

# The Kingdom and Transformation of post-Postmodern Megalopolises



Viv Grigg ASM, June 2022

*An urban missiological perspective.  
Conversation spaces where principles of the Kingdom of God confront post- postmodern urbanism.  
A prophetic imagining of transformation of cosmopolises.*

## Abstract

Conversion<sup>1</sup> has focused on individuals but little attention has been paid to the conversion of whole cities. Today cities have rapidly passed through the modernist and postmodern periods. Based on fifty years of the author's engagement in strategies for conversion of cities, this paper envisages transformation of mega-cities in the vacuum of post-Postmodernism. This involves the call to follow the cosmic Christ.<sup>2</sup>

He is identified as the answer to failed postmodernism:

1. Reintegrating cultural themes
2. As source of authority, integration and meaning in postmodernism's fractured authority.
3. As the nexus of truth and wisdom in the irrational context of "all truths are true".
4. His Kingdom of hope and new world order in the context of oppressive globalization and urbanization.
5. Values renewal and redefinition of humanness
6. And a non-sequitur!! - the Jonah strategy of declaring judgement.

## Our Locus within History

In working with city leaders in the AD2000 movement in the 1990's, we did not think far enough ahead. Unable to change the proponents of "people group" thinking to think in urban paradigms, US evangelical

mission strategies became largely irrelevant for the cities. And the development agencies focus almost exclusively on rural development issues.<sup>3</sup>

Then in the next years, we missed the Urban Millennium - for it passed in two decades. Within the last decades, cities have already morphed into the era of *megalopolises*, *post-metropolises*, *conurbanisations* and *urban corridors* (UNHDP 2011).

Prophetic imagination is based on reflection. *Missiology* is, at heart, the rationality behind such prophetic dreams, and the strategies that advance those dreams into reality. *Urban Missiology* is centered on a 4000 year-old Abrahamic dream. For "He looked forward to a city whose builder and maker was God." The Biblical tale is the tale of two cities in divine conflict, the "city of man" and the "city of God". Our task is to bring the city of God into the city of man as we look forward to that heavenly city.

## 50 Year Urban Mission Framework: Transformation of the World's Cities

1. Mobilize catalytic teams to global slums (1.3 Billion) from West (70's-90's)
2. Catalyze indigenous movements of 10,000 disciples, churches, Bible school in slums of each of 6600 cities (90's-2015)
3. Movements engage in significant transformational of slums (95-2020)
4. As a result, movements for urban transformation sparked among the urban elites (2000-2025)
5. Transformation of culture, philosophies and structures of conurbanizations (2020-2050) to welcome back the King.



No reflection, no dream:  
no dream, no strategy.

Figure 1: Five Missiological Movements towards City Conversion (Transformation of Cities)

I have lived outworking a lifetime framework of some 50 year goals to call workers to initiate Kingdom transformation of the world's cities:

1. Mobilize catalytic teams to global slums (1.3 Billion) from the West (70's-90's)
2. Catalyze indigenous movements of 10,000 disciples, churches, Bible school in slums of each of 6600 cities (90's-2015)
3. Movements engage in significant transformational of slums (95-2020)
4. As a result, movements for urban transformation sparked among the urban elites (2000-2025)
5. Transformation of culture, philosophies and structures of conurbanizations (2020-2050) to welcome back the King and his reign).

Having written extensively on #'s 1 to 3, (Grigg 2004a, b), I wish to focus in this paper on conceptualizing #4 and #5. For now, we are seeing massive conversionary movements in the slums of cities and expect God to move them into serious transformational dynamics this decade, preparing the ground for people power sufficient to accomplish the next goals. This paper is a global extension of themes from my analysis of postmodern Auckland in *The Spirit of Christ and The Postmodern City* (Grigg 2009).

For today, we are in the midst of some rapid and critical progressions. We are past the collapse of Western modernism, as the modern project, the search for rationality based on Platonic and Aristotelean logic has ended in a sea of murk in the 1980's; and in its demise, we dwell in a deep vacuum, the no-man's land termed "postmodernism".

But therein lies the great adventure. The term itself - post? - means we know *what was* but not *what is or will be*. Such implies a divine moment, where the future is open to those who will take it. The future belongs to those who envisage it, to the prophetic imagination (Brueggeman) and that apostolic momentum birthed in the prophetic which is also academically capable of engaging rapidly changing multivariate situations.

Thus, this paper explores issues beyond urbanism: What does a post-Postmodern conurbanism look like? What does a Kingdom-transformed Megalopolis look like? How do we bring the city of God into the city of man?

How does Christian spirituality combat post-postmodern spiritualities.

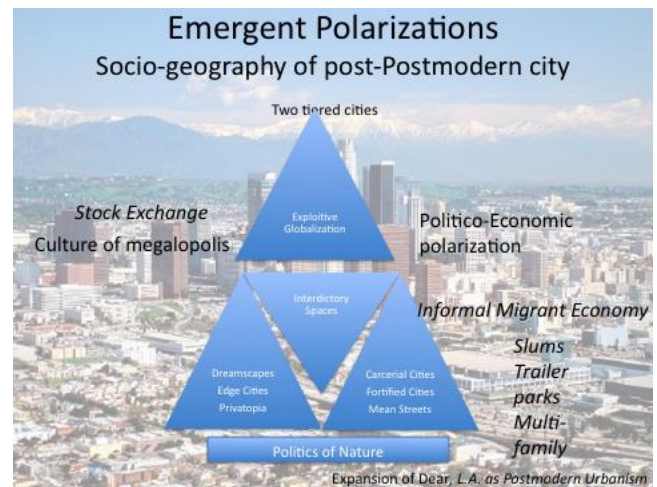


Figure 2: Post-post-modern urban geography à la Dear.

### Emergent Polarizations

For cities have moved past the urban analyses of the Chicago School to the post-modern analyses of the Los Angeles School of Edward Soja (2000), Stephen Toulmin (1990) and Michael Dear and others. Fig 1 is a socio-geography of post-postmodern city based on some of Michael Dear's futuristic dreaming (2010).

These *conurbanizations* are increasingly globalized and increasingly polarized. They are defined at the upper end by Globalization. *Globalization* is a catch word that includes among others: new technologies, Trans National Corporations (TNC's), trade agreements, the ideology of neo-liberalism, global capitalism, "economic growth", "progress", investment banks like IMF, and World Bank.

Such a list immediately locates this era of missions biblically, for it reminds one of Revelations 18, the trading by a symbolic blood-red globalized city, called Babylon, of all kinds of commodities and human bodies - a commercialization of everything, even the DNA in seeds in plants. According to the prophet John, against this we are in a spiritual war - the Kingdom of Christ and globalized Babylon. This then is part of today's *Kingdom mission*, the creation of alternative socio-economic structures opposing the greed and exploitation driving global capitalism, and globalization of exploitation.

The other side of the divided city in the diagram are the victims of the global recession - the urban poor - the slums, the street people, the migrants, those living three families per home... some of what Soja calls *Carcereal archipelagos*, carcinogenic suburban islands of poverty and marginality in the midst of wealth.

Most national elites are cut off from the urban poor. They have never visited a slum or in LA its equivalent, a trailer park. They bring little to the future of reversing this polarization of the cities, the bifurcation between those within the global economy and those who have been locked out. In contrast, *our Kingdom urban mission* role includes *economic urban discipleship* - intentionally reducing structural divisions between rich and poor (extrapolating James 5:1-6 to a city), seeking equality within societies (extrapolating the Jubilee) and reasonable redistribution of wealth (extrapolating Acts 2 and 4).

For cities will move to new bifurcations of wealth and poverty. ½ of the world are already dispossessed and have moved to the cities. The slums will continue to grow to 2 billion by 2025 (Neuwirth 2005) and as calamities, earthquakes, typhoons increase, this figure will likely increase more, for all population increase from now on will move to the cities.

There are other postmodernisms. In the third world the bifurcation between the formal economy and the informal economy is more intense. This decade, China decided to create 1000 new cities. These are cities without history.<sup>4</sup>

### **Missions Proposal: Transitioning to Global Kingdom Cosmopolitanism**

Postmodernism is simply that - post...! It's a looking back at the loss of an epoch, a breaking down of the modernist search for integrating themes without a clear sense of future integrating themes. But no society survives without integrations. In this transitional vacuum of Postmodernism can we envision that future?

I am proposing that Kingdom mission involves an envisioning and a prophetic proclamation that **reintegrates cultural themes and values around the King & Kingdom** as the universal center. This proclaiming of the Kingdom is what Jesus did - its called evangelism - its **evangelism of complex megalopolises, calling for change which, as theologians, we call conversion - conversion of cities - their people, their complex structures, their complexity of cultures.**

More popularly the word **transformation** is used (as in many cultures conversion has a negative connotation of betrayal of the culture), but we are seeking cultural fulfilment in the cosmic Christ. *Transformation* has become a missiological codeword for envisioning the impact of the Kingdom on societal structures and culture, for bringing the culture under the influence of the Kingdom.

I am proposing that *transformational urban mission* involves us significantly influencing and defining the values of post-Post-modernism. That the command to disciple the nations means just that, *bringing national political values, economic principles, social structures, people groups as well as individual people under the orbit of the King's authority, Kingdom principles.*

### **Defining the Kingdom**

Dyrness uses a simple definition of the Kingdom of God, *God's active, interventive rule over humankind and the creation.*<sup>5</sup> This rule has always existed and always will, defining the personal nature at the center of the universe. While Genesis does not use the phraseology of the Kingdom of God, it lays the foundation - "*In the beginning, God...*" To speak of God's creation is to remember that God created all things. He rules and reigns from before the beginning. He is King of Creation.

This Kingdom, in George Eldon Ladd's terms, "present, but not yet" can be simply diagrammed to involve three dimensions - the spiritual (an evangelical specialty), the economic (the mandate to manage the earth), and the socio-political ("Am I my brothers keeper?" - the rhetorical echoing universal question). Discipleship is our response to this Kingdom. Western Evangelicals have taught spiritual discipleship. But there is little teaching on economic and environmental discipleship. *Urban Mission*, focused on the urban poor, of necessity *trains people in environmental* (urban is an environment), *economic and socio-political discipleship.* To do less is to be less than evangelical, for discipleship is a historic mark of evangelical praxis, matching our core commitment to evangelism and revival. If ywe are not continuing in the word in practice, leading people

to Christ, releasing the power of the Holy Spirit, and engaged in social and economic issues of the poor, we would not be following the classical trajectories of Catholic, ecumenical or evangelical commitments to conversionary practice.

I have clustered Kingdom responses that should be significant in defining post-postmodernism around these four themes, plus the issue of centering authority, truth, governance, humanness and the nature of matter.



Figure 3: Foci of mission post-postmodernism with responses to the vacuums of the Postmodern transition in areas of spiritual, political, social and economic discipling of the nations.

### 1. Cosmic Christ: Source of Authority, Integration and Meaning

Jesus Christ, the integrator of the universe is our wisdom. Our task is to preach him as the integrative center. In him, cities, peoples, structures all find meaning and integration. In the day of Billy Graham, that used to be called, “preaching the Lordship of Christ”. Conversion of cities is the calling of the city to follow the cosmic integrator. That brings meaning and integration into the disintegrations of postmodernism.

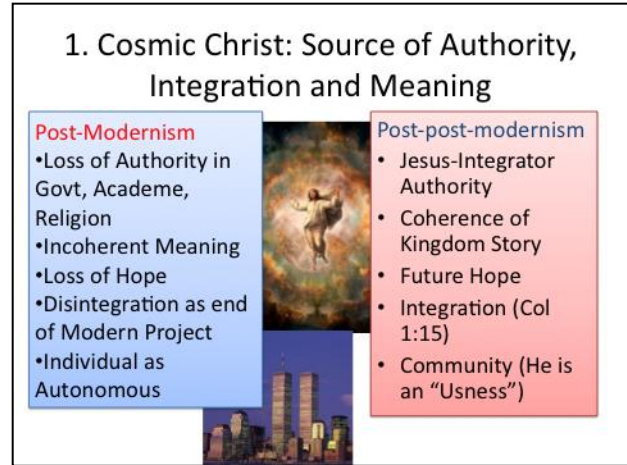


Figure 4: Post-Postmodern mission centralized on the cosmic Christ

### 2. Deep Christ, the Nexus of Knowledge, Truth and Wisdom

Aristotelian truth failed our generation. We all know that we understand intuitively before we rationalize so clearly Aristotelean logic is a subset of holistic and intuitive truth-seeking based on the personality as center of true knowledge. This is evidenced in our propensity to use stories to tell truth thus reflecting the deep truths of personality at the core of understanding. Jesus is that center.

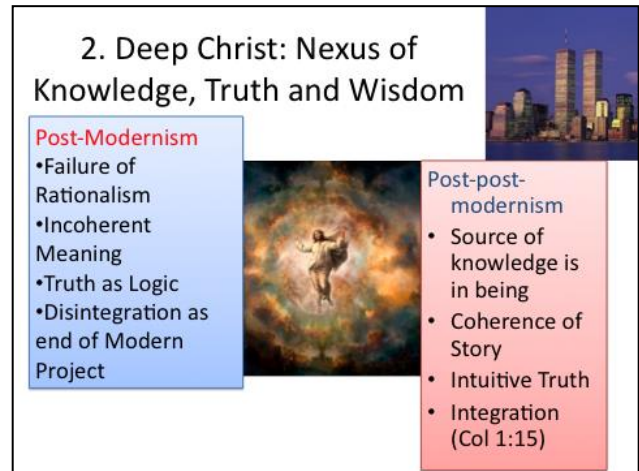


Figure 5: Elements of post-Postmodern mission focused on Christ as center of wisdom and knowledge in a wisdom economy and world.

### 3. The Kingdom of Hope and the New World Order

Discipleship also involves us in inverse politics. The Kingdom of God is here, yet not fully realized. Until it is fully realized there will exist two different Kingdoms.

One is a Kingdom of this world, symbolized through the Scriptures and in their great climax, as Babylon, a great

religious-political-economic conglomerate (Rev 17-19), that has grown out of the rebellion of humanity — its nature is that of idolatry, oppression, exploitation and unrighteousness. It is, at heart, a massive world-wide market place, eventually dominated by a single lawless authority (2 Thes 2:3-12),<sup>1</sup> in the midst of an increasingly lawless world. Don't these very phrases reflect the nature of Hollywood movies as they predict the cultural trends of the postmodern metropolis?

The other is a Kingdom of the Spirit...

*For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17)...*

yet a Kingdom that profoundly transforms economics, social relationships and political issues.



Figure 6: Elements of political discipleship beyond postmodernism

Moltmann (1998) defines theology as Kingdom-of-God theology and as Kingdom of God theology it has to be public theology. Rauschenbusch, in his simple yet masterful analysis of Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom, relates it to social structure:

*The phrase, then, embodies the social ideal of the finest religious minds of a unique people. The essential thing in it, is the projection into the future of the demand for a just social order. The prophets looked to a direct miraculous act of God to realise their vision, but they were in close touch with the facts of political life and always demanded social action on the human side (1916:57).*

Yet he refuses to limit the Kingdom to social structure, measuring the structures against the Kingdom not vice-versa. Along with a call to fully evangelise the world and bring the peoples into the Kingdom, he poetically called

the educated of his day to full involvement in aligning existing structures with the righteousness of the Kingdom (1916:77).

Our role should not be dissimilar to that which he states — we are to live as people of hope,<sup>6</sup> which involves a discipling of the structures relating them to the demands of the King. We should work with all our energy to see, “Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as in heaven!” as much as is presently possible. This should not only be in individual lives but in the social order of our nation and globe. This is the content of preparation for the second coming, for this gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to every people.

Postmodernism has also moved into multi-religious cities and multi-ethnicity. Thus, such an integrative vision as the Kingdom must grapple with its association with alternative visions inside pluralistic urbanism (Mouw & Griffioen, 1993: 110-129). I suggest that the freedom and openness of the Kingdom along with themes of reconciliation and servanthood, provide the widest meta-narrative for moral dialogue and affirmation of commonalities. Humanism and rationalism fade beside the grandeur and fullness of such themes and are unable at the end of debate to define common morality in multi-religious cities, for they lack the sacrificial motivation to service that is inherent in the cross.

Paul Hiebert, one of the world's leading missionary urban anthropologists, with years of interfacing Hindu and Christian worldviews, once commented to me that in his studies on the options for approaching pluralism, a Christian context of tolerance and freedom created a better environment for harmony than the other major religious worldviews. Madood, a Muslim scholar, also concludes that an established religion in Anglicanism in the UK is a far better option for openness to diverse ethnicity and religion than “triumphal secularism” (1994:53). This appears also true when considering Hindu affirmation of plurality and its pain in caste differentials or Islamic demands for submission to Islamic law or secular frameworks within which it is difficult to deal well with morality, ethics or religious values.

In general, within such a framework of Christian tolerance, clarity of our own beliefs makes dialogue easier. We may conclude that the most loving option is to call the society to be faithful to the living God, while working hard to build public space for dialogue between ethnic-religious communities within a Christian framework of freedom and tolerance.

### **Defense of the Marginalized**

Thus, we have to see this desire for creation of public space for pluralism, this passion for liberty, as God-given, as God at work in common grace upon all, as principles of liberty and liberation espoused for some centuries by the blood of evangelical martyrs in free Christian countries beginning to bear fruit in those bound by Islamic traditions. I have been skeptical of the Catholic interpretation of liberation movements as being a sign from God, but my engagement in people power in the Philippines and decades in training friends in rescuing communities from the bulldozers of the elite has led me to rethink this. All of our traditions confront corrupted powers, in that we share a commonality.

Wherever there is diffusion of economic, social, political power, there Kingdom principles of the uplift of people are at work. Whether people acknowledge the Lord in it, these principles are effective. Thus, wherever the church is established, wherever Christians are involved in community organizing, wherever micro-savings associations develop, there the principles, the truth of the Kingdom is made manifest.

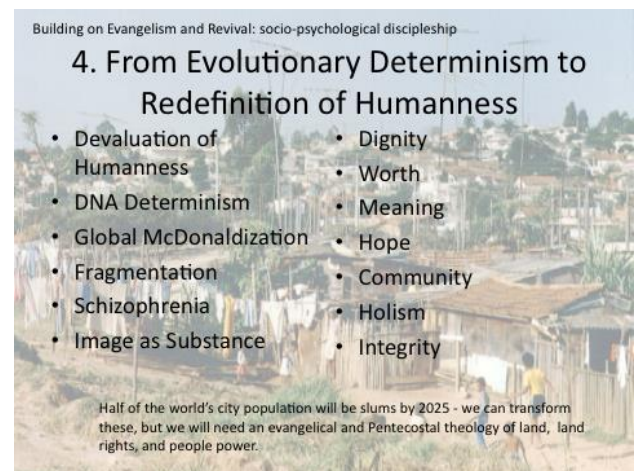
This also leads to affirmation of cultures, tribes and localized self-sustaining economies (viz a viz globalized Capitalism).

#### **4. Values Renewal and Redefinition of Humanness**

The failure of fundamentalism and Pentecostalism to develop a full-orbed biblical teaching on the nature of humanness, focussing on a disembodied holiness, only leads to the death of being and meaning. In the failure of the movement to expand its life into cultural transformation, eventually one sees the death of culture – unless the synergy of revival from other movements continues to renew Pentecostalism. Pentecostal rejection of intellectual pursuit needs changing into an affirmation of Spirit-directed academic discipline. If not, Pentecostalism may be expected to have little long-term conversation about meaning in an increasingly meaningless, bored, suicidal city. The alternative, a more academic approach to postmodern emergent churches, is seen by some to provide an alternative model that has intellectual validity, as well as postmodern cultural relevance (Taylor 2005).

The redefinition of personhood must also be related to work and rest, for in the definition of the God-human axis, we are made in the image of the Worker who

rested on the Sabbath. It has importance in the regaining of the meaning of “good work,” to use Schumacher’s phrase (Schumacher 1979). Without this teaching, life in an ambitious culture ceases to have meaning — except in production and consumption of goods. With this teaching, life is filled with the creativity, the artistry, the hospitality, the grandeur of the cultures of mankind. God, the worker in the creation story, becomes the worker reflected in our story.



*Figure 7: Elements of human identity and psychology that the Kingdom brings that correct destructive disintegrations within the postmodern era.*

This element of discipleship is the work of the Spirit. Volf, disciple of Moltmann in his *Work in the Spirit* (Volf 1991), suggests a pneumatological understanding of work. Volf believes that releasing the charisms of the Spirit gives a better basis for understanding the diversity of working roles in the postmodern city context than does the classic sense of vocation in Lutheran and historic Catholic analysis.

To do this expansion of small local businesses and self-employment and limitations on globalized multinationals are critical. Rejection of contract employment that breaks the bargaining power of the trade unions of the poor is an evangelical responsibility, as is the holding of society to the 40 hour week that our evangelical forbears fought for, so that people might have time for family.

## From Evolutionary Determinism to Redefinition of the Anthropological

Post-Modernism	Post-Post-Modernism
•Devaluation of Humanness	•Dignity of Being
•Global McDonaldization	•Meaning as Idea and Wisdom Creators
•Schizophrenia	•Holism
•DNA Determinism	•Worth
•Fragmentation	•Community
•Image as Substance	•Hope Integrity

Figure 8: Contrast of values between Post-Modern and Kingdom Influenced post-postmodern views of humanness.

### 5. Personhood Infusing Matter

God's Spirit was the creative breath that formed the universe. The Spirit's voice has not stopped speaking. The Spirit continues to create. The universe is thus infused with the voice and the breath and the being of a personal God. This view follows Philo and Augustine, in that God is not dependent on that universe, nor is the universe God, but matter is infused with his being, his personality, his breath.<sup>7</sup>

*He does not depend on the process of nature and history for his existence, but he does have purposes that can only be realised in nature and history (Bennett 1941).*


I suggest that economic discipleship, the Christian response to postmodern questioning of rationalist materialism, beyond the transformation of Newtonian physics and the death of materialism into chaos theory or relativity, is based on an understanding of matter as infused with personality, the personality of the Spirit of God, spirit not of chaos, but of structured creativity - what the Scriptures call righteousness, wholeness, holiness.. Colossians 1:15-20, the grand song of the apostle about the great sovereignty of his Lord, speaks first of our Lord's creation, then of an integrational role, then of his immanence, his infusion of all in all. That song is central to our conversations with the postmodern city and the star-trek generation.

*Matter is not only, as Einstein derived, energy. Personhood is the source of the energy. Matter has an infusive personality. The universe at its heart has a personality.*

Building on Evangelism and Revival: Economic Discipleship

### 5. Personhood Infusing Matter

- Moral Care of the Environment
- Localised Cooperative vs. Capitalist Consumer Society



- Biblical Critique of Consumer Society
- Personhood as Source of Energy
- Working with the Expansive Creativity of Universe
- Wisdom Societies Beyond Knowledge Economies

Half of the world's city population will be slums by 2025 - we can transform these, but we will need an evangelical and Pentecostal theology of land, land rights, and people power.

Figure 9: Economic discipling beyond postmodern city culture and structures.

That central personality of the universe is community, within which, the source of power and authority is the Father; the exercise of power is by the Holy Spirit. This creates a conversational space connecting with the search for creative power so central to many postmodern media productions. Relationship to the Holy Spirit as the essential creative power of the universe is central to charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity. This could place Pentecostalism at the centre of postmodern conversation. But only if it extends the conversation into the fullness of a Christian ecology and environmentalism.

The breath of God is also by nature expansive, as science has discovered in its conclusions of an infinitely

expanding universe. It is the Spirit who is continually hovering over and creating cities, giving a basis for Christian involvement in all things related to construction of good cities and entrepreneurial business. These themes enable structural conversations with the post-Star-trek generation that understands an expanding universe.

### ***Beyond Inanimate Materialism***

It is the empty modernist theory of inanimate materialism that is dead — not God. The new physics has blown apart the centrality of materialist doctrine. Relativity exposed the clockwork universe as shifting and warping. Chaos theory has replaced Newton's determinative machine. Chance has replaced causality. Solid matter has dissolved into apparently empty space seething with quantum activity. In its place, chaos theory has opened a future of creativity. Collaborative particles drive new forces (Davies and Gribben 1991).

These changes in the underlying perception of matter mirror changes in production and the market economy. The physical materials in a silicon chip are negligible yet the information and creativity released are far more productive than the iron of steam engines that drove the industrial revolution. Human imagination and creativity has now become a major dimension of formerly mechanistic production in what is becoming known as knowledge economies.

That discovery opens up the possibility of conversation between those who know him who is creator and the wisdom of the universe, and the children of the Silicon Valley generation, the children of those who developed the internet, DVD and Ipod.

### ***Economic Values: Human Dignity vs. Technological Dehumanization***

Again, in the area of economics, one could ask, to what extent we have enabled society to respect the dignity of the human being. Jane Kelsey, in *Reclaiming the Future: New Zealand and the Global Economy* (1999), documented the effects of overly rapid commitment to the positive benefits of free trade with concomitant loss of jobs in several sectors, including 21,000 in the textiles and clothing sector, the loss of sovereignty over many of our national assets leading to increasing foreign debt and increase in inequity and insecurity.

It is apparent, in returning to New Zealand after a decade, that governments, year by year, have increased the levels of pressure on New Zealanders to produce. This has included the increase of employment, deliberate policies to force women into the workforce in order to increase productivity (Knight and Laugeson 2005), yearly increase of the tax take, as well as the destruction of the power of the trade unions

(developed to protect the poorest workers) and collective bargaining processes and the creation of an indebted student population.

The reassertion of *human dignity* against such policies, which are based on assumptions of man the machine, woman the equal machine, is crucial for the sustaining of a just and good society. The stories in *Towards an Auckland Business Theology* (Grigg 2000), each contain the application into the workplace of values of *the worth, the creativity, the dignity of each individual*. As the stories of managers, they show an emphasis by Christian business leaders on three of several major, economic themes of the Scriptures: *work, production and creativity*. These are paralleled by ministries from many churches to sectors of poor in the community, including almost every church in Auckland reaching out to migrants. These represent the search to apply two other biblical principles of *equity and redistribution*.

### ***Biblical Critique of Consumer Society***

In a context of increasing differentials between rich and poor and expansion of indebtedness via credit card, postmodern discipleship cannot be less than economic, if it is to be true to Jesus' words.

For example, following Jesus' simple statement that, "the cares of the world, the delight in riches and the desire for other things enter in and choke the Word (Mark 4:19)," classic Christian discipleship has developed another principle in its *rejection of greed*, the accumulation of wealth and consumerism. The great transition away from this standard perhaps occurred with the failure of the puritans after Calvin, to keep regimentation on "profitable industry." As Britain led the world into the new consumer and technological age, Bishop William Temple (1942) indicates that the church for 150 years failed to sustain a consistent public critique of these sins. While Christian socialism and the social gospel, spoke to the issue of *redistribution of wealth*, they did not deal with the popular value systems of ordinary Christians with a call to the principles of *co-operative economics and simplicity*, without greed, in the midst of increasingly competitive systems.

This directly contrasts with earlier Calvinism, with its understanding of the *just use of resources for the common good, frugality, diligence* and their relationship to the emergence of capitalism (Weber 1980). While we are enjoying *the expansion of wealth, the abolition of poverty and the freedom* of the middle class, we pay a price in the violation of other biblical principles of *stewardship, remaining debt-free and wealth for work* (vs. creation of paper money).



### Non-Conclusion Beyond Academics: Jonah Spirituality

The prophetic is more deeply based on the direct word of God for a situation than academics, though the academics give the reasoned framework and testing of the prophetic statement.

The academic issues above call for **conversational spaces** in cities, which enable the communication of diverse Kingdom principles for the transformation of multiple sectors of cities in an evolutionary struggle against the culture of the world.

But, let me suggest, if God could allow an earthquake to destroy my university city of Christchurch, New Zealand, a godly city, of justice and equity, of near full employment, of civility and grace and creativity, home for migrants and strangers, with good and godly leadership, environmentally magnificent, a city for which there is little reason to discern his judgment (part form the public wizard outside the Cathedral)...<sup>8</sup>

...then why would he not destroy Los Angeles?<sup>9</sup> The derivation of the research above on the one hand indicates the city of God within Los Angeles, manifest in the freedom of individuals, the expansion of creativity (1/6 of Los Angelenos have work related to the media), and the productivity of its industry, in its being center of communications, and in it being home to many godly

people. For this reason, it is one of the world's great Meccas for the oppressed.

But this city of man is also a leading city of economic oppression, destroyer of families (72% of Santa Monica are singles or single parents), exploiter of illegal minorities, exporter of pornography, center of aggressive homosexuality (West Hollywood for two decades is proud to have been ruled by councils of largely homosexual counselors), leading proponent of unfettered individualism, and exploitative wealth disparity (L.A. area that finds itself deeply divided along class lines, with 250,000 millionaires, 1.6 million poor people (below annual incomes of about \$30,000 for a family of four))<sup>10</sup>, a city into which the luxurious goods of the earth, and its prostitution pour. It is known globally as a center of dark media that has damaged the morality of many other cultures.

Often, I have seen, as I fly in to LA, pictures of it completely wasted. Nothing left standing! Not just destroyed by a simple earthquake! While we look for repentance and transformation, is our mission more likely to be that of Jonah, a mission to proclaim God's judgment and the complete annihilation of this city? A commission to challenge people to flee and save themselves?

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For evangelical Protestants, “conversion” is an event, followed by a process of “sanctification”. This has morphed in urban missiological conversations “transformation” as an (impossible) goal and process. This is perhaps in contrast to historic Catholic discussion of “cultural conversion” as an ongoing process.

<sup>2</sup> This study builds on Grigg’s previous works, engaging in conversion of slum culture, economics and people (*Companion to the Poor, Cry of the Urban Poor*); economic discipleship applied to postmodern Auckland and New Zealand culture) (*Towards and Auckland Business Theology; Kiwinomics*), and strategies for citywide transformation (*Transforming Cities: An Urban Leadership Guide*). These are integrated with urban missiology literature that draws on *UNHabitat* analyses of cities and postmodern urban geographers of the LA schools (e.g. Soja (2000)); multiple analysis of post-Modernism (e.g. Toulman (1990)); frameworks of engagement with economics including Max Weber (1980), Volf (1991); historic liberal Protestant theologies of societal change of Rauschenbush (1916), instrumentalized by Bennett (1941) and Bishop Temple (1942), reflected in Kagawa of Japan’s *Cosmic Purpose* (2014). All built around Dyrness’s (1998) expansion of George Eldon Ladd (1993) masterpieces on the Kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup> For example, World Vision at its peak, under Urban Advance, had only 17% of its projects in urban areas. As of 2021, the organization policy was of 0% new urban projects (private discussions with leaders within the organization).

<sup>4</sup> [www.dynamiccity.org/download/Book-preview-01.pdf](http://www.dynamiccity.org/download/Book-preview-01.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Definition after Dyrness (1998), as he seeks to relate the Kingdom to third world social issues. “Intervention” is a community development phrase.

<sup>6</sup> As I have read the interactions of evangelical thinkers actively engaged with postmodernism, I am amazed at the constant recurrence of the theme of hope, for example Jeff Fountain’s *Living as a People of Hope* (2004), as he engages similar themes to this study in the European continent.

<sup>7</sup> It is beyond the scope of these paragraphs to enter into the debate about pantheism, panentheism etc. Since such debates have not been fully reconciled historically, either theologically or philosophically, I doubt that I can do it either. Not that they are unimportant, for each perspective has logical outcomes in terms of lifestyle.

<sup>8</sup> This, as with many natural disasters, is a situation similar to what Jesus faced in Luke 13:1-5, with the tower of Siloam that fell on 18 people. Were they greater sinners, no!! But all will perish!! Similarly, Jesus tells us the rain falls and the sun to rise on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). There are some natural dynamics that are totally unrelated to the moral nature of the people of a place, yet which God allows.

<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the above Biblical basis for non-judgement on people in the midst of calamity, where a city purposively and arrogantly engages in sin, the Biblical basis of the Jonah (or Jeremiah) model may be applied, a model of a call to repentance from annihilation prior to the calamity, so that either before or afterwards repentance may be encouraged. This presupposes the ongoing gift of prophecy as observed in the New Testament.

<sup>10</sup> 2011 Jerry Nickelsburg, UCLA Economist, GINI studies of Los Angeles.



Viv Grigg is a prophetic voice and serial social entrepreneur bringing justice in dark places. He has pioneered ministries in the slums of Manila, Kolkata, Los Angeles, Auckland; created and mobilized missions of workers to the slums from New Zealand, Brazil, the US; catalyzed global urban networks; as an academic he pioneered the *MA in Transformational Urban Leadership* ([www.matul.org](http://www.matul.org)) in multiple universities globally; author of 8 books and many articles on urban ministry, revival and transformation of cities. These have developed new paradigms in incarnational apostolic orders in the slums, transformative revival, slum-dwellers'

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theology, economic discipleship and others. Husband, father, mentor, creator of communities of love. All because of the leading of the Holy Spirit. Professor of Urban Leadership at William Carey International University.