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HOWARD WORSLEY

# The Return of the City: The Revival of Practical Theology in the Urban Context

**Howard Worsley offers a plea for a return to the city. He argues why it is that practical theology must be restored to the city, advocates reasons why this is not proving an easy thing to achieve and makes proposals for a future that features a reinvigorated church for urban mission. His own experience has shaped his convictions and central to the argument is that the encounter with the God who makes himself vulnerable in the suffering Christ is the proper starting point for such a return.**

The seventeen years since the publication of *Faith in the City* by the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas<sup>1</sup> have not been easy ones for urban church practitioners. It is not that the city has been absent from the agenda of the politicians<sup>2</sup> or of the theologians.<sup>3</sup> Rather it is because there is a growing perception by those who attend inner city churches or who champion their development, that the church is withdrawing her historic resources from the urban heartlands. Just as different church denominations are shutting down in the cities, more people are coming to live in the cities,<sup>4</sup> with globalization ushering in new ways of defining 'city' and raising complex issues of citizenship.

When urban issues are given priority in church circles outside the city, they die under a thousand qualifications. The first is that if the urban church is to be considered then we must also (in the same breath) talk about the rural church and the suburban church. The second is that if we are to focus on the poor, who will consider the rich? Such discussions can reduce the issues of the urban church into sterile conversation about low numbers in church.

1 Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. *Faith in the City Report: A Call for Action by Church and Nation*, Church House Publishing, London 1985.

2 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. *Our Towns and Cities: Delivering an Urban Renaissance*, The Stationery Office, London, 2000 (The Urban White Paper).

3 Urban Bishops' Panel. *The Urban Renaissance and the Church of England: A Discussion Paper*, GS 1446, General Synod of the Church of England, London 2002.

4 By the year 2010, it is estimated that seventy five per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas see D. Clark, *Urban World/Global City*, Routledge, London 1996 pp 47f.

## A biblical image

To stand against this tide of erosion with a concern for the urban church has felt a bit like Abraham pleading with God for the survival of the city of Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33). This story shows Abraham's futile attempt to speak up for the city dwellers of Sodom. He bargains with God, pleading for generosity to balance God's righteous anger and it appears that Abraham's boldness achieves a reasonable deal. Abraham's deal is that for the sake of ten righteous people, the city of Sodom will not be destroyed. Abraham's plea may be considered brazen, even outrageous, but he was motivated by his love for Lot and so he risked his standing with God to appeal for the city. One may critique Abraham's actions by suggesting that God's righteousness had to be seen in judgement on the city but Abraham was convinced that righteousness would be seen in God's graciousness in his love for the few who were righteous, and so he contested for their survival. It seems that the same is true today, though I cannot stand in the same righteous pedigree as Abraham and nor do I see the cities to be dens of iniquity.

This article is a plea for the city to be seen as a place in which to invest our theological resources and a place in which to rediscover the mission of the church.

Championing of the city is not an act of benevolent charity, nor is it motivated by the 'old culture of paternalism and philanthropy'.<sup>5</sup> It is instead motivated by a conviction that the uncertain identity of the church can be established by embracing a primal call to mission in the city where the gospel has still not taken root. Such an action could re-engage the church with new reflections on the incarnation of Christ and new thoughts on how the kingdom of God can be shown. We need to understand the city in broader terms; namely as:

1. inner city,
2. estate,
3. that place with less identity (that does not fit the other categories),
4. city centre, or
5. suburb.

By way of definition, this article will focus more on the first three terms, as they are the places most under threat of being forgotten by the church or by society. The city must be re-embraced as being the place where the church can most meaningfully enter into further relevant dialogue with an emerging culture. It is the place where most people live.

In order to develop these thoughts, this article will:

- explain why practical theology must be revived in the city: *the present*,
- suggest why practical theology has not flourished in the city: *the past*,
- offer a way forward for the renaissance of practical theology in the city: *the future*.

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<sup>5</sup> Urban Bishops, *The Urban Renaissance*, p 30.

## The present: why practical theology must be revived in the city

By way of definition, if theology is the process of 'faith seeking understanding',<sup>6</sup> practical theology is the action as theology hits the road. In theological colleges, practical theology is one of the three main streams (the other two being Biblical Studies and Christian Thought and Worship). It has been noted that just as theology is in the minority in the university, practical theology is in the minority in theology.<sup>7</sup> This double minority leaves practical theology as the weak partner but it is the most vital ingredient of all because it completes the process of faith joining action.

Despite the noteworthy advocates of practical theology,<sup>8</sup> the subject matter is often compromised by its setting in that it is nearly always taught within the sheltered environs of Britain's theological colleges, most of which are found in the more affluent suburbs. The place where practical theology will most naturally find a focus between faith and action is in the urban context, that place where most people are, where issues are most acute and where answers are least obvious.

One of my most abiding memories as an inner city priest is when I would walk into the church to see a congregation that consisted of black and white people, a large number of children and a good representation of old folk. We had a space reserved at the front for a line of wheelchairs from the residential home and normally had a number of people with learning difficulties as well as a smattering of urban intellectuals. This experience was something I still equate with the kingdom of God – a picture that represents something of the diversity of the tribes of people gathered around the throne in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 5:13).

It was working in this context that enabled me to reflect theologically about such issues as:

- equal opportunities;
- racial equality in a mixed race parish;
- welcoming the asylum seeker;
- being a church that was a safe haven for children (while being a church that could not find adult carers with the confidence to be leaders or helpers);
- offering acceptance to people who had never experienced 'normative' nuclear family;
- operating a child protection policy (in a place where sex offenders were released into the community and to whom we were also expected to offer support);
- the request for blessing same sex unions;
- including the laity in church leadership.

These challenges were also opportunities that could alternatively be a blessing or a curse. They were a blessing in that they caused us to wrestle with our beliefs and learn how to engage them with the actual world. They were a curse when they

6 Attributed to Anselm.

7 Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology*, T & T Clark, London, 2000, p 21

8 Paul Ballard & John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, SPCK, London 1997

(a work that describes practical theology as the science of theological reflection) and Laurie Greene, *Let's Do Theology*, Mowbray, London 1990 (a work that introduces theological reflection as being a part of the pastoral cycle of experience, exploration, reflection and response).

caused us to burn out under the pressure of our low resources when huge energy was needed to handle them.

Now as a theological educator, I see these issues as being crucial to the Church as a whole and the focus of some of our ongoing theology. I also notice that when ordinands are allowed to reflect theologically on such issues, they often discover the boundaries of their theology and so can identify their core gospel beliefs, forming them as ministers of the gospel.

To take this a step further, I must state that the whole credibility of the church is at stake if the city ceases to be a primal focus for her theology. The gospel will lose its authenticity if it withdraws from the city. This is because the city is a touchstone to a wider reality that is not so apparent in suburbia. This realism is indicative of truth to a wider church and has a prophetic voice. If lost, the wider church will cease to have credibility and will be swallowed up in pietism or churchmanship issues that will relegate it to the leisure industry rather than giving it a political voice in education, industry and government.

Back in the early 1980s, Bishop David Sheppard began to make this point, provocatively suggesting that the gospel was biased to the poor.<sup>9</sup> His book has raised much comment as it points to the coming of Christ to a position of poverty. Many others have noted how the gospel has flourished where poverty is explicit but has become weak where wealth has subdued it. In simple terms, it is contrary to its theological integrity for the church not to include different identities to those that feel most comfortable in her.

To embrace the city is to go against the current tide of sociological drift and to resist the current demise of the church in the city. Examples are well documented of how suburbia has developed in order to recreate families free from the threat of the city.<sup>10</sup> In general the trend has been for society to withdraw to the relative peace and seclusion of the suburbs, as it has become financially better off. People are more likely to pass through urban priority areas on their way to work but will resist becoming involved with the problems of those areas.

The prime theological reason as to why the church should remain in the city is because she is called upon to include those who are on the outside and it is in the urban context that diversity offers most opportunities for such an embrace. Miroslav Volf discusses this in *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*. In this book he states, 'It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend upon how we deal with identity and difference.'<sup>11</sup> It seems to me that the chief focus for this challenge will be our cities and their communities. This is put succinctly by Rowan Williams in his recent Lent book *Christ on Trial*. In this work he concludes that:

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9 David Sheppard, *Bias to the Poor*, Hodder & Stoughton, London 1983.

10 Francis M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia*, Leicester University Press, Leicester 1982; Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: the Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, Basic Books, New York, 1987; and Kenneth T.

Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States*, Oxford University Press, New York 1985.

11 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1996, p 20.

All human identity is constructed through conversations in one way and another. The gospel adds the news that, in order to find the pivot of our identity as human beings, there is one inescapable encounter, one all-important conversation into which we must be drawn. This is not just the encounter with God, in a general sense, but the encounter with God made vulnerable, God confronting the systems and exclusions of the human world within that world – so that, among other things, we can connect the encounter with God to those human encounters where we are challenged to listen to the outsider and the victim.<sup>12</sup>

The way of Christ is made most explicit where exclusion takes place. It is in such a place that the church can have its truest identity. In terms of practical theology, this means that a focus for the gospel of Christ is likely to be found on the margins of society. Far from withdrawing from the city and its pain, the church needs to draw closer.

### **The past: why practical theology has not flourished in the city**

Ordained clergy are less likely to encourage practical theology in the city because we are becoming resistant to taking up urban posts. It is becoming apparent that not only is it easier to fill Anglican clerical posts in the south of England but that posts in suburbia are generally more sought after. Of those willing to serve in the city, many are either women or are single. There are a number of different reasons for this. Women and single people are less sought after by congregations. Single people most often do not have the same issues that attach themselves to moving larger family units. There is a certain vulnerability expressed by women and single people that allows them empathetically to echo the content into which they minister in the city.

Most ordinands will readily accept the importance of ministry in the city but, from my own experience and observation, there are several reasons that stop them from going themselves.

#### **Rumour**

Poor press concerning the city tends to overlap issues concerning drugs, violence, racism and abuse. Many an ordinand will hear loudly such sound bites and not hear the more appealing issues concerning the creative interplay of cultures, the emergence of global citizenship, the engagement with pain that brings wisdom, the cutting edge of the practical gospel in places of displacement and the openness of the vulnerable to what is authentic.

#### **Fear**

Many are frightened of the city. Most do not come from a marginalized urban background and are more secure in their known world of business, professionalism and middle class values. This is not to say that ordinands are unaware of the issues of the city. Many have worked in caring professions or in education but they have

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<sup>12</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christ on Trial*, Harper Collins, London 2000, p 138.

generally not lived in the inner city. Only a minority of ordinands have inner city origins and of these some do not wish to return having undertaken their theological training. Ordinands are generally people with convictions who have come to the church with the hope of being part of order and stability. They feel that the chaos of the city, demonstrating as it does the sharp edge of fragmentation in society, vulnerability and exclusion, is a challenge that is one step too far. It is dissonant with their current position in life.

### **Rigid Thinking**

This fear of different contexts could be linked to a rigidity in believing. Peter Hammersley has recently conducted an academic inquiry into the nature of rigidity in religious faith, and noted that rigidity can develop which reduces the adaptability of a person to achieve new learning and to respond creatively to the demands of new experience.<sup>13</sup>

Although his research drew on trainees for the ministry of Reader in the Church of England, I would suggest that his observations are likely to apply similarly to ordinands. His main thesis is to connect rigid patterns of religious belief and practice with experiences of unresolved loss, particularly in early life. In other words, he is saying that people who have experienced bereavement or loss and not worked them through carefully, are likely to be people who have fixed patterns of faith, showing intolerance and an unwillingness to change. If such people become leaders in the church, their strong belief pattern, apparently an asset at first, can lock them into a state where development cannot take place.

The study raises important questions for both the recipients of theological training and for those who provide it. It suggests the importance of personal development in adult religious education, a subject that is far more than the transmission of a faith tradition. It also notes that the development of people attracted to church office is linked to the influence of their God representation, formed largely on an early parent figure. Hammersley notes four characteristics of God representation, namely the perfect parent, the controlling parent, the protective parent and the primitive parent. The most rigid participants in this inquiry were those who had a controlling parent shaping their God representation. This could be linked to the rigidity of believing, or it could be the influence of postmodernity on traditional discipleship that insists that ministry 'must fit me'...<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this discussion, rigid faith is something for Bishops' selectors to note and for the training system to combat if candidates are to be found who are flexible enough to consider urban ministry.

### **Comfortable Discipleship**

On a less psychological train of thought, Michael Moynagh draws on sociological factors. He notes that British churches are refusing to die and are regrouping in new and emergent patterns. Contrary to the sociologist Robin Gill who believes

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13 Peter Hammersley, *Adult Learning Problems & the Experience of Loss: A Study of Religious Rigidity*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham 1997.

14 Michael Moynagh, *Changing World, Changing Church*, Monarch, London 2001.

that a decline in church attendance has produced a decline in faith,<sup>15</sup> Moynagh perceives that churches are emerging in less institutionalized forms, being attracted to different foci and led by emergent leaders who are more specific about these foci. Thus a 'tailor-made world'<sup>16</sup> is producing churches that are youth orientated or Alpha focused, that are interested in target groups like the elderly, the homeless or the employed. I consider that most emerging ordinands are more likely to feel comfortable within areas of their prior experience in the suburbs (for instance, the elderly, churched youth, Alpha courses or the employed) than with issues of social justice (for instance the homeless or the abused).

### **Confusion**

The inheritance of postmodernity on Christian thinking has not only caused a loss of arrogance but a loss of confidence in the market place. Ministers who feel called to the city will be aware that there is no blueprint for ministry and that there are no obvious patterns of success. Faced with this, the conflicting message that they are loved by a caring God and yet that they are called to offer their lives sacrificially can breed a deep lack of certainty as to whether they should go to a difficult place.

I was once present in a conversation with a group of ordinands in which a discussion concerning city ministry was terminated by one person saying to a family person, 'Do not sacrifice your children on the altar of your ideology.' In other words, the emergent concern for the city was deemed to be a selfish and a personal ideology that would enslave that family person. Within this conversation, the 'truer way' of Christian faith was to go the route that was appealing to the nuclear family. Due to a lack of confidence, it won the day.

These are just some of the difficulties with which the Church of England is faced. However, the inheritance of fear, rigidity and confusion is not the end of the story. The Church of England offers a tradition that has once embraced the city, a parish network that includes the forgotten places and a means of paying the parish share that can benefit the poorer parish. In other words, there is also a legacy for hope.

### **The future: a way forward for the renaissance of practical theology**

The Church of England must again be clear that it is committed to the city. As in the 1980s when the *Faith in the City* document was released and people were aware of the Church of England's intention, this commitment must be articulated offering a mission objective that clearly specifies its ownership of the urban heartlands, the outer city housing estates and the areas of exclusion. This may yet draw in those who are called to work on the margins. It could open the door for people being called to do their practical theology as ordained people or in lay ministry.

If we allow the dream to progress, it will open new ways for urban theologians to emerge. This will not simply be the return of the academics to the city but an empowerment of those who have grown up in urban environs. Liberation theologies

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15 Robin Gill, *Churchgoing and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999 pp 64ff.

16 Moynagh, *Changing World, Changing Church*, p 92.

have arisen around the globe when the disenfranchised have been able to articulate their needs and discover new ways forward. This has included the base communities of South America, the Minjung movement of Korea<sup>17</sup> and other emancipatory reclamation of black theology and feminist theology.

If the Church of England is to remain a player in this, it will carefully consider from where it is drawing its future urban practitioners. The House of Bishops, through the auspices of the Ministry Division, must deliberately look for people who have an existing rapport with the city as well as those who wish to become more involved with it. Selection must also be more aware of issues of psychological formation such as a tendency to create dependency – a feature of formation that tends to plague urban ministry in particular and to cause burn out.

As far as possible, the person selected for ministry with an urban background should be encouraged to keep in touch with her or his roots. Given that the Church of England is generally a middle class culture, the city-bred ordinand is less likely to enjoy the normal residential college experience, with its recent background in the monastic tradition, set apart from the thoroughfares of life. They could be encouraged to preserve their urban culture instead of being encouraged to lose it. Such a means of education is encouraged by the school of transformative education that has been popularized by Jack Mezirow.<sup>18</sup> This is a form of education that overtly sets out to transform a culture, not just to educate from within the norms of that culture.

Transformative education recognizes that knowledge must be demystified and that local culture, into which the knowledge is brought, is valued. In other words it recognizes that knowledge is not value-free but exists in relationship to a given context. This is crucial to the urban scene where many inner city churches no longer represent the dominant culture of their neighbourhoods and may find that people have forgotten or not become aware of their religious perspective. They need to proclaim a transformative Christian message in ways that are inculturated.

Transformative education therefore has the tools to value an urban culture. Rather than forcing ordinands with an urban culture to submit to a dominant middle class culture, it will empower them to actively retain their urban style. The sort of instrument offered would be a personal learning contract designed between the student and the tutor, in which the student is allowed to select a personal route through the curriculum that makes allowance for the student's preferred learning style. Further progress is then monitored by learning mentors and the daily journal. Personal construct theory<sup>19</sup> is useful in engaging with such a line of thought, through its argument that 'each of us creates our own reality... we know the world we live in only through the personal interpretations... we make of it'.<sup>20</sup> In such ways,

17 See Bastiaan Wielenga, 'Liberation Theology in Asia' in Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp 39-62 for a brief introduction to Minjung theology.

18 Jack Mezirow & Associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to*

*Transformative and Emancipatory Learning*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco 1990.

19 George A Kelly, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, Norton, New York 1955

20 Phillida Salmon, *Psychology for Teachers: An Alternative Approach*, Hutchinson, London, 1988, p 11.

transformative education can be seen to be constructed to resist the legacy of a patriarchal institution in order to release the voice of the oppressed. For the purposes of this article, it can be understood to be a means whereby the existing culture of Anglican training colleges is changed.

If transformative education is to inform and change our current approach to theological education, then traditional educational styles, either those labelled conservative (top down) or liberal (elite group responsibility), must make room for transformational (bottom up) education.<sup>21</sup> It has already begun to make inroads in Britain, an important example being found in the successful pilot project pioneered by David Leslie on the Liverpool Ordained Local Ministry Course. This course in theology has managed to train people for ministry within their own culture and it is currently being evaluated. Models of training that employ transformative education models have the potential to enable the church to confront and overcome some of the reasons why practical theology has not flourished in the city context.

A means of preserving the hallmarks of the 'urban culture' in emerging practical theologians could be the adoption of a number of parallel strategies:

- To encourage Ordained Local Ministry schemes and training in the urban context.
- Further use of extension studies as a complement to ongoing ministry or residential training.
- To use sandwich course training (as pioneered for theological training at St John's College Nottingham) in which students come to college for block months of training between longer periods of ministry.
- The urban context should be highlighted as a key placement as a part of theological training.

Many colleges have a Contextual Theology Project which needs to be encouraged and energized as being a crucial aspect of training. Recent research into current provision of urban theological training in Anglican colleges identified that eight colleges were offering contextual projects or urban placements.<sup>22</sup> Some colleges offer long courses in which students bring together biblical studies, doctrine and practical theology in the context of mission. Others go further and offer students the opportunity to live in a different context, away from home, where they can evaluate their theology. Still others offer only a token gesture where minimal experience is given for urban reflection. Whatever the particular emphasis, provision for training in doing practical theology in the urban context is to be encouraged and developed. In the framework suggested by the report of the working party set up by the Archbishops' Council, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*, an urban centre for ministry could be envisaged, offering specialist training in urban ministry and theology.<sup>23</sup>

21 Matias Preiswerk, *Educating in the Living World: A Theoretical Framework for Christian Education*, translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1987, pp 37-43.

22 Research informally carried out by Sarah Schofield in 2002 at the East Manchester

Project, an urban arm of Westcott House, Cambridge.

23 Church of England, *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church: The Structure and Funding for Ordination Training*, March 2003, p 74 n 53 and para 6.19 (see <http://linkup.c-of-e.org.uk/ministry/safwp/index.htm>).

This report, recently finalized, could enable the development of these thoughts concerning the city, or contradict them, depending on how it is implemented. It shows the fruit of widespread consultation and asserts the principle of preliminary studies for most candidates, prior to the start of initial ministerial education or even attendance at a Selection Conference. However, it still suggests a prior theological educational level of between 60 and 120 units at Level 1, towards the standard required of the first year of a degree course. Unless the caveats to this are carefully heeded, that this could be adjusted according to personal circumstances and needs, the danger is that many prospective ordinands would be eliminated who have had a less formal education but who may well be very well equipped to minister. Such are the ordinands from the city whom I have seen nurtured through the systems to date, and survived and flourished to become good urban practitioners. An emphasis needs to be placed on the report's statements about flexibility and the benefit of, rather than the necessity of, achievement in preliminary theological studies.<sup>24</sup>

These thoughts, however, need not take us in a downward spiral whereby we sense that the Church of England is unable to provide adequate training for the candidates that this article has in mind. There are positive moves in the Anglican community and Dan Hardy is one theologian who points the way to a brighter future, implemented by improved theological education. He writes: 'redeveloping theological education is the most important single way to enhance the church in its faith, its coherence and its effective missionary witness.'<sup>25</sup>

In this, Hardy shows his previous experience as Moderator of the Board of Examiners for the Church of England and his contribution to the influential and radical ACCM Paper No. 22 entitled *Education for the Church's Ministry*.<sup>26</sup> Behind his stated conviction is a theology that has a primary concern for God at work in 'the fabric of sociality in the world' and for the way that the church 'figures in the confirmation, redemption and hope of the social order'. Such a worldview naturally supports the presence of the church in the city, not least because in the midst of this concern is an acknowledgement of the social fabric's 'disruption and loss'.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, when trained ministers are released into the city, they must have support. Either they should operate in a team or they must have strong supervision and available back up from elsewhere. Clearly the challenges of the city must be met by increased resources. Lone clergy are likely to suffer and must therefore go in prepared, backed up by mentors, a spiritual director, friendship clusters and the practice of regular retreats. The recommendation made by *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* that initial ministerial education is reconfigured from the time of entry to a course or college until the end of the first training post, can only assist in providing this support, at least in the early years of ministry.

24 Church of England, *Formation for Ministry*, pp 61-65, paras 5.20-29.

25 Daniel Hardy, *Finding the Church*, SCM Press, London 2001, p 181.

26 *Education for the Church's Ministry: The Report of the Working Party on Assessment*, ACCM Occasional Paper No. 22, London

1987. For an overview see Brian Russell, 'The Reform of Theological Education', in David F. Ford & Dennis L. Stamps, eds, *Essentials of Christian Community, Essays for Daniel W Hardy*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1996, pp 213-225.

27 Hardy, *Finding the Church*, p 94.

## Conclusion

It is apparent that at a time of insecure identity a window of opportunity is currently opening again, allowing the Church to take ownership of a fresh and radical identity. If the Church is to remain connected with the primal gospel that is attached to the 'subversive memory of a crucified Messiah',<sup>28</sup> the opportunities for making these links can be found in the city.

As we again focus on the city as a key objective of the gospel, the unique clarity and power of the gospel will become apparent. This was apparent to Jürgen Moltmann in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. "The Church loses its fellowship with the messianic mission of Jesus if it is not "the people of the beatitudes" and does not consist of the poor, the mourners, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the pure in heart and the persecuted."<sup>29</sup>

Conversely, if the church is to reconnect with the city, the mission of Jesus will be clarified and amplified.

A practical theology is one that is theologically reflective and pragmatically implemented. It is rooted in the traditions of church and scripture but focused on a mission context. Clearly the city is a place where God is giving opportunities for the church to get involved and where Christian identity can again be discovered to be relevant.

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28 J. B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, Burns and Oates, London 1980.

29 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, translated from the German by Margaret Kohl, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1993, p 81.