Urban Ministry Reconsidered

Contexts and Approaches

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Introduction

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"Urban ministry" has become well-established terminology within the theological lexicon, although there is a wide range of thinking about its meaning. This is not surprising, given there is no uniform understanding of what is meant by "urban" or "ministry." As outlined below, "urban" has acquired both empirically and socially descriptive usages, referring to forms of collective living where certain numerical thresholds, structural configurations, or cultural patterns obtain. Whether numerically small or large, key characteristics of urban populations have included a spatial concentration; an economic, political, and cultural variegation; and a developmental intensity and dynamism resulting from the interactions between diverse individuals, institutions, and ideas.

A growing proportion of the global population resides in urban spaces, even as the intensity and dynamism characteristic of those spaces has been multiplied by technologies that have facilitated vastly increased communications, information gathering, and social intersectionality. Given the intensifying nature of these urban dynamics, Christian ministries have struggled to account for urbanization's growing force, complexities, and reach—and to formulate theologically and sociologically appropriate responses. Rapidly evolving urban circumstances have fueled Christian efforts, for example, to reassess and reenvision ministry forms and functions; reaffirm and reinvigorate spiritual grounding in response to social forces; and reconsider and reformulate moral, ethical, and theological foundations of community life.

Nevertheless, in doing so, ministry approaches have varied in the extent to which urban social-contextual factors have been accounted for explicitly and systematically within their ministry analysis and practice—for

instance, accounting for the complex ways personal lifestyles, livelihoods, worldviews, and behaviors may be influenced by compound urban structural and group dynamics. Ministry approaches that are insufficiently alert to contextual factors risk missing significant life-shaping details and particulars of the persons toward whom ministries are directed, sometimes remaining abstracted altogether from the daily realities of those persons' lives. The explorations and analysis of urban ministry in this volume are rooted in both theological and sociological perspectives and presuppositions that speak into these conceptual gaps.

The majority of the essays by the contributors to this volume focus on ministry contexts within the United States, but more than a third address ministry contexts in the Global South or Europe. Moreover, many of the essays in the volume make clear that urban ministries within each of these regions of the world encounter similarly global and globalizing populations, institutional influences, and socializing forces.

The case studies in this volume, then, provide windows into the dynamic process of ministry responses to newly forming contexts of urban social and religious life, drawing attention to circumstances and factors that make these contexts potentially unique in both the challenges and opportunities they present for Christian ministry.

Urban Framings

Urban has been defined by several factors, including by quantitative metrics, structural dynamics, and social cultures. Where urban has been defined along numerical lines, for example, the measurements have often differed from one nation to another. In the United States, the technical standard for an urban context is "an agglomeration of 2,500 or more inhabitants, generally living in densities of 1,000 or more per square mile." The technical standard in France is any context with 2,000 or more persons "living in contiguous houses or with not more than 200 metres between houses." Botswana and Zambia define urban as "localities of 5,000 or more inhabitants, the majority of whom all depend upon non-agricultural activities."[1] As this latter definition suggests, an urban designation may result from numerical formulas but also from the social and structural activities that have drawn persons into a collective existence—including production sectors that have served as organizing principles for

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1. These definitions are charted in the *Demographic Yearbook*, 2005, table 6, http://unstats .un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/Defintion_of%20Urban.pdf.

urban formation, as in the case of Detroit's auto industry, Johannesburg's mining industry, or the high-finance industries of London or New York.

These large cities epitomize key structural dimensions of urban formation, but such cities (along with much smaller contexts) also are embodiments of demographic, sociocultural, and institutional diversities characteristic more widely of urban spaces. When urban is defined (as one astute observer has) as "density with diversity," urban can be applied to many contexts—not only to New York and Johannesburg, but also to New York's Pleasantville suburb (population 7,055, population density 3,856 people/sq. mile) or Johannesburg's Rosebank suburb (population 10,000, population density 3,400 people/sq. mile).[2] In addition, the diversity of the contexts is evident from the fact that both of these suburbs are largely affluent while also possessing a mixture of economic classes, races, and ethnicities. Many contexts not immediately perceived as "urban," therefore, could accurately be accorded that designation.

Moreover, when measured by a standard of "density with diversity," urbanization has increased dramatically within the United States and elsewhere. Within the last two centuries, the percentage of the world's population living in urban areas has grown from 3 percent in 1800, to 14 percent in 1900, to 50 percent in 2008—with projections of reaching 70 percent by 2050. Increasingly, urban residents have been located in very large cities, with cities of one million or more residents multiplying from 12 in 1900, to 83 in 1950, to more than 400 in 2008—including 19 cities with 10 million or more inhabitants.[3] But as the Population Reference Bureau points out, "the bulk of urban population growth is likely to occur in smaller cities and towns of less than 500,000"—with the largest increases in urbanization taking place in Africa and Asia, which by 2030 will have cities accounting for "almost seven in every 10 urban inhabitants globally."[4] Therefore, urban residents globally will be increasingly people of color, not only in Africa and Asia, but throughout the Americas and in Europe. By 2030, the percentage of urban residents will reach 87 percent in North America, 84 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 78 percent in Europe.[5]

2. Dhati Lewis, Quoted in D. A. Horton, "What 'Urban' Means Today," ReachLife Ministries, http://www.reachlife.org/uncategorized/what-urban-means-today/.

3. Population Reference Bureau, "Human Population: Urbanization," http://www.prb.org/Publications/Lesson-Plans/HumanPopulation/Urbanization.aspx.

4. Population Reference Bureau, "World Population Highlights 2007: Urbanization," http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2007/623Urbanization.aspx.

5. Ibid.

Among the factors contributing to urban population diversity and growth have been population shifts within nations, but also between nations. In the United States, net outmigration from rural areas was roughly 75,000 persons per year between 2010 and 2013 and twice that amount during the mid-1980s.[6] In Europe, the outmigration from rural to urban areas has been so pronounced during the last century that it has been described as a "depopulation" of rural areas.[7] Sub-Saharan Africa has had the highest rate of urbanization in the world since the mid-twentieth century, ranging between 3 and 5 percent per year (or roughly twice the world average)—with a substantial amount of this urban growth resulting from rural to urban migration.[8]

Immigration from other countries also accounts for a significant amount of urban population growth, especially in the United States and Europe. Legal immigration to the United States has expanded from approximately 250,000 per year in 1950 to about 1 million per year in 2013, with 41.3 million immigrants residing legally in the United States in 2013.[9] Another 11.5 million immigrants are estimated to be residing within the United States illegally, roughly two-thirds of whom have come from Mexico. European nations received 3.6 million legal immigrants in 2015, the majority of whom were migrating from one European country to another.[10] Another 547,000 persons were present in European nations illegally in 2014, with an additional 464,000 migrants crossing into Europe by sea during the first nine months of 2015 (less than half of whom were granted legal asylum).[11] Immigration within

6. U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Rural America at a Glance: 2014 Edition," Washington: Department of Agriculture, 3–4, https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/42896/49474_eb26.pdf?v=42401.

7. Simon Tisdale, "Silent Blight in a Countryside of Empty Homes and Shut Shops," *The Guardian*, August 22, 2015.

8. Cecelia Tacoli et al., "World Migrations Report 2015: Urbanization, Rural-Urban Migration and Urban Poverty," London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 2015: 6, https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/MPR/WMR-2015-Background-Paper-CTacoli-GMcGranahan-DSatterthwaite.pdf.

9. Migration Policy Institute, "Legal Immigration to the United States, 1820-Present," http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/Annual-Number-of-US-Legal-Permanent-Residents.

10. Eurostat, "Immigration by Citizenship," 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Immigration_by_citizenship,_2013_YB15.png.

11. See Giulio Sabbati and Eva-Maria Poptcheva, "Irregular Immigration in the EU: Facts and Figures," European Parliamentary Research Service, April 27, 2015, http://epthinktank.eu/2015/04/27/irregular-immigration-in-the-eu-facts-and-figures/; Jeanne Park, "Europe's Migration Crisis," Council on Foreign Relations, September 23, 2015, http://www.cfr.org/migration/europes-migration-crisis/p32874; and BBC News, "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts," March 4, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911.

Sub-Saharan African countries has had a largely involuntary quality as well, with this region hosting about 2.6 million refugees in 2012, mostly in urban areas. South Africa, for example, was host to 153,500 refugees in 2012, about 82,000 of whom were asylum seekers (making South Africa the country receiving the greatest number of asylum seekers in the world at the time). It is also estimated that the number of illegal immigrants in South Africa has swerved between 3 and 8 million over the last two decades.

Urban spaces, therefore, are the primary connection points for a world that is "flattening" (to borrow a term from Thomas Friedman).[12] In this sense at least, they are places that facilitate a kind of demographic, cultural, and institutional integration across geographic boundaries, though not necessarily a smoothing out of the peaks and chasms of structural inequality that divide populations within and between urban spaces. Although urban contexts are where modes of economic growth and development are most concentrated and where many poor persons consequently can graduate out of poverty, urban contexts are also places where poverty is expanding and where disparities between richer and poorer populations are widening.

For example, in developing nations, the share of poverty located within urban areas grew from 17 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2010.[13] In European nations, the percentage of persons at risk of poverty or exclusion was 24 percent overall in 2014, with persons in cities more at risk than persons in rural areas (as least within western European nations).[14] In the United States, though the percentage of the overall population living below the poverty line decreased from 22 percent in 1960 to 14 percent in 2013, the percentage of the nation's poor living in the 20 most populous counties (such as Los Angeles, Cook [Chicago], Kings [Brooklyn], Maricopa [Phoenix], et al.) increased from 14 percent to 21 percent.[15] Also, within the United States urban contexts, poverty has become

12. Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005).

13. Lawrence Haddad, "Poverty Is Urbanizing and Needs Different Thinking on Development," Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, October 5, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/oct/05/poverty-urbanising-different-thinking-development.

14. European Urban Knowledge Network, "The Inclusive City: Approaches to Combat Urban Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe," 2014: 12 and 17; http://www.eukn.eu/fileadmin/Files/EUKN_Publications/EUKN_report_InclusiveCity_Final.pdf.

15. Jens M. Krogstad, "How the Geography of U.S. Poverty Has Shifted Since 1960," Pew Research Center, September 10, 2015, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/10/how-the-geography-of-u-s-poverty-has-shifted-since-1960/.

more geographically concentrated, with the share of the poor who live in census tracts where 40 percent or more persons are below the poverty line increasing nationally from 9 percent in 2000 to 12 percent in 2012.[16]

To say that urban contexts are being reconfigured would be an understatement. Rapid and dramatic changes are taking place with respect to urban population demographics, human relations, and structural and technological connections—each with implications for individual and collective human prospects that are of social and theological significance. These intersections between urban contextual dimensions and their formative and normative impact on individual and collective life are at the heart of the present volume's urban ministry analysis.

The impact of urban expansion and escalation on the social, psychological, and spiritual formation of urban dwellers has been actively debated. On one side there have been those who have drawn attention to ways the mechanistic, materialistic, impersonal qualities of our industrially and commercially centered urban spaces have resulted in various forms of human alienation. Social theorists such as Karl Marx who viewed structural and psychological alienation of workers as symptomatic of modern industrial distortions, political novelists such as Upton Sinclair whose book *The Jungle* exposed inhumane conditions endured by urban laborers in the commercial meatpacking industry, and even contemporary television shows such as *Married with Children* with its parodying of unmeaningful employment, have pointed to a human estrangement from personal labor that leaves persons bereft of fulfillment.[17] Additionally, transcendentalist thinkers from Henry David Thoreau to Theodore Roszak (the former's "Walden Pond" juxtaposed to the latter's urban "wasteland"), and even wilderness retreat organizations such as Outward Bound, have sought to counter a modern materialist assault on human dreams, spirit, and connections to the natural realm.[18]

Similarly, some have connected a systematized urban depersonalization and human indifference to a substantial erosion of community connectedness, social purposefulness, and civic-mindedness. Social theorists from Richard Sennett (who laments the "fall" of public purpose in the

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16. Elizabeth Kneebone, "The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008–2012," Brookings Institution, July 31, 2014, http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/concentrated-poverty#/M10420.

17. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Jungle, 1906).

18. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Las Vegas, NV: Empire Books, 2013); Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

modern metropolis), to Cornel West (who laments the loss of social meaningfulness among urban minority youth), and even cinematic depictions of street life such as *Boys in the Hood* or the South African film *Tsotsi*, all speak to a growing social disaffection on the part of urban dwellers.[19] Others have linked urban social disaffection more closely to urban systemic injustices and inequalities, as identified for example in Barbara Ehrenreich's critical analysis of social policies and business sector practices that trap the working poor in low-paying jobs without supplemental support systems, or Jonathan Kozol's denunciations of under-resourced public school systems that fail to adequately educate urban children and youth, or Michelle Alexander's condemnations of criminal justice approaches that ensure the over-incarceration of the black and brown poor through what are "school to prison pipelines."[20]

In other more explicitly theological readings of urbanization, as in the case of analysis by Robert Linthicum, the despoiling aspects of urban life are not tied necessarily to a jettisoning of spiritual sensibilities but actually to the active presence of a demonic spirituality manifesting in systems of injustice, dehumanization, and moral depravity.[21] Still others within theological circles, such as Francis Schaeffer, have argued that what has been most alarmingly sacrificed within the urbanization process has been theological intentionality itself, replaced by a celebration of human agency and achievement symbolized by urban development that has supplanted human reliance on divine agency and guidance.[22]

In contrast to these unfavorable readings of urbanization, some interpret the urban journey from simpler to more complex, from more religion-centered to more secular, from more anthropocentric to more mechanistic, and even from more consensual to more conflictual, as necessary (or at least unavoidable) dimensions of social progress. Though not minimizing the problematic nature of urban inequalities, injustices, and inhumanities, urbanists Sam Bass Warner and Harvey Cox, for example,

19. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
20. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On Getting By in America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001); Jonathan Kozol, *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).
21. Robert Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991).
22.Francis A Schaeffer, *Death in the City* (Hants, UK: L'Abri Fellowship, 1969).

do not regard quintessential urban features such as individualism as lead-ing necessarily to indifference, nor anonymity necessarily to alienation, nor diversity (whether of thought, values, or lifestyles) necessarily to dis-integration. Rather, urban attenuations of personal and societal norma-tivity are viewed (at least when tracking toward constructive aims and ambitions) as necessary components of independent thought and action upon which a democratic and enterprising culture are premised. Whether the relationship between urban life-worlds and Christian sensibilities are viewed as complementary or in conflict, it is clear that Christianity (in its ever-evolving formal and informal formations) is a factor that must be accounted for within Western and Westernizing urban contexts.

Ministry Framings

Approximately one-third of the world's population identifies as Chris-tian, and the vast majority of that Christianity is channeled through denominational, interdenominational, or congregational institutional frameworks, or through church-related civil society institutions such as schools, hospitals, or social service organizations. Christianity, like much of social life in westernized social contexts, plays out upon a highly insti-tutionalized landscape.

Despite the expanded reach of institutions within societies, scholars from many disciplinary vantage points have documented post-institutional tendencies within contemporary life, noting the loosening grip of insti-tutions ranging from governmental institutions, to civic and educational institutions, to religious institutions.[23] It has been a movement away from form to formlessness, away from permanence to impermanence, away from rootedness to rootlessness. With respect to the black urban poor, this also may be connected to deeper disaffections growing out of longstanding race-based and class-based social antagonisms operative within grossly unequal and highly racialized societies, such as the United States and South Africa.[24] Moreover, ethnicity and national origin serve

23. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univer-sity Press, 1990); David Roozen and James Nieman, eds., *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); John Bibby, *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987): 10–18; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 1996); and Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*.
24. R. Drew Smith, "Black Religious Nationalism and the Politics of Transcendence," *Jour-nal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no. 3 (1998): 533–47; Karin Chubb and Lutz Van Dijk, *Between Anger and Hope: South Africa's Youth and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*

as markers of social difference that may also potentially translate into social marginalization and distance within urban spaces, especially where these are impoverished population groups.

Nevertheless, the declining influence of religious, civic, and communal ideals that has accompanied movements away from societal normativities has been a matter of great consternation within institutional leadership circles—including among urban churches. Many churches within these urbanizing contexts have been reassessing and repositioning their ministries to revitalize their institutional life and their broader ministry influence. Many have engaged with contemporary urban contexts in innovative and relevant ways. Too often, however, ministry initiatives within contemporary urban settings have struggled with urban dynamics and circumstances they find unfamiliar, if not daunting.

Although not solely a result of urbanization, many global North countries have experienced steady and sometimes dramatic declines in formal religious involvement during the past fifty years or more. In the United States, for example, 23 percent of Americans over 18 years of age indicated having no religious affiliation according to a 2015 national survey by the Pew Research Center. This increased from 16 percent in a 2009 Pew survey and 8 percent in a 1990 Pew survey—which means that from 1990 to 2015 the percentage of religiously nonaffiliated Americans has tripled. One implication of these data is that while the vast majority of Americans continue to place importance on matters of faith, a growing number of Americans approach matters of faith informally rather than formally and individually rather than institutionally.[25]

This is especially true among poorer, more socially marginalized populations, who not only may not enjoy the same level of access to formal institutions but also who may regard those institutions as spiritually and culturally restrictive and exclusionary.[26] Either way, declining religious affiliation among the urban poor has become increasingly obvious since the 1960s (as urban poor populations became more geographically concentrated, culturally isolated, and pushed to the margins of social and institutional life). What may also contribute to declining religious

(Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001); Sharlene Swartz et al., "Ikasi Style and the Quiet Violence of Dreams: A Critique of Youth Belonging in Post-Apartheid South Africa," in Sharlene Swartz and Madeleine Arnot, eds., *Youth Citizenship and the Politics of Belonging* (New York: Routledge Press, 2013); and Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
25. Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," May 12, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/.
26. Frances Kunreuther and Patrick Corvington, *Next Shift: Beyond the Nonprofit Leadership Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006).

affiliation on the part of the urban poor is that these populations may be largely transient—driven from place to place through evictions for infractions (such as failure to pay), dislocations resulting from urban development schemes, or migratory pursuits of new opportunities (as in the case of migrants from other locales, or immigrants from other countries). These factors (whether taken separately or together) present significant challenges for ministries seeking to engage contemporary urban contests and challenges.

Structure and Focus of the Volume

A question central to the volume then is what does it mean to minister in urban spaces in ways that are intentionally responsive to ever-changing urban environments, conditions, and contexts? Asked another way, where ministries have been intentionally contextual in their approaches to urban challenges and complexities, how have they interpreted their mandate and framed their responses in these situations? For example, are ministries willing and able to grant their context a careful reading and adjust their ministries in relation to the potential and possibilities this reveals, or do they project or impose their institution-bound subjectivities and norms upon the context? When committed to forming open and fluid relations with their local community, what are the points of commonality and the procedures for relational bridge-building (e.g., do they look to meet the community inside the church walls, cultures, and operations, or outside all of these)? Additionally, are the necessary leaders and training opportunities in place to nurture and facilitate faith perspectives and innovation contributing to more robust and reciprocal church and community relations (e.g., are urban churches equipped for community organizing, policy advocacy, and cultural translation)? The essays in this volume wrestle in various ways with these concerns and considerations.

The volume is divided into four sections: Urban Conceptual Worldviews, Urban Community Formation, Urban Social Policy, and Urban Ministry Adaptations—each of which shed light on changes in urban landscapes and dynamics and on promising urban ministry practices and responses in the face of urban change. Essays in the Urban Conceptual Worldviews section explore transitions from earlier ministry frameworks largely informed by privileged Christian worldviews, to engagement in urban spaces increasingly characterized by a plurality of worldviews more cognizant of contemporary urban struggle and hope.

The Urban Community Formation section examines all too common

patterns of eroded neighborhood economic conditions and social connectedness, the sometimes disruptive and/or enlivening influxes of newcomer populations and resources, and the diminishment of neighborhood "social capital" resulting from social separation and fragmentation in many of these contexts. Essays in this section outline ways congregations and their community-based ministries strengthen and sustain community in the face of countervailing forces.

The Urban Social Policy Section looks similarly at church-related community organizing, social service, and advocacy initiatives, but more in relation to specific urban policy concerns such as economic justice, gun violence, food security, and HIV/AIDS. Authors highlight ways urban churches pursue policy reforms and more effective frameworks to promote human flourishing. Responsiveness to evolving urban contexts and community formations are also the focus of the Urban Ministry Adaptations section, but with essays outlining details of ministry formations, practices, and methods suited to twenty-first-century urban circumstances. These ministry cases (and analysis throughout the volume) provide instructive contrasts to more traditional ministries that have not accounted as effectively for new social, cultural, and religious configurations and realities within urban contexts.

I

Urban Conceptual Worldviews

Urban Conceptualizing in Historical Perspective

Ronald E. Peters

The city, among humankind's oldest social, economic, cultural, and political phenomena with origins dating back to the Paleolithic period, was also seedbed to human religious motivations.[1] In view of the fact twenty-first-century cities are larger than ever before, more numerous in quantity, and account for more than half the world's population, what are the role and function of religious engagement in these contexts?

In examining urban conceptual worldviews that inform twenty-first-century urban ministry approaches, it is helpful, first, to give some attention to the conceptual framework from which urban ministry, as we know it today, has originated. Conventional thought about urban ministry almost exclusively associates its roots with the old social gospel movement in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Scarcely more than a century ago religious narratives engaging urban wealth inequities, oppression, violence, poverty, and survival overwhelmingly were informed by comparatively privileged Christian worldviews. Accordingly, the origins of urban ministry are seen as having been primarily influenced by German idealists in philosophy and its liberal theology, interpreting the gospel primarily in response to social problems associated with industrial capitalism, its growth, and its influence on urbanization.[2] This post-Enlightenment thinking drew heavily

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1. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (Boston: Harcourt, 1961); Cheik Anta Diop, *Pre-Colonial Black Africa* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987); Robert C. Lithicum, *City of God / City of Satan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991); Bernard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

2. Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1991), 4–5; See also Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos Jr., and Peter Kivisto, *Sociology*

on the rise of science along with faith in analysis of social challenges associated with the impact of industrial capitalism, its growth, and impact on urbanization.[3]

The writings of Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Ernst Troeltsch are among those credited with providing critical analyses of the role of religion in society throughout this period. Marx, for example, outraged by the squalid living conditions of the urban poor working in industrial cities, became notable for his dialectical materialism, which interpreted religion as a negative factor in society ("the opium of the people"), contributing to the maintenance of systemic economic and social inequities. By contrast and more widely accepted were interpretations of Christianity's role represented by writers like Durkheim, Weber, and Troeltsch that interpreted religion as a catalyst for positive social functioning.[4]

During this period, the United States was focused on putting the ravages of the Civil War behind it and moved into the new century with unprecedented industrial growth and wealth. With crisp accuracy, J. Philip Wogaman described the era as one of rapid change that revealed critical social problems:

> The Civil War . . . had quickened the pace of the Industrial Revolution in the North, as industries grew up overnight to supply the Union war machine. Unlike the South, which was devastated, the North was stimulated economically. The following years were a

of Religion: Contemporary Developments (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), chaps. 1 and 4.

3. Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos Jr., and Peter Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 4–5.

4. Émile Durkheim saw the role of religion in society, including Christianity, in more positive light than the less complimentary views of Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud. In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 44, Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Max Weber's classic sociological assessment of workings of religion in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* gave new religious blessing to the task of work and the accumulation of wealth: "Low wages fail even from a purely business point of view wherever it is a question of producing goods which require any sort of skilled labor. . . . Labor must, on the contrary, be performed as if it were an absolute end in itself, a calling. But such an attitude is by no means a product of nature. It cannot be evoked by low wages or high ones alone, but can only be the product of a long and arduous process of education" ([Lexington, KY: Renaissance Classics, 2012], 22). In *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, the theologian Ernst Troeltsch sought to relate types of religious experience to the varieties of social teachings with which they might be correlated.

time of rapid expansion: new factories were developed to manufac-
ture new products, railways were built spanning the continent, trade
expanded. Wave after wave of new immigrants came to America to
provide cheap labor. . . . It was a time of growing prosperity for
many, and some became fabulously wealthy. . . . But many people . . .
concentrated in the working-class sections of the industrial cities. . . .
Industrialization meant backbreaking toil, long working hours, child
labor, exploitation of women, adulterated food, periods of unem-
ployment, vulnerability to industrial accidents and disease, little
educational opportunity, inadequate medical attention, and general
impoverishment.[5]

Against this backdrop, one of the preeminent personalities calling
attention to this situation was Walter Rauschenbusch, a son of German
immigrants, the nineteenth-century New York City urban pastor-turned-
seminary professor. With the publication of his *Christianity and the Social
Crisis* in 1907, Rauschenbusch became one of the principal articulators
of the social gospel movement of the early twentieth century. As such,
the motivational approaches of urban ministry were clearly influenced
by liberal theology's socially progressive agenda, which sought to address
these flagrant social injustices in the first half of the twentieth century.

These approaches included individualistic and direct-service elements,
such as soup kitchens and settlement houses like Chicago's famous Hull
House developed by Jane Addams, as well as more macro/systemic
voices like the Congregationalist minister Washington Gladden.[6] As an
example of this more systemic critique of the social injustices of the era,
Gladden's 1886 volume titled *Applied Christianity* decried the widening
chasm between the wealth of employers and their workers:

The hundreds of thousands of unemployed laborers, vainly asking
for work; the rapid increase of pauperism, indicated by the fact that
during the last Winter, in the chief cities of this rich commonwealth,
nearly one tenth of the population sought charitable aid from the
infirmary director or the benevolent societies; the strikes and lock-
outs reported every day in the newspapers . . .[7]

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5. J. Philip Wogaman, *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/
John Knox Press, 1993), 194–95.
6. Ronald E. Peters, *Urban Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 86.
7. Washington Gladden, *Applied Christianity* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1886), 161.

Influential and urbane preachers and academicians of Christian Protestantism including Harry Emerson Fosdick, Henry Sloane Coffin, and George A. Buttrick articulated this social-emphasis agenda.[8]

Additionally, as successive generations of African Americans began to make their way north of the Mason-Dixon line in the United States to escape the ravages of post–Civil War social, political, and economic oppression in the South in search of better economic opportunity and living conditions, black churches in the North also focused on addressing the unabated racial hostilities that continued to define life for them "behind the veil" of race in America.[9] Meanwhile, the fifty-five-year period (1915–1970) of the Great Migration of blacks from southern cities to northern cities began its course.[10] In 1900, 90 percent of all African Americans lived in the South.[11] While racial segregation and circumscribed opportunities also defined northern life, southern blacks nonetheless were drawn to them as the United States became increasingly involved in events leading up to World War I and the supply of European immigrant labor rapidly declined.[12] Cities across the North, including Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Washington were among those that saw substantial increases in the numbers of African Americans between the censuses of 1890 and 1920.

The new arrivals from the South often found themselves the victims of economic and social exploitation and were forced into squalid living conditions. Hostile whites often viewed blacks as intellectually and morally inferior and occasionally resorted to physical violence against the newcomers, whom they saw as competing for their jobs. Urban race riots in cities across America, North and South, erupted during this period in such places as New York City (1901), Springfield, Ohio (1904), Atlanta (1906), and East St. Louis, Illinois (1917).

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8. See stories of the ministries and preaching of some of these leading figures during the early part of the twentieth century: Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Preaching Ministry: Twenty-One Sermons Preached by Harry Emerson Fosdick at the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, 1918–1925* (New York: The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, 2000); for information on the ministries and preaching of Henry Sloane Coffin and George A. Buttrick during their successive pastorates at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, see: http://www.mapc.com/about-mapc/history/.

9. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1903).

10. Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage, 2010).

11. Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 36.

12. Peters, *Urban Ministry*, 97.

The social gospel influences were manifested in ministry approaches of leaders like Charles A. Tindley of Philadelphia (1906, East Calvary United Methodist Church, later renamed Tindley Temple Church), Reverdy Ransom (pastor of Boston's Charles Street A.M.E. and Chicago's Bethel A.M.E. Churches), and Adam Clayton Powell Sr. (pastor of New York City's Abyssinian Baptist Church). The influence of the social gospel thinking and behaviorist agenda of this period clearly was a precursor to foundational paradigms for urban ministry approaches throughout the twentieth century. The conceptual worldviews that shaped ministry in these contexts and spaces overwhelmingly emerged from and engaged an urban arena with the language and values of Christianity.

By the mid-twentieth century, multiracial and multiethnic efforts from a variety of perspectives in ministry emerged, carving out broader religious approaches. Among them were the urban ministry perspectives and work of thought leaders and activists such as Harvey Conn, Manuel Ortiz, John Perkins, David Wilkerson, and Greg Boyle, whose faith-based approaches to remediating social inequities and injustices reflect the changed context of the post–civil rights era.[13] From various perspectives, these representatives engage challenges of poverty, socioeconomic disenfranchisement, the collusion of racial prejudice and profiling, dysfunctional educational systems, and politically defined housing patterns that feed warped policing and criminal adjudication in ways moving beyond racial constrictions of earlier periods. Moreover, they do so in ways that attempt to bridge common mistakes of the period that often established binaries between urban ministry's roots in social justice advocacy (ethical agency) and spiritual considerations (evangelistic emphasis).[14] Still, these perspectives all reflected worldviews largely engaging a social space and context influenced by values articulated from Christianity.

Within the twenty-first-century context, cyber technology has radically transformed global understanding of wealth inequities, violence, poverty, and oppression, yet without significantly engaging these realities helpfully. In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. noted that in spite of

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13. See Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Ronald E. Peters, *Urban Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); John Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993); David Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade, and the Man Who Believed* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014); Celeste Fremon, *Father Greg and the Homeboys: The Extraordinary Journey of Father Boyle and His Work with the Latino Gangs of East L.A.* (New York: Hyperion, 1995).

14. See Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 25–26; and Perkins, *Beyond Charity*.

"technological advancements," society still had not demonstrated the ethical commitment to create a concomitant level of genuine "brother-hood." What is significantly different about this twenty-first-century context is the diminishing influence of Christianity in the urban public square, in all of its global dimensions, spaces, and virtual locales. Increasingly, the public role and function of organized religion within the city are increasingly suspect, increasingly viewed, at best, as cultural residue from past societies that unnecessarily complicates efforts to improve the quality of life going forward.

Without question, the role of religion in American society remains very strong in comparison to other advanced industrial counties, but it has declined significantly over the past decade at rates substantially higher than in prior years.[15] Ministry in urban contexts must necessarily transition from mid-twentieth-century approaches characterized by profound pain, fear, insecurity, and bereft of the ability to dream,[16] to a systemic uplifting of outcomes pregnant with new hope.

15. Pew Research Center. "America's Changing Religious Landscape," May 12, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr_15-05-12_rls-00/.
16. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015); Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace* (New York: Crown, 1995); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage, 1992).