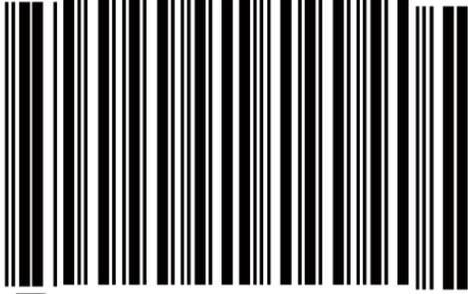


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THINKING AFTER . . .
ACTING AGAIN

GOD'S GLOBAL URBAN MISSION IN AN ERA
OF THE AUTONOMOUS SELF AND GLOBALIZATION



Christian Direction
Partners with the Church for the City

God's global urban mission in an era of the autonomous self and globalization

THINKING AFTER...ACTING AGAIN

In 1983, I left a ministry to university students to give direction to the ministry with which I presently am involved in Montréal. It is interesting for me to reflect back on how a relevant theology and missiology of the city evolved through that change. One day, as I was looking out the window from the sixth floor of our office, I asked myself a question that initiated a reflection that continues to this very day. “*I wonder what is being done in my city to reach people who work in the downtown core from Monday at 8 am until Friday at 5 pm.*” Much to my chagrin, I learned that very little was happening. I began to read about ministry with people in the marketplace and saw the relationship to the needs of urban ministry. At that same time, I was reading in Jeremiah. Having been raised in the context of a family that placed a high priority on the Bible and the church, I am not sure how many times I had read that particular book or skimmed this particular chapter. But in that cold winter of 1983, the words of chapter 29:4-7 took on a new meaning. As the LORD God Almighty had called those 10,000 exiles to seek the *shalom* of a foreign city, I began to see that the social and spiritual needs of downtown Montreal could not go by me easily. So began the reflection and the action that have informed life over this period. The context was shaping how I listen to the Bible. I had to join with others to pursue a contextualized action and reflection.

Yet along the way, I learned that this one text would never inform all that is the mission of God in the city. Harvey Conn taught me well (I trust). I remember him saying, “Picking one biblical text to sum up my view of urban ministry is an assignment too awesome and dangerous for me. Too awesome because wherever I turn in my Bible it shouts ‘urban’ to me. Too dangerous because the text I select could leave out a piece of the picture too crucial in another text and distort the whole. We need a hermeneutic serious enough to link Genesis to Revelation in the unending story of Jesus as an urban lover and the church as God’s copycat.” I realized that I needed to keep studying all the texts in the context of God’s global mission!

Many urban church leaders do cultural studies and wrestle with (the sociology of) place. On a different track, others try to get their heads around the worldviews that make up the personality of our cities (sometimes referred to as a *horizon or a space*). We need to help urban ministry practitioners put these two approaches together so that in examining the city as a place, we are also learning to look very closely at the worldviews and the social imaginaries that are reflected in the urban context.¹ *Place is space with historical meanings, different identities, varied societal preoccupations.*²

¹ I am intentionally making the distinction between the theoretical notion of worldviews and the deep ideas that inform life that we call social imaginaries. I am grateful to Charles Taylor for the distinction that I have not always made in my writings. I have tended to fuse the two notions. During the research on this subject, Professor Taylor was generous with his time to dialogue on the issues.

² One of the most recent texts on urban geography that takes these two distinct categories seriously is by A. M. Orum and X. Chen, *The World of Cities: Places in Comparative and Historical Perspective*. (Oxford:

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the mission of God in our city/regions in an era of two realities: hyper-individuality and globalization. These are two unquestionable dimensions of the emerging social imaginary of city dwellers. The article is divided into four sections. We will begin the article with two conversation partners that will allow us to understand how to wrestle with the issues. Second, we will define some key terms. The third section will examine God as a missionary God – taking root in Karl Barth’s mission theology from the Church Dogmatics. We will conclude in the fourth section with some practical notions that congregations can pursue as an copycat of God’s global urban mission.

Two conversation partners worth listening to

The astute reader will see in the title of this article two infamous phrases from two of the world’s great thinkers of the 20th and 21st century. In an article he penned in response to a German atheist, Karl Barth entitled the piece, “To think is to think after”. This is foundational for Barth who grounded his theology in the objectively real, self-speaking God in revelation. “Thinking after” draws attention to the motifs of actualism (Barth speaks of God in terms of occurrence, events, history and acts rather than in propositions or static categories), particularism (Barth took his bearings from the specifics of the biblical witness, especially the narrative portions) and objectivism (He insists that knowing God as confessed by faith is objective – it lies in God not in human subjectivity). “*Thinking after*” implies that our knowledge of God is “...not a beginning which we can make *with Him*”. It can only be the response after He takes the initiative *with us*. (CD.II/1, 190)

“*Acting again*” draws our attention to the point Barth never tired of repeating that *God’s being is always a being in action*. His eternal being can be understood as He acted for and among us in history, most particularly in Jesus Christ, God’s definitive, final and binding act of self-disclosure.³ Barth observed, “We have represented the existence of Jesus Christ as His being in His act.” (CD. IV/2, 105)

But the reader will also notice the term for which Charles Taylor is well known – *the autonomous self*. At times, Taylor refers to this as *expressive individualism, self-sufficing*

Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For these authors *place* is the specific locations in space that provide an anchor and meaning to who we are. (See pages 1, 15, 140 and 168) Our sense of place is rooted in individual identity, community, history and a sense of comfort (11-19). *Space*, on the other hand, is a medium independent of our existence in which objects, ideas and other human persons exist behaving according to the basic laws of nature and thought (see pages 15, 140 and 160-170).

³ I am deeply grateful for the time spent at Princeton Theological Seminary in The Karl Barth Centre to do this research. Professors Darrell Guder and Georges Hunsinger were extremely helpful. Cliff Anderson at the centre helped me access all the material I needed. I also want to thank John Vissers for his encouragement in this research. He was the one who first encouraged me to explore this issue in Karl Barth.

individualism or in terms of *exclusive humanism and the buffered-self*.⁴ Today, there is a near categorical rejection of any source external to the individual to serve a basis for ethics. This culture of authenticity⁵ is “...the understanding of life....that each of us has [for] realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live one’s own way, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority.”⁶

So how are we to “*think after*” in an era marked by secularity and this pervasive hyper-individuality? Or what is often referred to as the privitisation of beliefs? In large part this means a rigorous definition of terms so we do not simply repeat what has been said over the past 50 years. I am intentionally using Taylor’s word, *secularity*, as he is one of the conversation partners in this paper. Secularity in counter distinction to secularism or secularization refers to the conditions of beliefs or **the shift in our understanding on which our society is grounded**. “The great invention of the West was that of an immanent order in Nature, whose working could be systematically explained on its own terms, leaving open to the question whether the whole order had a deeper significance and whether if it did, we should infer a transcendent Creator beyond it.”⁷ This becomes for Taylor, the immanent frame. “...the life of the buffered individual, instrumentally effective in secular time, created the practical context within which self-sufficiency of this immanent realm could become a matter of experience... we come to understand our lives as taking place with a self-sufficient immanent order...(that) can slough off the transcendent.”⁸

But does this shift necessarily give rise to hyper-individuality? Taylor seems to think so and he dedicates 776 pages in *A Secular Age* to describe this shift! He summarizes it this way, “...one could offer this one-line description of the difference between earlier times and the secular age: a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls within the range of an imaginable life for masses of people. This is the crucial link between secularity and a self-sufficing humanism.”⁹

However, it would be important to underscore that this does not mean that religion by any stretch of the imagination is in retreat in public life or that there is a decline in belief and

⁴ Taylor articulates this in his book, *Sources of the Self*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989). I am choosing to use the notion of “hyper-individuality” in this article. Margaret Somerville likes to use the notion of “intense individualism”.

⁵ In his most recent book, *A Secular Age* (Boston: Belknap Press, 2007) Taylor unpacks this idea in chapter 13. He explores this issue at length in his Massey Lectures, published subsequently in *The Malaise of Modernity*, (Toronto: Anansi, 1991).

⁶ *A Secular Age*, 475.

⁷ *Ibid*, 15.

⁸ *Ibid*, 543.

⁹ *Ibid*, 19-20.

practice - a sort of individualized religion, if you will, as a result. All social science surveys illustrate the opposite. My working premise is that (post) Christendom urban cultures produce a separation between the private and public spheres of life and therefore focus on the personal dimensions as the arena for the development of individual freedom and fulfillment. The Church buys into this and further marginalizes the social significance of faith in the city.

Yet to what extent are “secularity and a self-sufficing humanism” an evidence of what we call the public/private divide or the privitisation of the social significance of faith? What is the relationship to the globalizing tendencies in our post Christendom city/regions?

Terms worth clarifying

Urbanism is commonly understood as the philosophy of how a city culture affects the behavior on the greater population of the nation and the world. It is closely linked with globalization and the forces that are at work in the democratization of information, the expansion of global capitalism and the extension of homogeneous expressions of culture and styles. Roland Robertson understands globalization as the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. It is a multidimensional set of processes that is transforming our present social contexts, is weakening national conditions and is experienced in advances in communication technologies, neoliberal economic capitalism, realignments in political movements and dramatic cultural shifts. Robert Schreiter states that these developments represent the extension of the effects of modernity to the entire world and the compression of time and space, all occurring at the same time.¹⁰ For reasons that defy logic, metropolitan areas continue to be home to the emerging informational technologies. I say this because there is no logical reason, in the age of digitization, high-speed Internet and 24-hour investment, why large cities need to be home to the sector. One can just as easily “practice globalization” from Chibougamau, Quebec as from the new technopole that is literally in downtown Montréal and the world center for aerospace, pharmaceutical, telecommunications research and development and cinematic animation. Now the compression is truly urban. Admittedly, there is no “meta-theory” that helps us to explain globalization and urbanization.

Max Stackhouse, however, helps us to grasp the complexities of this compression by showing how globality manifests itself in different domains of social life. These spheres are the channels for the moral and spiritual life which drive the structures of human life in all societies. One finds certain specific “channels” all the time. When one thinks about the city in a functional manner rather than a geographical one, these functions include:

¹⁰ There is an abundant literature of this subject. The author would refer the reader to Roland Robertson, “*Globalization and the Future of ‘Traditional Religion’*” in *God and Globalization*, edited by Max Stackhouse and Peter Paris. (London: T & T Clark, 2000) 53-68. Also, Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Globalization and Contextuality*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997). Charles Taylor, “*Defining Globalization*” in *The Gospel and the Urban World*, 5th edition. Edited by Glenn Smith (Montréal: Christian Direction, 2007) II. 9-15.

the demographic, social, cultural, economic and technological including the media and the political. The compression and intensification is all-pervasive in our cities.

This emerging social condition, coupled with secularity is a perfect context to understand the public/private distinction that is central to this chapter. Jeff Weintraub develops a fine typology to help us weave through this issue, explaining four ways in which this distinction is often used.¹¹ First, in the classic Roman distinction, there is the *res publica* or the domain of citizenship governed by the sovereign state. This is public life. Second, it is used in making a distinction between public administration and the market economy of private enterprise sometimes referred to as the second sphere. Third, a distinction is made between the private domain of the family and the larger economic and political “public” orders. These aspects of the distinction are not under consideration in this chapter. However, there is a fourth way to understand the public/private distinction. There is the fluid, “public” realm of social life and the cultural ways that we sustain it. We talk here of public space. This sociability is the realm most under pressure with hyper-individuality in the globalized city. With the compression of time and space, the immanent world dominates. We control everything on our own. There is little sense of the transcendence in daily life. The lives of human beings in cities are increasing split between an intimate and a public sphere, between public and secret behaviors.

These realms have existed for decades. Personal, intimate, intense life was lived out in the family, with friends and a primary group. Public space in the boulevards, the gardens, the squares and festivals provided the place for strangers to meet. Increasingly, this public sociability has suffered decline and friendship and the family (in particular) cannot bear the weight of emotional expectations.¹²

The consequences of the decline of sociability also affect the very nature of our urban understanding. John Mercer has illustrated at length the fundamental differences in Canadian and American cities on a private – public (city) continuum.¹³ Whereas public cities prioritise the collectivity, the common good, belief and trust in government and active urban planning, private cities look to autonomy in municipal affairs, special

¹¹ See his chapter, *The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction* in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, edited by Jeff Weintraub and Kristan Kamur (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1997)

¹² The most significant contribution to this thinking is Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978). I am writing this article in the autumn of 2009 during the second phase of the H1N1 pandemic. It represents an interesting yet frightening case study about what the globalisation of information looks like when people need to make a “health” choice. In this age of hyper-individuality where the citizen is king and with access to all sorts of information – regardless of its scientific validity, the individual chooses what s/he wants. In Québec, as of this writing, 67% of the respondents were not going to get vaccinated.

¹³ Goldberg and Mercer initially articulated this thesis in *The Myth of the North American City* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986). Mercer pursued it further in *The Canadian City in Continental Context*, in *Canadian Cities in Transition*, 3e edition, edited by Trudi Bunting and Pierre Fortin. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006.) 24-39.

purpose districts, individual rights and extensive use of user fees. It is not merely a question of government intervention, regardless of the level of intervention. The continuum reflects the result of the nature of the intervention. Sam Bas Warner did the classical work on the issues in his historical study of Philadelphia.¹⁴ However, over the course of the past 20 years, the city I live in, Montréal, is increasingly becoming a “private city” as evidenced by the significant percentage of people who live alone – now close to 40% of the population on the island of Montréal.¹⁵ This movement to a private city will only be accentuated in the days ahead. With the monumental infrastructure challenges that cities like Montréal face, the polarized social landscape rooted in educational and economical polarities and the marginalization of institutional life this privatisation will only get larger.

God as the Trinitarian missionary God in the era of “private faith”

Our other conversation partner, Karl Barth looks in the same direction as Charles Taylor. Throughout Church Dogmatics, he addresses a keen concern; what he calls “private faith.” A systematic perusal of the four volumes leads to a clear understanding of Barth’s preoccupation.

Barth’s view of public life sets the stage which he examines through the lens of bureaucracy.

“Bureaucracy is the form in which man participates with his fellows when this first step into mutual openness is not taken, and not taken because duality is evaded for the sake of the simplicity of a general consideration and a general programme. Bureaucracy is the encounter of the blind with those whom they treat as blind... Many a man unwittingly sits and acts all his life in a private bureau from which he considers how to treat and dismiss men according to his private plans, and in the process he may never see the real men and always be invisible to them.”¹⁶

In his description of the three-fold form of the Word of God, he sees the liberalizing tendencies of 19th century theology in these terms. This theology,

“...is the knowledge, faith, sanctification and blessedness of the individual. But this means that the unity of revelation and Scripture, however stiff the objectivity in which it is arrayed, takes on more and more the aspect, not of God's dealings with His Church, but rather of a private divine institution for so many private

¹⁴ Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968) Eric Jacobsen uses similar nomenclature in his interesting text, *Sidewalks in the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Bravos Press, 2003.) 49-56 and 157-159. However, it applies the idea primarily to the Church.

¹⁵ Annick Germain and Damaris Rose, *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*. (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2000) 193-197.

¹⁶ CD. III/2, 252.

persons, preaching and the sacraments being adequate instruments of this as the so-called *media salutis*...”¹⁷

In our separateness from the triune God, Barth writes about us as neighbours:

“... [my neighbour] tells me what I am and where I belong by what he himself is. He calls me to order by calling me into line, and in the first instance into line with himself. He tells me that I am such a one as himself. Therefore at any rate in personal relation to himself, he takes me right out of the private existence which I perhaps thought I could achieve for myself. He shows me that there is a fellowship of sin and misery: a place where it is concretely true between us men that we cannot accuse each other; that we cannot claim any advantages, any superiority or superior position; that we all have to proclaim our common bankruptcy....”

He continues in the same paragraph,

“But this result of his meeting with the neighbour will inevitably have the consequence that he knows himself to be summoned afresh to the love of God, the God who first loved him in his sin and his misery. The encounter has certainly done him the service of pointing him afresh to the grace of God by reminding him of his lostness...For him, the child of God, the dissolution of his private existence by the known solidarity of need cannot be reversed.”¹⁸

It is for this reason, Barth adds, “They cannot be monads or private disciples operating in their own strength. They are always linked in a common and therefore a mutual responsibility accepted and borne together.”¹⁹ In the same section he adds, “A private monadic faith is not the Christian faith.”²⁰

These comments raise the more fundamental issue of how does one do mission in a world of hyper-individual, self-sufficing, private existence which is so contrary to the biblical faith Barth affirms. Traditionally we teach students to wrestle with the any issue of mission this way, “*Do we serve God on behalf of the world or do we serve the world on behalf of God?*” All previous discussions of the mission of God illustrate two competing notions of missionary actions. Is the ordering God-church-world? (i.e. “Do we serve God on behalf of the world) or God-world-church? (i.e. do we serve the world on behalf of God?”)

¹⁷ CD. I/1, 124.

¹⁸ CD. I/2, 436-437.

¹⁹ CD. IV/3.2, 683.

²⁰ CD.IV/1, 678.

As Barth himself pointed out, the witness of God in general is a problem of God.²¹ As the previous formulations imply, a supposed breach exists between God's being and God's acting. But as John Flett clearly illustrates, only as God bridges the gap between himself and the world is the church able to live out her connection with the world.²²

Since the middle of the 20th century, the Church is pursuing missiology through the lens of this *mission of God*. Although Barth never uses the notion of *missio Dei*, it is possible to construct a missional theology that addresses the themes of this article from his writings. He saw it necessary to emphasize the *action of God* in contrast to the human-centered focus of the liberal theology of his day.

Missio Dei establishes the priority of God's activity in terms of mission and characterizes God as himself being a missionary God. In this case mission cannot be conceived of primarily or even essentially as an activity or program of the Church but must be rooted in God.

We need a four-fold understanding. It is rooted in the triune God's undivided "being in action" and a Trinitarian understanding of the mission of God. These two are coupled with the corollaries of a theology of the church's "being in action" (which does not separate God's mission from the church's existence and purpose) and the individual's "being in action" (with an undivided attention to prayer and the active life). This is the framework to address the privatisation that dominates so much of faith and practice. An intentional, missiological living theology of the triune God is the way forward. Because of the history of partnership that marks God's history, the (supposed) breach between who God is in his being and who he is in creating and reconciling is bridged in God himself. It is essential and proper that He reveal himself. It all takes place in God who is, in his being, missionary! We learn all this ultimately in God's witness in Christ. One aspect of overcoming the notion of privatization is first locating the agents within this reconciling community, and then speaking of the individual agent. Located in this way, it should be clear that the individual does not refer to an autonomous agent, but one within a community of fellow followers of Jesus.

²¹ CD. IV/2, 344. "...when in the Holy Spirit He intervenes with the solution and answer for the problem of these antitheses before and in which we also stand. He knew this problem long before we did, before we ever were and before the world was. For He knew Himself from all eternity, the Father the Son, and the Son the Father. And we must not try to know it in any other way than as a spiritual problem, characterised as the problem of God Himself by its answering and solution in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. A problem of God Himself?"

²² One of the delights of this research was meeting John Flett in Korea and dialoguing with him on his proposals articulated in his thesis. *God is a Missionary God: Missio Dei, Karl Barth and the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, September, 2007: publication by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing forthcoming. The encounter in Seoul is another story in and of itself but evidence of God's providence!

In his tremendous love for the created order, God engages in the mission of salvation and reconciliation for the whole order through the Father's sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through this missionary activity of the triune God, the Church is formed, a community who is called in turn to participate in the mission of God, to reach out with the salvation and redemption God has initiated and is pursuing in the world. The Church now lives in a doxological correspondence to the triune God. His life is relational and his community now situated in his person is to be a finite copycat, an echo if you will, which embodies God's living being.

This hermeneutical approach to the *missio Dei* or *mission of God* in city/regions reaffirms "the scandal of particularity." Urban missiology is rooted in the stories of cities in the Bible and especially of the Good News of Jesus' incarnation and inauguration of his reign through his death on the cross. There has been a tendency to question the uniqueness of God's participation with creation through the history of Israel and in the person of Jesus Christ. Instead the concept of *mission* has been broadened almost to the point that the Church is stripped of any responsibility for proclamation and service - the Church is excluded from mission. This exclusion of the Church results in an argument that God is "working out His purposes in the midst of the world and its historical processes." It is simply the Church's responsibility to serve *missio Dei* by pointing to God at work in world history and name Him there. In order to avoid the severing of the *missio Dei* concept from the triune God and in an attempt to hold together the whole mission of God for the whole city, it is important to hold the universal concept of the *missio Dei* together with the particular history of God's revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ and read the story in our own unique urban contexts.

The way forward – "acting again"

As the church understands that the mission of God is rooted in the undivided being and act of God, this requires an ecclesiology which will not separate God's mission from the Church's existence and purpose. This is because of the community of Jesus followers' participation in the mission of the indivisible God.²³ But the challenges are real – can we "act afresh" in this era? Hyper-individuality, the immanent frame and the evacuation of the transcendent in the pursuit of "realising one's potential in life" present huge challenges for local congregations that want to pursue the mission of God in their communities. As I said earlier, this does not at all give credence to the traditional view of secularization which sees a decline of religion in the city because of urbanization. Rather, as we saw, it has totally shifted our understanding of how our society is grounded. To their own peril, congregations pay far too little attention to these issues.

Once again, Barth's missional theology provides a framework for reflection and action for the church. "It is the Church of Jesus Christ as this missionary Church which is sent out into the world or not at all."²⁴

²³ The reader will see my debt of gratitude to Darrell Guder's thinking and writings on this theme.

²⁴ CD. IV/4, 199-200. See also CD. IV/3.2, 344 and CD. IV/3.2, 647-8.

In conclusion, let me propose a four-fold agenda for urban churches.

1. The local congregation as the entity that interprets the triune God to the neighbourhood

As communities of followers of Jesus in our neighbourhoods, we are the structure of believability that brings meaning to the message of the God of Jesus Christ. Our common life together, incarnating shalom, will be a huge “No” to the perils of selfish individualism and a “Yes” to communities that are seeking public space that brings meaning to life in the face of pervasive evil and suffering.

A necessary place for congregations to play a role is in the pluralities of our cities. My city and the province I live in find themselves in a long, drawn out debate over how to reasonably accommodate cultural and religious differences in our common public culture. How can churches, in the particularity of their own beliefs and practices based on the Word of God, contribute publicly to such a conversation?

In our neighbourhoods, congregations can be voices to challenge the myth of neutrality on these themes. We need a great deal of discussion on these issues in our cities to hear and understand one another. As an entity that embodies the triune God, we can create space for all to speak and to live their worldviews. We need to be places where differences are celebrated. We must affirm the commitment to the liberty of conscience, not just the liberty of religion. Finally, we need to describe concretely what a common life together in our neighbourhoods looks like.²⁵ This describes our affirmation of the equality of all persons.

2. Bearing witness to the God of Jesus Christ and all his teachings

As we saw, witness to Jesus and mission are the essence of our vocation. In the present context, moving our discourse from offering people a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (all too often understood as a private relationship) to a lifestyle that incarnates the Good News in all that it encompasses should hardly sound radical. But the paucity of fresh reflections on the subject of Christian witness leads me to believe that this must be part of the four-fold agenda.

In our urban communities, sustainable development provides the framework to reflect and act again with integrity in our neighbourhoods. Community development is journeying in community to express aspirations, discover assets,

²⁵ For a further description of this issue see my article, *Les Protestants au Québec à l'ère d'accommodement raisonnable* in *L'accommodement et la diversité religieuse à l'école publique*, éditeurs, McAndrew, Milot, Imbeault et Eid. (Montréal: Fides, 2008) 195-211. Also see the Québec government report, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation* written by Gérald Bouchard and Charles Taylor.

confront limitations and generate solutions for peace and well-being in homes and the neighbourhood.²⁶

A fundamental question we will need to examine at every juncture of community development is how poverty in cities affects worldview and how worldviews can transform poverty. Essentially, poverty is about relationships. It is not just about economics. Poverty is a broad concept including economic, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual realities. It is often intergenerational. It affects peoples' identity (social exclusion, absence of harmony in life and well-being) and their vocation (deprivation at every level of life including one's ability to participate in the welfare of the community). But as Jayakumar Christian points out, the causes of poverty can be traced to "*inadequacies in the worldview*".²⁷ These inadequacies are in actual fact a web of lies beyond the mere cognitive level of deception. As Christian points out, this intricate web leads people to believe that their poverty or social status is somehow divinely sanctioned or a factor of fate. People sense that they have no choices. A worldview is a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty.

3. Pursuing spiritual formation, Church education and discipleship

Barth reminds us that the Christian calling as disciples "...is not to be understood as being from the outset a kind of private route to their own salvation and blessedness." Each Christian is called to gather others to Christ.²⁸

Being a follower or disciple of Jesus Christ in the New Testament means living fully in the world in union with Jesus Christ and his people and growing in conformity to his person. We could say that it is a grateful and heartfelt *yes* to God expressed both in act and attitude — the follower of Jesus lives in obedience and imitation of Jesus Christ and walks in the disciplined and maturing pattern of love for God by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.

Spirituality, then, is the process of developing and experiencing a deep relationship with God. It also deals with how Christians live their faith in the world. Spirituality cannot be divorced from the struggle for justice and care for

²⁶ For an in-depth examination of sustainable urban community development see my article :

www.direction.ca/images/stories/documents/community%20development%20in%20large%20canadian%20cities.pdf

²⁷ Jayakumar Christian. *Powerless of the Poor: Towards an Alternative Kingdom of God Based on the Paradigm of Response*. PhD thesis. Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena Calif., page 340.

²⁸ CD. IV/4.1, 130. Barth compliments this thought. He writes, "Certainly the question of the subjective apprehension of atonement by the individual man is absolutely indispensable."

the poor and the oppressed. Christians' interest in the subject of spirituality is not new, although there has been a renewed awareness in the past several years.

Curiously, the word *spirituality* in theological dictionaries is relatively recent, but the meaning of the term should not be separated from previous expressions, such as holiness, godliness, walking with God, or discipleship. All of these words emphasize a formal commitment to being alive and very connected with God and fellow followers of Jesus through a deepening relationship with Christ. It implies a life of personal obedience to the word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can say that spirituality is our self-transcendent capacity as human beings to participate together in God's creative and redemptive activity.

Spiritual formation focuses our attention on the dynamics of how the Holy Spirit works in us to shape us into the image of God in Jesus Christ in every area of life. We pursue spiritual formation because of God's love for us and the consequences of evil in the world since the fall. It is the Trinitarian work of the Godhead to stimulate followers of Jesus in their individual lives and in the local community of faith to participate in God's project for human history through the ways and means revealed in Scripture. But spiritual formation is also about those spiritual exercises that the follower of Jesus pursues under the guidance of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit so as to more readily receive God's transforming grace.

4. Preaching and teaching to bring together heart and head

The first three aspects of our agenda need to be underscored in the public preaching and teaching in the church and in our theological education. Perhaps no area of the church's work needs more attention right now than this one. To address hyper-individuality, we need to address those features of secularity and globality that "bring doom to the workaday world" and a "shutting out" of the mystery of the transcendence. We have bought into the assumptions of the Age of Reason so thoroughly that we actually teach an 'excarnational faith' "...the steady disembodiment of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms and lies more and more 'in the head'."²⁹

The public proclamation of the Scriptures and theological education in the church and in academia will invite learners to a balanced spiritual life of prayer and the active life, expressed in a corporate commitment to full participation in the mission of God in the variety of our urban contexts.

²⁹ Taylor, 771. See also footnote 68 on page 850.



Dr. Glenn Smith is married to Sandra (1976) and together they have three daughters, Jenna (né 1981), Julia (né 1984) and Christa (né 1986). Glenn did his graduate studies in Patristics at the Université d'Ottawa and his doctoral thesis in contextual theology at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. He received an honorary doctorate from the Union des universités privées d'Haïti for his contribution to urban theological practice in that country.

He has been the Executive Director of Christian Direction in Montreal since 1983 - a multi-faceted ministry committed to the spiritual transformation by Jesus Christ of all of life in the cities of the Francophone world. He is a professor of urban theology and missiology at the Institut de théologie pour la francophonie and at the Université chrétienne du Nord d'Haïti. He is a sessional lecturer at McGill University. He also is a professor at Bakke Graduate University. He and his family have been involved in pastoral ministry with an Anabaptist Francophone congregation in Montreal, Quebec for 20 years.

While directing the ministry of Christian Direction, Glenn Smith was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities from 1986 to 1990 and its President from 1990-1992. He was a member of the Protestant Committee of le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (Superior Council of Education) from 1986-1991 and its President during the two school years of 1992 and 1993. He was the President of the Protestant Partnership on Education from 1993 to 2004. From 1991-2005, he was a member of the Board of Directors of World Vision Canada. He is on the Board of IVCF: Canada. He chairs, Urbanus, an international partnership committed to providing reflective, practical and contextual education for urban practitioners in large French speaking cities. He is the senior associate for urban mission for the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation.

He is co-author of three books: *Espoir pour la ville; Dieu dans la cité, Éduquer les enfants: une vision protestante de l'éducation* and *L'histoire du protestantisme au Québec depuis 1960* and the editor of *The Gospel and Urbanization*, a 250 page reader that is into its 5th edition in French and English on urban ministry. He also wrote the book, *Following Jesus: God invites us to transformative discipleship*, which was published in English, French and Spanish. He edited, *Towards the transformation of our city/regions* in the LCWE Occasional papers series. His forth-coming book is entitled, *City Air Makes You Free: Transforming the city through a fresh, biblical hermeneutic*. He is the author of numerous articles on urban mission.