' metaphor from Matthew 5:13 that we, his followers, are the salt of the earth.

Salt tossed into a river is by definition self-sacrificing. It hits the water and dissolves. We might say that it gives up or pours out its life.

Tim Keller, senior pastor at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, has supplied a catchy phrase to serve as a tagline for the new Pew Charitable Trusts-sponsored "Christian Vision Project." The project is inviting Evangelicals of note to reflect on Keller's question, "How can the American church become 'a counterculture for the common good'?" One answer is, "By becoming 'saltier.'"

Advancing true transformation in our cities is costly work. It requires a self-giving of not just money but time and emotional energy. Because of this, too many congregations do not get engaged in work that actually moves people out of poverty—as opposed to helping them manage their hardships a little better. We are too eager to help the poor but not willing enough to know them. A saltier church moves beyond mere relief efforts to true partnership with our neighbors, working with communities to bring about transformation through holistic, relational ministry with individuals and well-considered structural reform. This challenge is difficult but doable.

INVESTING "FOOLISHLY" FOR GOD

Lawndale Community Church in inner-city Chicago has transformed several city blocks into a place of greater safety and more hope—and higher graduation rates, home ownership rates, and employment rates. The congregation is one of the jewels of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), whose "manual," *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together & Doing It Right*, is reviewed by Lissa Schwander in "Restoring Urban Communities" on pp. 89-93 of this issue. Other congregations—New City Fellowship in Chattanooga, The Church at the Neighborhood Center in Phoenix, and Sandtown New Song Church in Baltimore, to name a few—similarly have engaged their congregants with community residents in marvelous works of mercy, community development, and justice. They have established schools and job-training programs, initiated new afford-able housing developments, counseled teen moms, turned gang members into entrepreneurs, and launched new minority-owned businesses.

These "salty" congre-gations share at least two characteristics. First, they have refused to give up on their cities. The depressing (and usually one-sided) news that flows from city to suburbs can make us despair of the possibility for city renewal. But there are no God-forsaken places. As community developers Noel Castellanos and Mark R. Gornik have observed in their important commentary on Jeremiah 32, God some-times calls us to make what appear to the world as foolish investments.[†] God issues a very strange command to Jeremiah, telling him to buy a field in Anathoth, on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem. The command bewilders Jeremiah, for this piece of real estate lies behind enemy lines!

> These "salty" congregations have refused to give up on their cities. The depressing (and usually one-sided) news that flows from city to suburbs can make us despair of the possibility for city renewal. But there are no God-forsaken places.

The Babylonian armies have laid siege to Jerusalem, and Anathoth is filled with mourning. Yet God orders Jeremiah to buy the land, to execute studiously and publicly all the legal protocols accompanying the purchase, and then put the deed "in an earthenware jar, in order that [it] will last a long time" (Jeremiah 32:14). The prophet faithfully obeys, but he doesn't understand why God would call him to such a foolish investment. Who spends money to buy property you cannot access, property that lies in the enemy's territory?

In mercy, God gives Jeremiah an explanation for the strange command. God reminds Jeremiah that the Babylonian invasion is the judgment upon the people of Israel that God had warned them about. But God wants the people to know that the time of judgment will not last forever. God promises a future redemption and foretells a day when feasts and weddings will sound again in the fields of Anathoth (Jeremiah 32:26-44). So, the Lord asks Jeremiah to make a publicly noticeable investment in a place that others have given up as lost. By doing so, Jeremiah makes tangible God's future promise to reclaim and restore.

God is still in the reclamation business. Though impoverished neighborhoods in our cities are "behind enemy lines" — Satan has a grip on them through drugs, crime, injustice, and despair — God has not forsaken this territory, and neither should the Church. The kingdom of God is breaking into the Anathoths of our land. God has used congregations as those mentioned above to do just this, but additional "foolish" investors are needed. The Church is not allowed to give up on the city.

TASTING GOD'S KINGDOM

Another characteristic of salty congregations is that they provide a foretaste of shalom, the peace of God's kingdom. They are notable for their vision. They have a model in mind for the change they seek in this broken world. We are meant to glimpse this model in the story of Elisha in Jericho — a city cursed with a river of death running through it, but miraculously transformed by God's salt into a city where a river of life burbles. In the restored Jericho we have a foretaste of the New Jerusalem graced with "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city" (Revelation 22:1-2a).

Offering people a foretaste of the consummated kingdom marked Jesus' ministry, and it should mark the Church's as well. Jesus often selected Old Testament "preview" passages (like Isaiah 61) that spoke of the "coming attraction" of the new heavens and the new earth, and then announced, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). And to the critical Pharisees he interpreted his miracles, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). It was as though Jesus, through his miracles, reached

forward into the fully consummated Kingdom and yanked a foretaste of it back into the present. You can imagine Jesus looking at Bartimaeus and saying, "Friend, in the consummated Kingdom, there is no blindness; so today I give you your sight." Or to Lazarus, "Brother, in the New Jerusalem, there is no death; so I say to you: 'Up out of the grave!'"

The kingdom of God has begun; Jesus inaugurated it. It is *now*, but it is also *not yet*. We patiently long in our still-broken world for its full consummation. But while we wait, it is the task of the Church—Christ's Body—to continue to proclaim the good news of the kingdom and, through our actions, to give people foretastes of it. "Urban ministry" is nothing less than laboring with our neighbors in the kingdom works of justice, love, and healing, to the end that our cities might grow to look more like the New City.

NOTE

† Noel Castellanos and Mark R. Gornik, "How to Start a Christian Community Development Ministry," in *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together and Doing it Right*, edited by John Perkins (Baker Books, 1995), 211-236. They discuss Jeremiah 32 on pp. 217-218.

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The Church Building as Sacramental Sign

BY PHILIP BESS

If the church is to be a witness to the Heavenly City, Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism. Heralding the City of God is only made more difficult by acquiescing in the Suburb of Man.

T hink with me about the church building in the city and the church building as a city; about the inside significance of the church building and the outside significance of the church building; and, above all, about the church building as a visible witness to the mystery of the ongoing life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

CITIES AND THE GOOD LIFE

The philosopher Aristotle, who lived some four centuries before Christ, is the intellectual wellspring of western thinking about the form of cities, or urbanism. The best life for individual human beings, he observes, is the life of moral and intellectual virtue lived in community with others and most particularly in a polis, or city-state.

The city is a central metaphor and theme of historic Christianity. Scripture depicts the end of the human pilgrimage as a heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. In the fifth century, Augustine describes the distinctive character of Christian vocation as our simultaneously being citizens of two cities: an earthly city and a heavenly city, the City of Man and the City of God. In Augustine's view, the Church is a sacramental mystery seeking to make her members over the course of a lifetime fit citizens for the City of God; we become thus in part by learning to be good citizens in the City of Man and by loving the City of Man with a properly ordered love, never forgetting

that our first loyalty is to the heavenly city that is our origin and destiny.

Aristotle says of the polis that it is a community of communities, "the highest of all, which embraces all the rest, [aiming] at the highest good," which is the well-being of all its citizens.[1] Now at one level a Christian might say this is not quite right, inasmuch as the Church would be characterized as the highest of all communities, aiming at the highest good — the eternal well-being of all its citizens. But here again, Augustine offers the insightful hermeneutical key. In her life on earth, the Church is but a single member of and participant in that community of communities which is the earthly city. But with respect to her divine vocation, the Church recognizes that here she has no lasting city, but seeks the City of God that is to come — and not only seeks but represents and to some extent even embodies it. Thus it is more true than even Aristotle knew, that the highest of all communities — embracing all the rest and aiming at the highest good, which is the well-being of all its citizens — is indeed a City: it is the City of God, of which the Church is its earthly herald, symbol, and embodied anticipation.

In the following passage we glimpse Augustine's inclusive urban vision and the complex relationship between the earthy and heavenly cities:

> [While] this Heavenly City is a pilgrim on earth, she summons citizens of all nations and every tongue, and brings together a society of pilgrims in which no attention is paid to any differences in the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained. She does not rescind or destroy these things, however. For whatever differences there are among the various nations, these all tend towards the same end of earthly peace. Thus, she preserves and follows them, provided only that they do not impede the religion by which we are taught that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped…. Indeed, she directs that earthly peace towards heavenly peace: towards the peace…[that] is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God…. This [heavenly] peace the Heavenly City possesses in faith while on its pilgrimage, and by this faith it lives righteously, directing towards the attainment of that peace every good act which it performs either for God, or — since the city's life is inevitably a social one — for neighbour.[2]

INDIVIDUALISM AND SPRAWL

The life of the city as "a social one" is a reality and ideal that since the Enlightenment and the rise of the industrial city has become increasingly problematic. Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America* (1835), noted the inherent tendency of democratic societies to foster a culture of individualism. There is now a large volume of academic and popular literature devoted to modern society's discovery and celebration of the "autonomous self."[3]

Our society's view of selfhood is reflected in the spatial forms of the built environment—and the physical expression of individualism is post-WWII suburban sprawl. The culture of individualism has affected, if not corrupted, virtually every institution responsible for the creation of the built environment: from the profession of architecture, to the institutions of architectural education, to the institutional patrons of architecture, to the organization of the construction industry, to the rule-of-thumb manuals of transportation engineers, to the lending policies of banks, to the legal framework represented by zoning ordinances that regulate where and how buildings get built. The vision of both the City of Man and the City of God to which I referred earlier stands in the sharpest possible contrast to the suburban ideal that has become our culture's dominant paradigm for the good life.

American suburbs cater to the illusion that unpleasantness in life can be avoided. The traditional city is designed to transform the unpleasantries of human life by means of community, culture, and civil society.

Suburban sprawl is problematic because it renders cross-generational, mixed-class communities of place impossible. The automobile suburb—of its very nature, owing to its physical characteristics—effectively demobilizes and disenfranchises that significant percentage of the population which is too young, too old, too poor, or too feeble to drive an automobile. Suburbia cannot deliver on its promise of convenience, mobility, beauty of the natural landscape, and individual freedom and well-being for all. Its contradictory nature is evidenced in that the persons who have most recently arrived in suburbia are often the people most vociferously opposed to its continuing extension, the political phenomenon that has come to be known as NIMBY-ism, or "Not-In-My-Back-Yard-ism."

Our suburban cultural habit undermines the formal patterns, the urban patterns, by which human beings traditionally have sought to achieve the good life. The American suburb is a cultural conspiracy catering to the illusion that unpleasantness in life can be avoided. But Christians above all must surely understand that unpleasantness in life cannot be avoided; and I think it is not too much to say of the traditional city that it is a complex institution designed to address and transform the unpleasantries of human life by means of community, culture, and civil society.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITY

Design professionals who are interested in traditional architecture and urbanism agree that the mixed-use walkable neighborhood is essential to

good urban design and ought to be a focus of both public policy and our design efforts. A neighborhood standing alone in the landscape is a village; several neighborhoods in the landscape are a town; and many contiguous neighborhoods constitute a city or a metropolis. But to make traditional neighborhoods today requires a conscientious rejection of the way we have been making human settlements since 1945.

Léon Krier, the most influential traditional urbanist of our time, famously compares the traditional urban neighborhood to a slice of pizza. A neighborhood is to the larger city what a slice of the pizza is to the whole pie — a part that contains within itself the essential qualities and elements of the whole. In contrast, the separation of uses typical of the modern suburb (and typically mandated by modern zoning) is analogous to separating all the ingredients of the pizza from each other — the crust here, the sauce over there, the cheese someplace else, the pepperoni way out yonder, and so on. This latter arrangement has all the ingredients of the pizza, but it is not a pizza precisely because it does not have the form of a pizza. Similarly, the post-WWII suburb has all the ingredients of a city, but it is not a city because it lacks both the physical and the social form of a city. And the reason this matters is because the very purpose of the city — the good life for human beings — is not as separable from the formal order of the city as our cultural ideal of suburbia leads us to believe.

Traditional cities have a characteristic form, Krier observes. The private, economic realm and civic realm are identifiably separate but necessarily mixed together. Streets are defined by blocks of private buildings, while hard-surfaced plazas or garden-filled squares are typically fronted by civic buildings or focused on a monument. Virtually all urban streets connect; urban culs-de-sac are rare. Although there is a recognizable hierarchy of streets according to traffic capacity, urban streets always have on-street parking and wide sidewalks to safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrians (and, in some places, the patrons of outdoor cafes).

Often the buildings have a mix of uses. Those used for commerce may have residences above the ground floor, and buildings primarily intended as residences may shelter small offices or businesses. Good cities provide a variety of housing types, often on the same block. In addition to various kinds of detached single-family houses, there may be row houses, flats, apartment buildings, coach houses, and the aforementioned apartments-above-stores. The consequence of this concentrated mix of housing is that the young and the old, singles and families, the poor and the wealthy, can all find places to live within the neighborhood. Small ancillary buildings are typically permitted and encouraged within the backyard of each lot. In addition to parking, this small building may be used as one rental unit of housing or as a place to work.

Good neighborhoods have good schools (particularly elementary schools within walking distance of both students and teachers) and parks

of various sizes for both passive and active recreation. They reserve prominent sites for civic buildings and community monuments. Buildings for education, religion, culture, sport, and government are sited either at the end of important street vistas or fronting squares or plazas.

All of these civic, commercial, residential, and recreational buildings and uses are within pedestrian proximity of each other—a one-quarter- to one-half-mile walk. The most important implication of this is that persons who are too young, too old, too poor, or too infirm to drive a car remain able to live a relatively independent life in their community. The car becomes a convenience rather than a necessity.

> The first duty of the church building is to be an image of the Church as a whole, of that communion of God and human beings across time wrought through the mystery of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

Making neighborhoods of such quality today is as simple as looking closely at, emulating, and attempting to improve upon the most beloved cities and neighborhoods in the world. Unfortunately, making such neighborhoods is as hard as the fact that in most places in America today it is literally illegal to build such environments and also that—to complicate matters even further—we have lost the cultural habit of doing so.

THE LOGIC OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

I have been contrasting two formal paradigms of human settlement—the traditional urban neighborhood and the automobile suburb. Today, urbanists are sounding alarm bells: the social and cultural costs of sprawl are excessive, sprawl itself is culturally and environmentally unsustainable, and the only alternative to suburbia is the revival of the art of making traditional cities. What are the implications of these ideas for church architecture?

Father Timothy Vaverek suggests that the first duty of the church building is to be an image of the Church as a whole, of that communion of God and human beings across time wrought through the mystery of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. "The entire building is therefore 'sacramental' in that it visibly represents the Church, the kingdom of God present now in mystery," Vaverek urges. "The church building is an icon of the Church herself and a witness to the kingdom."[4] Good church buildings proclaim the Church's faith in visible signs and evangelize the neighborhood, the city, and the nation. Nonbelievers point to them as stunning examples of art as well as mysterious, public symbols of Christian piety.

What form or forms, then, should twenty-first-century church buildings take? Several characteristics of sacred architecture, common in many cultures, seem to be grounded in created nature and human nature: a recog-

nizable verticality (in height or depth); a concern for light and shadow; a care for craft, durability, and material particularity; the conscious use of mathematics and geometry as formal ordering devices; a compositional and artistic unity; and a sense of hierarchy, by which I simply mean formal evidence that some things are regarded as more important than others.

Other formal aspects of Christian church buildings iconographically reflect something of the nature of the Trinitarian God who has revealed himself through created nature and in human history through Jesus Christ and various manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The *centralized plan based upon the geometry of the circle* symbolically represents the unity and changeless perfection of God. The *great, high-roofed hall of the basilican plan* represents the dynamic movement of nature and history toward their end in God. The *cruciform plan* includes the preceding argument; yet it also symbolizes the mystical Body of Christ and best expresses — at the crossing of nave and transept — the intersection of heaven and earth and the communion of God and human beings at the axis mundi. There may be a contemporary argument for the *elliptical plan* as expressing the dynamic relationship and movement between the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist.

The style of the church building, as well as its form, can be an expression of the Church's mission. The style of *Classicism,* with its interest in the proportions of the human figure, can be a celebration by the Church of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity. The *Gothic* style's verticality and its ethereal quality of light is a celebration of the mystical presence of God the Holy Spirit. *Exuberant localized vernacular expressions* can be a fitting testimony to the endlessly creative energy of God the Father.

Finally, a case can be made for *monastic simplicity and austerity* of buildings to express the Church's voluntary solidarity with the poor. "I shall say nothing about the soaring heights and extravagant lengths and unnecessary widths of the churches, nothing about their expensive decorations and their novel images, which catch the attention of those who go in to pray, and dry up their devotion," wrote the Cistercian monk, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). "Let them be, since it is all to the glory of God. However, as one monk to another, may I ask [this] question...'tell me, O poor men — if you are really poor men — why is there gold in the holy place?'... The stones of the church are covered with gold, while its children are left naked. The food of the poor is taken to feed the eyes of the rich, and amusement is provided for the curious, while the needy have not even the necessities of life."[5]

THE CHURCH ON A PUBLIC SQUARE

We have been thinking about the church building itself. What about the church building's immediate context? If the neighborhood church is to be both an identifiable community center and witness to the Heavenly City, Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism. Heralding the City of God

is only made more difficult by acquiescing in the Suburb of Man.

Unfortunately, it is not the church on the public square but rather the church in the parking lot that is the paradigm for church architecture today. So what can congregations do about that?

Let's start by comparing two good-sized and by certain standards thriving churches. The first is located in west suburban Chicago, on a ten-acre site that is entirely occupied by the parish church building, a rambling single-story parish elementary school, a large surface parking lot, and, initially, a retention pond required for the water run-off created by the parking lot. (The pond has subsequently been attached to storm sewers and drained, and the land now serves as a depressed, i.e., below-grade, athletic field.) This programmatic arrangement is what the parish asked for and, more importantly, what the suburban zoning either required or allowed.

> Instead of building a church and parking lot on six to ten suburban acres, why couldn't a congregation build a church, a public (not private) square, perhaps a school, and the beginnings of a mixed-use neighborhood?

Compare this with a church and elementary school located on two adjacent Chicago city blocks. In addition to the church and the school, there are over 150 on-street and off-street public parking spaces, as well as more than a dozen businesses and over 100 dwelling units in buildings predominantly two and three stories tall. This urban church is a genuine neighborhood center, easily accessible by both car and foot from its dense urban surroundings. In contrast, the suburban church lacks a sufficiently dense and pedestrian-accessible adjacent neighborhood of which to be the center.

Consider now an alternative form of suburban development, but one with interesting implications for urbanization. Its precedent is the development of the London residential square. Beginning in the seventeenth century, when London was a dense but still small city, aristocratic estate-holders would contract with a developer to build on a six- to ten-acre parcel of land a square surrounded by housing and, in a few cases, fronted by a parish church. This happened on the outskirts of London for a period of about 200 years. Small residential square developments (some 350 to 400 of them) proliferated over the landscape. Eventually housing filled in between the squares, and what you ended up with is modern-day London, a world-class city noteworthy for its many beautiful albeit casually distributed residential squares. Savannah, Georgia, is a more regularized but no less beautiful contemporaneous colonial American variation on that pattern of development and directly indebted to it.

So here is my proposition: When congregations build today, why couldn't they play a part analogous to the London aristocrat? Instead of building a church and a parking lot on their six to ten suburban acres, why not build a church, a public (not private) square, perhaps a school, and the beginnings of a mixed-use neighborhood? (See the illustration below.) Why couldn't a congregation partner with a developer and use some of the proceeds from the development of its property to pay for part of the construction of its church building(s)? Why couldn't churches use this strategy to begin to integrate affordable housing and commercial buildings into suburbia as part of mixed-use neighborhoods? And who's to say that an initially random proliferation of such developments across suburbia—once the exemplary pattern was established—over time might not become, as it did in London, the very physical and spiritual centers so pointedly lacking in contemporary suburbia?
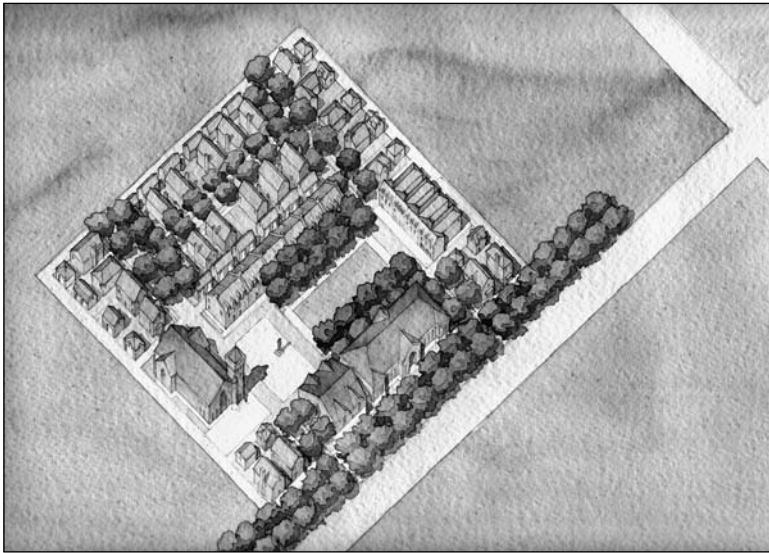
Drawing by Elizabeth McNicholas, courtesy of Thursday Associates.

This proposition, of course, presumes that contemporary Christians have at hand or can develop the aesthetic and spiritual resources—not least the desire—needed to promote good cities; and this may be assuming a lot, at least at the present time. Nevertheless, the challenge we face today is the same challenge Christians always face—to be true to our calling to celebrate, witness to, and foreshadow the coming City of God.

NOTES

1 Aristotle, *The Politics,* Book 1, Chapter 1 (1252a 1-6), and Book 3, Chapter 9 (1280b 32-35), translated by Benjamin Jowett.

2 Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Book XIX, Chapter 18, translated by Robert Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 946-47.

3 Classic descriptions of the culture of individualism include Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966, 1987); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, second edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); and Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, updated edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996). For critiques of individualistic views of the self and an outline of a "transmodern" account of the self, where the sources of meaning and purpose transcend the individual, see Paul C. Vitz and Susan M. Felch, eds., *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006).

4 Fr. Timothy V. Vaverek, "The Church Building and Participation in the Paschal Mystery: Assessing the NCCB Document Built of Living Stones," *Sacred Architecture*, 5 (Spring 2001), 10-15 (available online at *www.sacredarchitecture.org/pubs/saj/features/nccb. php,* accessed May 30, 2006).

5 Bernard of Clairvaux, "An Apologia to Abbot William," chapter XII, in Michael Casey, translator, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux,* Volume 1 (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1970), 63-66.

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Building a City
That Honors God

BY BENJAMIN J. BRUXVOORT LIPSCOMB

While most urban theology focuses on poor and marginalized people, urban planning is more interested in form and function. Two books reflect a new type of writing on the city: carefully attentive to how buildings "behave," they are insistently grounded in Scripture and its narrative of creation, fall, reconciliation, and redemption.

U ntil quite recently, Christians who were concerned about the condition of American cities have confronted a choice between two bodies of work, each of which more or less ignores the other. There is, on the one hand, "urban theology" or the "theology of the city" as this has developed from Harvey Cox and other theorists of the "secular city" in the 1960s, through the writings of Jacques Ellul, up to present-day enthusiasts for urban ministry. On the other hand, there is the literature of urban planning, to which Christians have not made a large contribution, but which is increasingly religious in spirit—characterized by an impulse to build (or at least facilitate) community, to enact justice, to make of our cities "a better place to live."

It would be too simple to say that the pastors and academics who read urban theology are principally interested in people—especially the poor and marginalized who seek opportunity or escape in urban centers, but often find only alienation and exploitation—while the professionals and citizen activists who read about urban planning are principally interested in form and function. Urban theologians have thoughts about the physical degradation of the urban environment; and, in many recent books about urban planning, the authors' interest in form is grounded, finally, in how the

built environment affects its inhabitants for good or ill. Still, as a prediction about what one would find under discussion on a randomly selected page from a book of urban theology, and what one would find on a randomly selected page from a book on urban planning, the generalization has merit.

I am encouraged, then, at the recent emergence of a new type of scholarship on the city: scholarship grounded in the discourse of urban planning that takes up the concerns of urban theologians, and scholarship that begins from the concerns of urban theologians and moves toward issues of form. Two fine instances of the new type, one from each side of the aisle, are Eric O. Jacobsen's *Sidewalks in the Kingdom: New Urbanism and the Christian Faith*

> Jacobsen recommends that we see ourselves as stewards—or, should we say, "superintendents"—of the built environment, by analogy with the stewardship for the natural world urged by Christian environmentalists.

(Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003, 192 pp., $18.99) and T. J. Gorringe's *A Theology of the Built Environment*: *Justice, Empowerment, Redemption* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 292 pp., $27.99). Both books attend carefully to how buildings "behave." And they are insistently theological, grounded both in the text of Scripture and in the scriptural narrative of creation, fall, reconciliation, and redemption.

FROM URBAN PLANNING TO THEOLOGY

"We do not see cities or traditional neighborhoods in this country because we have not lived in them or thought specifically about them for a long time. We tend to think of them as abstractions—a city is a place where humanity is gathered in large numbers. And so our discussions about…cities tend to be indistinguishable from discussions about crowds," Jacobsen writes. "This oversight has been reflected in our theology as well. Try to find any concrete description of what actually constitutes a city in our myriad theologies of the city, and you will see what I mean" (pp. 64-65).

It is not easy to define a city, as Jacobsen readily admits. The book's second half consists of a point-by-point discussion of what he calls six "markers" of the city, markers intended to focus our attention on the characteristic features of a well-functioning, urban community: (1) the provision of substantial public space; (2) a close, integrative mixture of uses; (3) a vibrant (or at least functional) local economy; (4) the presence of a significant number of aesthetically excellent edifices or spaces (especially public spaces); (5) a sufficiently large and dense population to generate and sustain the practices of high culture; and related to this, (6) the impossibility of knowing all or nearly all of the people one meets in public space. Although

Jacobsen does not stress the point, the first four of these are also markers of well-functioning small towns, confirming the New Urbanist thesis that cities are put together from smaller units, neighborhoods, which—if removed from their urban surroundings—would be small towns.

Jacobsen's book is full of wonderful, homely illustrations of each of these markers, and one of his major aims is to explain their significance to Christians who have not thought about such matters. Nevertheless, the more important part of the book is the preparatory discussion of the first half that grounds and motivates the detailed, concrete analysis that follows.

There we find a helpful distinction between two presently dominant versions of Christianity: the "private Christianity" of most evangelicals, which is focused on the conversion of individuals; and the more engaged but sometimes heterodox "public Christianity" of mainline denominational leaders. Neither, in Jacobsen's view, attends sufficiently to the physical and formal qualities of urban space.

Jacobsen also offers a nuanced discussion of scriptural portrayals of cities, negative and positive. While in the end he affirms the cliché that "the Bible begins in a garden but ends in a city," he connects this affirmation to the scriptural theme of God bringing good out of evil, taking human institutions that may have begun as manifestations of alienation or hubris and redeeming them. The first two cities in Scripture are Enoch (the work of Cain, the wanderer) and Babel. The last, of course, is the New Jerusalem.

Finally, he recommends that Christians see themselves as stewards—or, should we say, "superintendents"—of the built environment, by analogy with the stewardship for the natural world urged by Christian environmentalists. The principles for intelligent stewardship of the built environment, he suggests, are by and large those codified in the *Charter for the New Urbanism* (2001), which is appended to Jacobsen's book, along with a lucid and comprehensive glossary and a judicious annotated bibliography. The *Charter* is also available in PDF format at the Congress for the New Urbanism's website, *www.cnu.org*. Since Jacobsen surveys the movement in "The New Urbanism" on pp. 28-36 of this issue, I will not summarize the twenty-seven principles of the *Charter for the New Urbanism*, other than to say that they consist in the cultivation and maintenance of his six markers of city life.

FROM URBAN THEOLOGY TO PLANNING

Except for the emerging type to which it belongs, Gorringe's book contrasts with Jacobsen's in every way imaginable. Jacobsen, while he plainly knows very well what he is about, is first and foremost a pastor and a citizen-activist; his aim is to popularize a particular vision of urban stewardship and redemption (a vision with which I am strongly sympathetic). Gorringe is an academic's academic, casually conversant with a vast range of theological, philosophical, technical, and social-scientific literature. His prose is dense and allusive; between a third and a half of his book consists

of framed quotations from other authors, and one can sometimes read a half-dozen or more pages, unable to form a confident opinion of Gorringe's own views. Jacobsen is an American, well-traveled but firmly at home in the United States—indeed, in Missoula, Montana. Gorringe's paradigms are primarily British, secondarily in the global south, and his work only rarely achieves the grounded particularity of Jacobsen's anecdotes. Finally, Jacobsen, while critical of some trends in evangelical thought, is plainly an evangelical himself. Gorringe, by contrast, is a respectful theological liberal.

Gorringe conceives of his project as an extension of the work of Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Jürgen Moltmann, Harvey Cox and Jacques Ellul (1912-1994), and liberation theologians and prophets of "postmodernity." He is deeply engaged with urban theology, but wants (like Jacobsen) to work out more concretely what it means to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city" which is both home and not home (Jeremiah 29:7). Toward this end, he brings the theologians mentioned above into a complex and fruitful encounter with classic theorists of the city, Aristotle (384-322 BC), Vitruvius (died ca. 50 BC), and Alberti (1404-1472); British architects, John G. Howard (1864-1931), Sir Raymond Unwin (1863-1940), and Dennis Sharp; and North American urbanists, Lewis Mumford (1890-1995), Richard Sennett, and Jane Jacobs (1916-2006). It would be impossible, in this short space, to do justice to the richness of the ensuing discussion, but let me note some of Gorringe's prominent themes.

Gorringe, with many recent theologians (above all, Robert W. Jenson), insists upon "Trinity…[as] the Christian name for God" (p. 183). His project is comprehensively motivated and organized by the doctrine of the Trinity: for every topic he introduces—be it space or land, the dwelling or the city, a region or the whole earth—he asks how God interacts with it as creator, reconciler, and redeemer. He often describes God as confronting "the Powers," a term borrowed from Walter Wink for the spiritually charged organizations and systems that texture and too often dominate our lives. Following his Trinitarian scheme, Gorringe calls for the actualization of the created potential of the Powers, the correction of their injustices, and their ever unfolding redemptive transformation.

This may sound abstract, even abstruse, and frequently it is. But, over the course of Gorringe's book, a clear, forceful view emerges of what the Christian's priorities should be with respect to the built environment. This view is, at one and the same time, more radical and more permissive than Jacobsen's.

First, the radicalism: the Christian should see land as a gift of God and, therefore, as our possession only in a qualified sense. While Gorringe acknowledges at one point that unequal distributions of land are not inherently unjust, he seems convinced that all actual disparities of any consequence are unjust. His view is that property, if not shared in the face of need, is theft—a view one can study, he reminds us, in a number of patristic and

medieval Christian authors, not to mention the biblical prophets. Not that Gorringe favors just any mechanism of redistribution. But he does regard as unjust, for example, the vast holdings of the wealthiest English and Scottish landowners.

Gorringe's radical egalitarianism is foundational also for what he says about the dwelling and, by extension, the town and city. Gorringe advocates "a new vernacular" language of planning that will involve everyone, as much as reasonably possible, in the work of design and construction. The epigraph to Gorringe's book—"would that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Numbers 11:29)—is well chosen; his vision is of a world of people, each with his or her own adequate *nahalah* or inheritance, who return thanks to God by building with sensitivity to context and neighbors, human and nonhuman. Gorringe's vision has its attractions, although I do not think it satisfactorily acknowledges the ways in which the common good is served by the division of labor and the cultivated expertise of architects.

In other respects, though, Gorringe is more permissive than Jacobsen. Where Jacobsen sometimes repeats as gospel the most over-the-top remarks of critics of suburbia, Gorringe seeks and finds positive possibilities in this form, considering it too as something to be redeemed. Jacobsen is understandably focused on convincing actual and potential suburbanites to return to the city, where there is so much to be done. But in so doing, he sometimes loses touch with his most important insight: that an artifact's potential for good is measured by the redeeming power of God, not by the short-sightedness of its human maker(s). This is related to another fault in Jacobsen's book: his characterization of rural communities as existing for the sake of urban ones. Again, Gorringe is more nuanced; he characterizes cities at their best as symbols and centers of whole regions, but accords to the rural its own integrity and dignity.

> Gorringe's project is motivated and organized by the doctrine of the Trinity: for every topic he introduces—be it space or land, the dwelling or the city, a region or the whole earth—he asks how God interacts with it as creator, reconciler, and redeemer.

Given the depth of his engagement with other relevant bodies of literature, Gorringe's reading of New Urbanists is surprisingly slight. He quotes from journalist Philip Langdon, but does not reference Leon Krier, Andres Duany, or Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. And, notwithstanding Gorringe's engagement with the great critics of urban space, he has little to say about design.

FROM VISIONS TO EXECUTABLE DESIGN

So a divide remains between those who begin with questions of how to minister to the poor and those who begin with questions about how urban forms affect people's behavior and sense of well-being. I cannot say that one is a better starting point than the other. But, with community-minded urban planners facing their greatest opportunity and challenge in helping to re-shape New Orleans and other hurricane-wrecked communities, the need has never been greater for prophetic visions of justice to be brought together with executable design. These two books, although they differ significantly in substance and tone (and thus in their ideal audience), are therefore provocative and timely.

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Restoring Urban Communities

BY LISSA M. SCHWANDER

How can we help restore urban neighborhoods? Three books remind us to be wise—by connecting with work in progress across racial, ethnic, class, and generational divides—and to be hopeful—by remembering that we are rejoining a long process of renewal God has begun.

When Jesus called his first disciples to follow him, he invited them to enter what we today call "intentional community." The disciples left behind their family and friends, lived with limited privacy and resources, and faced together what appeared to be an uncertain future. Christ challenged their misunderstandings and stereotypes about people who were different from them—people who were poor, sick, or seemingly far from God. In confronting these myths, Christ moved the disciples to a deeper insight about who is the neighbor.

Despite our having these and other biblical models of how we should live with one another, we struggle with the same questions as Jesus' first disciples: Who is my neighbor? How are we to live in community? What are our obligations to the community? Myths still abound about the people we encounter—those who live in poverty, suffer from AIDS, are unemployed and homeless, are tempted by the lure of alcohol and drugs, or remain trapped in decaying urban neighborhoods. We are called, like the disciples of the early church, to challenge these myths and uncover the workings of Christ in and through all of his people.

Through a personal account of living in an intentional community in inner-city Atlanta, Robert Lupton in *Theirs is the Kingdom: Celebrating the Gospel in Urban America* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989, 121 pp., $13.00) shares what a modern-day response to "follow me"

involves. He describes engaging the structural, institutional, cultural, and societal issues that pit individual children of God against one another. Moving back into Atlanta's urban neighborhoods, Lupton and others come face-to-face with communities decimated by racial tensions and white flight, the movement of business and industry away from the urban core, and pockets of crime and substance abuse that are caused by and result in segregation, alienation, and prejudice.

Despite misunderstanding and mistrust between people relocating into urban neighborhoods and those who already live there, new urban neighbors are drawn into dependence on and close community with one another.

When the urban core is pitted against the perceived safety of the suburbs, those left behind in the city suffer. Reflecting on this situation, Lupton "wondered if all was well with an economic system where winning meant defeating another human being. Could it be that among human beings cooperation was a better way than competition?" (p. 24). Lupton's vision for community overcomes his questions and the experiences that he and his family share in this Atlanta neighborhood do not end in hopelessness. He witnesses the presence of God in the strengths, abilities, and commitments of those he encounters:

> Amidst the chaos of its crowds and the ominous power of its structures, there exist small, nearly invisible pockets of vigorous, healthy growth. In old storefronts and empty warehouses of decaying communities, gifted ones are finding each other. Called from different places by the same voice, they are joining hands and hearts to take on the overwhelming problems of the city. In the process they are creating kingdom playgrounds. (p. 88)

As we live, work, and play in such "kingdom playgrounds," places where God's children meet and enter into authentic relationship with one another, we encounter Christ. The path to rebuilding an inner-city neighborhood is not always an easy road, as Lipton shares. Misunderstanding and mistrust abound on all sides of the new relationships between people answering the call to relocate into the urban neighborhood and those who already live there. Yet Christ promises to be present in the midst of the struggle. Lupton wonderfully describes new urban neighbors from all walks of life, who have varying interests and skills, being drawn into dependence on and close community with one another.

Among those working and playing in these kingdom playgrounds are artists. J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early's *Taking it to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004,

288 pp., $24.00) presents a framework for transforming urban neighborhoods in holistic ways through these local artists' work. Corbitt, professor of cross-cultural studies, and Nix-Early, dean of the Campolo School for Social Change at Eastern University, are cofounders of Buildabridge International. Their "model of Arts in Redemptive Transformation (A.R.T.) offers a framework for how people, and artists in particular, can help to create a world in which people, communities, and societies are transformed through a journey toward redemption" (p. 25). As local artists engage their communities in new and transformative ways, they catch a glimpse of what Corbitt and Nix-Early call "the NU JERUZ."

> [It] is not so much a place, though we use the term to refer to the urban context, but…a way of living in which all people are empowered to live lives that are full, free, and pleasing to the Creator in all aspects – artistically, economically, culturally, politically, spiritually, environmentally, and socially – until the journey of living faith is complete. (p. 22)

Corbitt and Nix-Early urge congregations to incorporate the arts—including visual art, performance art, music, and dance—in a new way in their ministries. The Church has long employed the arts to praise and glorify God in worship. But in addition to this "vertical" expression, the arts should be used in a "horizontal" way to open the doors of local congregations and reach out to the communities that they serve.

Works of art can function in a prophetic, agape, or celebrative way in the A.R.T. model. Art functions prophetically when it awakens us to a social problem or problems; then a communal response and solution to the problem may be accomplished through agape art; and the accomplishment is celebrated via celebrative art. For example, prophetic artwork can draw attention to societal issues like racism and social and economic inequalities that, in Lupton's words, "pit people against one another." Agape artists create works that help us "love our neighbor" and restore relationships. When awareness has been raised through prophetic art and relationships restored through agape art, celebrative artists can draw attention to the victory the community has won. For each component of the model, Corbitt and Nix-Early lay out a variety of specific steps individuals, congregations, and communities may take to use art as part of their ministry.

Of course, "art has no meaning without people," the authors note in exploring the limitations of their model for community outreach and development, and "it is not a neat or exact science" (pp. 64-65). Throughout the book they stress the importance of relationship building; it is not the art itself but the process of creating the art and the relationships that result from this process that provide an impetus for community transformation. Thus they realize that art cannot stand alone, but must be used in combination with other tools and methods in urban ministry.

Art can be the creative "outside of the box" kind of thinking that opens doors to new personal relationships. To inspire us to this end, Corbitt and Nix-Early provide many examples of places and ways that prophetic, agape, and celebrative artists—and not just Christian artists and congregations, by the way—are helping to bridge racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and generational divides among people in their communities.

While using art to build relationships is a relatively new approach to restoring urban communities, following Christ's example by entering neighborhoods and engaging people where they live is not. *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together & Doing It Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995, 264 pp., $16.99), edited John M. Perkins, the founder and chair of the Christian Community Development Association, lays out Perkins's influential model for community engagement and development. This model has inspired Christians who work and play in emerging kingdom playgrounds around the world.

At the heart of Perkins's model is what he calls "the three R's"—relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution. He urges Christians to relocate their homes to neighborhoods that have been devastated by racism, poverty, and economic inequality, for it is only by living and working in close proximity with people that we can be reconciled to them. The redistribution of resources is grounded in the biblical principle that all things belong to God. "Redistribution means putting our lives, our skills, our education, and our resources to work to empower people in a community of need," Perkins writes (p. 34). Other contributors to the book further describe the methods and provide concrete examples of Christian community development.

Foundational to this model is an understanding of poverty, racism, and segregation and their effects on individuals, families, and urban neighborhoods in the United States. In the chapter titled "Understanding Poverty," Lowell Noble and Ronald Potter provide an overview of the middle-class flight that has devastated urban neighborhoods, leaving them with few positive role models and very limited resources. It is in the midst of such devastation, Perkins suggests, that Christian leaders and community developers are called to minister.

Yet Christian community development is not a job for heroic individuals and isolated families. Rather it is most effectively accomplished in partnership with local congregations situated within the communities they seek to develop. Glen Kehrein, who directs the Circle Urban Ministries in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago, IL, explains how many congregations have vacated inner-city neighborhoods and then condemned those left behind for the deteriorating situation. "Instead of condemnation we need to take appropriate responsibility," writes Kehrein. "Our communities will not be reached unless we recapture a parish concept. We must reclaim the inner city by staking our claim and recapturing turf yielded to our enemy" (pp. 173-174). He recommends a holistic approach to reclaiming the city for

Christ that involves both individuals and churches working together toward transforming people and neighborhoods.

Perkins's model is explicitly Christian not only in the central role it gives to congregations in the process of community development, but also in its theological perspective on the issues facing inner-city communities. Because Christian community development understands the human need for spiritual as well as physical wholeness, it includes building of relationships between people and with God (reconciliation) as well as empowering individuals and communities through economic development (redistribution). As Noble and Potter put it, "The biblical vision for Christian community development is for people to be in loving fellowship with God and with one another," and this includes relationships across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic divides (p. 49).

Lupton, Corbitt and Nix-Early, and Perkins and his colleagues share a vision of community transformation through the work of those who respond to Christ's call and example by moving into urban neighborhoods. None of them are idealists. Though these authors believe in the power of leaders and neighbors to work toward change, they realize there are tremendous challenges and difficulties to be faced. So they remind us to be *wise*—by connecting with work that is already in progress across racial, ethnic, class, and generational divides—and to be *hopeful*—by remembering that we are rejoining a long process of renewal and redemption that God has begun.

"In spontaneous, inconspicuous ways, the God of history is fitting together new forms for the urban church—bold, compassionate forms adapted to the schedules, cultures, and special needs of the city," writes Lupton. "As I communicate with urban visionaries around the country and throughout the world, I am discovering some common characteristics of these new wineskins. Almost all grow out of contact with poor and disenfranchised people. They are often multi-ethnic or multiracial. They are reinstituting early church practices of sharing food, homes, and material possessions with those in need. And there is a rediscovery of the importance of spiritual gifts which are distributed to all believers and give special significance to even the least in the body" (p. 120).

These authors challenge us to stop watching from afar as cities suffer from middle-class flight and disinvestment and to start participating in the work of Jesus Christ in these urban neighborhoods.

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