

## LESSON 11

### EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT MISSIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show some of the external factors in society that affect the Church, its ministry, its outreach, and the lost multitudes it is trying to reach.

Missions is a divine operation, and it was born in the heart of God before the foundation of the world. At the same time, it is carried on in history by human beings to human beings and is a profoundly down-to-earth operation. Many forces at work in our world affect the missionary, the pastor, the church, and the lost. Governmental regulations, sociological change, migration to cities, economic crises, and health conditions affect missions. What is not affected is God's eternal purpose and its final outcome.

God's people should search the Scriptures; they should also be aware of events that are occurring in the world about them. We should pray that God would raise up among us strategists in missions who would be like the sons of Issachar "which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do . . ." (1 Chron. 12:32).

At Glorieta, New Mexico, Dr. Baker James Cauthen, well-known missionary statesman, walked across the lobby of the Christian assembly hall. One of his colleagues noted that he had a Bible under one arm and the morning newspaper under the other. Later he commented, "That is the way a Christian ought to be: in touch with the eternal verities of God's Word; at the same time in contact with the world situation today."

#### Change

We are living in an era of cataclysmic change. Inventions that have reshaped the face of our world, such as radio, television, jet propulsion engines, radar, the computer, and atomic power, have been developed within the lifetime of some who will be studying this text. One authority on change mentioned that seventy per cent of the prescriptions a physician now gives are for drugs that were unknown at the end of World War II.

Alvin Toffler, in an alarming book called *Future Shock*, details some of the things the future may hold. He also shows that man may come to the point that he

*Missions is both human and divine:*

1. *It is divine because it was born in the heart of \_\_\_\_\_;*
2. *It is human because it is carried on in history by \_\_\_\_\_ beings.*

*(1. God, 2. human)*

*The Christian should stay both--*

*In touch with God's \_\_\_\_\_ and*

*In contact with the world \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Word, situation)*

goes into a paralysis called “future shock” in which he is incapable of absorbing any more change.

Man will still be a sinner, will still need love and affection, and will still be created in the image of God. In a world of rapid change of residence, occupation, and relationship, he will still need some permanent values. Modern urban man is rootless, but Jesus Christ can give him an anchor for his life, and the Church can provide a fellowship that can make him capable of coping with changes. Like the hymn writer, he may be able to say,

Change and decay in all around I see,  
O Thou that changest not,  
Abide with me.

### Urbanization

By urbanization, we mean simply that all over the world there is a fantastic move towards the cities. One fact will show this truth. At the beginning of our century, approximately thirteen per cent of the people of the world lived in cities with more than 20,000 population, but by the year 2000 approximately eighty-seven per cent will live in cities. Roger Greenway, a missionary strategist who has given a great deal of consideration to reaching city or urban dwellers for Christ, points out the importance of the cities to Christians:

Missionary strategists cannot afford to ignore this worldwide movement to the cities. Urbanization is one of the most important aspects of worldwide social change today. . . . If the gears of missions are not shifted to keep up with social change, God-given opportunities for discipling the nations will be lost.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the people moving to the cities in your country and mine come from smaller towns or from rural regions. They are looking for a better way of life, more job opportunities, better health conditions, or better educational opportunities for their children. What often happens is that “urban migrants become culturally displaced persons.”<sup>2</sup>

At times new immigrants to the cities are called part of “a rootless society.” They are separated from family and from familiar routines of a face-to-face society, in which they knew everyone on the street of their home village by sight, by name, and by reputation. By contrast, they are now members of a faceless, impersonal society, in which they can ride the bus, walk the streets, and enter their apartments, flats or hovels without seeing a single person whom they know personally. In this society they must struggle for existence, often without the skills or the education that they need to compete successfully.

<sup>1</sup> Donald A. McGavran, ed., *Crucial Issues in Missions Tomorrow* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Although we live in a changing world, there are some things that do not change. List them and compare with the text.

Who can give man an anchor? \_\_\_\_\_

Who can help him cope? \_\_\_\_\_

(Jesus, the Church)

Urbanization is a move towards the \_\_\_\_\_.

(cities)

Urbanization requires missions to adapt to this social \_\_\_\_\_ if we are to \_\_\_\_\_ the nations.

(change, disciple)

Some of them claw out a hole at the margin of society, setting up a dwelling from whatever materials they can find at hand and hope for a better tomorrow. Some of the sturdier ones make it. On the streets of a large Central American city, many Indian people from the countryside make their entrance into the economic life of the city by spreading their wares on the sidewalk. One young Indian man whom we have observed made the difficult transition. At first he had only a few fruits to sell. He had no shoes, and his clothes were worn. After a few months he had added nuts and candy. Later he spread a small store over some three metres of sidewalk. Now he wears a new hat, shoes, and other new clothes.

On the other hand, there are those who are gradually reduced to the bars, to begging, and to stealing until they finally fall by the wayside altogether.

The new urban dweller finds his value system severely tested. "Furthermore, his value system takes a terrible shaking. Family, home, neighbours, the church and other loyalties were once highly regarded. In the city with its money economy and ruthless materialistic philosophy of life, these allegiances are gradually eroded and his entire value system undergoes a transformation."<sup>3</sup> Many try to return to the home town when they can, if it is not too far away, but mainly the new city citizen "tries vainly to find a decent place to live and earn enough money to feed his growing family."<sup>4</sup>

Edward Murphy evaluates the struggle: "During the first ten or fifteen years of life of the urban migrant the common social consequences of rapid urbanization are devastating. Yet, they often produce a receptivity to the gospel that would not exist under normal circumstances."<sup>5</sup>

Let us examine some of the causes of urbanization or the fantastic growth of cities throughout the world.

*Population growth* has been one of the contributing factors to the expansion of the cities. Barring some cataclysm or the Lord's return, the world is expected to have seven billion inhabitants by the year 2000. But the growth of the total population is only a partial explanation of the growth of the cities; cities are growing at a rate far in excess of the total population growth.

*Industrialization* is a second cause of urbanization. It is now possible for larger conglomerations of people to live together. They are often attracted by industry and the promise of jobs in the cities. The hope for better health and educational facilities attract many. More rapid transportation has made it possible to live in one section of a city and to work in another.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

The urban dweller often finds his value system tested:

1. F \_\_\_\_\_, h \_\_\_\_\_, n \_\_\_\_\_, c \_\_\_\_\_, and other loyalties were once highly regarded.
2. In the city, money and materialism gradually erode and change his v \_\_\_\_\_.

(1. Family, home, neighbours, church;  
2. values)

One factor which is contributing to the expansion of cities is \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Another cause of urbanization is \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

*Secularization* has also been a factor in the development of the cities. The “commercial and residential skyscrapers are temples of the god Technocracy,” stated Dr. Luther Copeland in a conference on urban evangelism.

Living in the cities has not been without effect on the city dweller. Dr. Carlos García,<sup>6</sup> a Peruvian Christian trained in both law and theology, has made a detailed study of the effects of urbanization on the urban dweller. His studies deal particularly with Latin America but have relevance far beyond Latin America.

García points out that city living develops certain psychological characteristics. The urban man becomes more *extroverted*, more outgoing, more willing to express himself. If he does not, he is lost in the crowd. He feels the tensions of the city, the press to get to work on time, the hurry to get a place on the underground or omnibus. He feels the *tensions* and pressures of competition. In time he becomes more *aggressive*. Previously, he waited for others to board the bus; now he pushes ahead. He does the same in traffic with his automobile. With this life style, he becomes more *isolated*. Daily he is in contact with many people, but his in-depth contacts are less. Many have commented on the loneliness of the great cities. The urban man becomes *anonymous*. That is to say, it is likely that his next door neighbour does not know his name. On the street, he passes thousands of people for whom he is just a passing face. This fact can be devastating. For a time, many enjoy this feeling of freedom, of having no one to whom to respond, but statistics on suicides show that a person living in a great condominium, where he has no personal identity, is much more likely to take his own life than someone who lives in a close-knit circle of friends.

The urban dweller, Dr. García points out, also develops certain social characteristics. Not only is he anonymous, but he is *alienated*. He becomes separated from his fellow-man and becomes interested only in making his own way, using the law of the jungle. The urban dweller is seen by the advertisers, and often by himself, as a *consumer subject*. Radio, television, newspaper advertisements, and direct mail all bombard the urban dweller in an effort to get him to buy, to join, to subscribe, or to consume. He becomes more *individualistic*. He is not bound by the mores of the tribe, nor by the traditions of the local village. Indeed, he has little common agreement to look upon. Whereas he was formerly interested more in primary groups, such as the

A third factor in the growth of cities is \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The urban dweller often develops certain psychological characteristics:

He becomes e \_\_\_\_\_  
 t \_\_\_\_\_  
 a \_\_\_\_\_  
 i \_\_\_\_\_  
 a \_\_\_\_\_

(*extroverted, tense, aggressive, isolated, anonymous*)

FINISH READING THIS PARAGRAPH, WHICH CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE, BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

List four social characteristics which the urban dweller often develops.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

<sup>6</sup> Dr. García presented a series of seminars on the urban man, his characteristics, and his problems at the Conference on Urban Evangelism, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, August 13-20, 1974.

family, now he is more *interested in secondary groups*—the labour union, the bowling league, the political party.

In the moral and religious realm, at least in the Americas, he is *nominally Christian* but not often vitally Christian. There are notable exceptions to this statement; for instance, the Pentecostals and some other evangelicals are growing rapidly among the disinherited, rootless masses of the great cities of Latin America. The very factors we have just mentioned have made people ripe for acceptance of a clear-cut Gospel message that offers life, emotional response, a present Christ, and a warm fellowship of believers. Generally the urban dweller is more *relaxed in his morals*. He tolerates more in himself and in others. He is more *secular*. That is to say, he lives a large portion of his life without reference to God. Whereas the farmer tills the soil, prays to God for rain, and knows his dependence upon the elements, the city dweller is not so conscious of this. He puts a coin in a soft-drink machine and takes out what he has paid for. He turns on the light switch and has light. If it rains, he takes an umbrella. He thinks he is more in control of his life and the circumstances that surround him.

At the same time, he exhibits a reverse characteristic. Urban man has more tendency for a *flight into the irrational*. He realizes that there are impersonal forces that he cannot control. Thus he consults the daily paper for his horoscope. He gambles, feeling that "Lady Luck" may smile on him, and he consults the occult to see where he can derive greater powers for the daily battle. These facts have meant that in many cities the pseudo-Christian sects and spiritism have grown as rapidly, if not more so, than evangelical Christianity.

In the civic and political realm, he has *greater political consciousness*. He realizes that what happens at the state house may well affect his house, his job, and his future. As a consequence, he is more active politically.

Those who move to cities are affected psychologically, morally, socially, and economically. The Christian Church needs to be aware of the changes that are coming about and through use of the social sciences find out more about urban man's characteristics and how to minister to him.

The pressures and insecurities of urban life and other forces mean that the urban man has his specific problems. He has *family problems*. The husband or the husband and wife are often outside the home many hours each day seeking to make a living. The family ties are not as strong. They spend less time together, and the fabric that held the family together is weakened.

In many senses there is a disintegration in the home life. Home becomes simply a refueling and sleeping place.

Morally and religiously, the urban dweller is usually only nominally \_\_\_\_\_, relaxed in his \_\_\_\_\_, and more \_\_\_\_\_.

(Christian, morals, secular)

Urban man tends to escape into the irrational by:

consulting his h \_\_\_\_\_  
g \_\_\_\_\_  
consulting the o \_\_\_\_\_

(horoscope, gambling, occult)

Thus the urban dweller is affected

p \_\_\_\_\_, m \_\_\_\_\_,  
s \_\_\_\_\_, and e \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The urban family has problems because the husband and wife are often away from the home many hours making a \_\_\_\_\_.

Thus the family ties are not \_\_\_\_\_.

(living, strong)

Infidelity is easier to practise and cover up in the anonymity of the urban situation. Children are harder to rear.

The urban man meets problems of acculturation, that is, getting adapted to the city. The mass media and the public spectacles often bring degrading shows with low morals into his living room.

He has spiritual and moral problems. He is exposed to sects and groups and comes to wonder, "Who is really right?" Alcoholism and drug addiction are on a marked rise in the cities because drugs and liquor are readily available. He meets pornography on the newstands and sexual corruption on every hand. In the city, the skyscrapers overshadow the churches and are the symbols of a secular society.

In this strange milieu, the Church of Jesus Christ has a message, and we must get it to this man who desperately needs it. Because of the importance of the cities, we will dedicate a chapter to a strategy for urban evangelism.

### Political Factors

Both within a nation and on the international scene, the political situation often affects the Christian mission. It is difficult to build stable churches when refugees are streaming across the countryside, but the Church will try to have some ministry. Under a dictatorship, it is often difficult for a church to express freely itself, but it must continue to give witness. When the doors of some nations are closed to the missionaries of a certain group of nations, it is often possible for Christian missionaries from still a third group of nations to continue to reach this nation for Christ. Christianity has seldom operated under ideal conditions and has often grown in the face of stern opposition.

### Cultural Factors

Several years ago Ralph Winter of the School of Church Growth and Missions at the Fuller Theological Seminary developed terminology for expressing the varying degrees of cultural difference a missionary must cross in order to present his witness. He called them M1, M2, and M3. The M1 missionary carries on an intracultural ministry. He goes to people whose language and culture are similar to his own. He does not have to learn a new language, and he does not suffer cultural shock.

The M2 missionary must learn another language, but the differences of the culture are not too great. In this realm, we might think of a missionary sent from England or France to Mexico City.

The M3 missionary crosses radical boundaries to

*The Church of Jesus Christ has a message which is urgently needed by the \_\_\_\_\_ man.*

*(urban)*

*Give some examples of how the political situation often affects missions.*

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*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

become an intercultural missionary, such as a missionary from Germany to Thailand or to the Andes of Peru. Culture does make a difference, and the apostle of Christ today must adapt to this new environment if he is to present effectively the Gospel.

### Religious Factors

Among the chief opponents of Christianity in today's world are the "revived and aggressive indigenous religions," comments Eugene Nida.<sup>7</sup> Often, as in the case of Shintoism, Buddhism, and animism, they are used by government leaders in part of an ultranationalistic movement to condemn everything that is not considered native to the country.

On the positive side, animism in many quarters of Africa is weakening from its encounter with the scientific world, thus creating a vacuum into which Christianity can move with force.

There are five external factors that can make people receptive:

1. When people are still emotionally attached to their Christo-pagan forms of worship but are spiritually undernourished and uninstructed, they are responsive.
2. The fact that a rival religious system is morally corrupt may also help to stimulate interest in a new religion.
3. Certain developments seem to trigger interest in the message of Christianity (for example, in Africa, the dying of animism, the breaking up of tribalism, and the increasing of industrialization and urbanization).
4. A minority group finds in a church or its missionaries support in their struggle against a majority or dominant group. (This happened among the Karens of Burma.)
5. External preparatory factors may also be of a positive nature. For instance, before Judson reached the Karen population of Burma, they had a legend of strangers who would bring a black book. Today there are well over 200,000 Baptists among the Karens.<sup>8</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

Missions is a divine enterprise and will prevail, but God left it in the hands of human beings who are subject to change, urbanization, political, economic, cultural and religious factors.

Urbanization is one of the key concerns of our time. The rapid growth of the cities is due to general population growth and to industrialization that draws people to the cities and secularization. Urbanization develops certain characteristics in the urban dweller. He becomes more extroverted, subject to tensions, aggressive, and isolated.

<sup>7</sup> Donald A. McGavran, ed., *Church Growth and Christian Mission* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 61.

*State briefly five external factors that make people more receptive to the Gospel.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

He becomes anonymous. It brings certain problems. He becomes alienated, a consumer subject, more individualistic, and more oriented towards secondary groups.

In the Americas, he is nominally Christian but more relaxed in his morals and increasingly secular. He is prone to "flee into the irrational." He has a greater political consciousness and is more politically involved. He sees the weakening of family ties and has family problems. He has needs that Jesus Christ can meet, and it is the Church's responsibility to see that he hears the good news and has the opportunity.

The present wave of urbanization . . . provides a church-growth potential never seen since, perhaps, the days of the early church. At whatever cost, we must restructure our missionary strategy to step into this open door of opportunity.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> McGavran, ed., *Crucial Issues in Missions Tomorrow*, pp. 246-247.

*Modern man has needs that Jesus Christ can meet, and it is the Church's responsibility to see that he hears the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(good news)*

## Home Study Exercise

### Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Please explain: "Missions is both human and divine." \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How does change affect missions? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are some unchanging truths? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Define urbanization. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why is urbanization a special call to missionary activity? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How does a rootless society offer opportunities for the extension of the Gospel? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How does the migrant from country to city find his values tested? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Name three factors that have contributed to the fantastic growth of the cities. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. List five psychological characteristics the urban dweller often develops. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. List four social characteristics the urban dweller develops. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. How is the urban dweller's flight into the irrational illustrated? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What family problems often develop in cities? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. How can these external factors make people more receptive to the Gospel? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Supplementary activity (Levels 2, and 3)**

Read pages 179-197 in *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* and answer the following questions.

1. Why are cities of strategic importance to the Gospel?
2. What are some characteristics of a receptive city?
3. List five types of city churches.
4. How has mass evangelism been used in cities?
5. List six steps for multiplying city churches.

### Advanced activity (Level 3)

Read pages 179-208 in *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* and answer the following questions.

1. Relate Paul's ministry in the great cities of his day to the strategic importance of cities in our day.
2. What factors seem to make a city more receptive to the Gospel?
3. Describe five types of city churches.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evangelistic campaign as one method for reaching the urban dweller. List its strengths and weaknesses.
5. List six steps for multiplying urban churches and comment on one.
6. List five elements of missionary strategy in revolutions.

### Seminar Discussion

1. How do the eternal purposes of God interrelate with history?
2. How is change both an enemy and a friend of missions?
3. Relate some methods of evangelism that have proved effective in the cities.
4. How did Jesus and Paul show their concern for the cities?