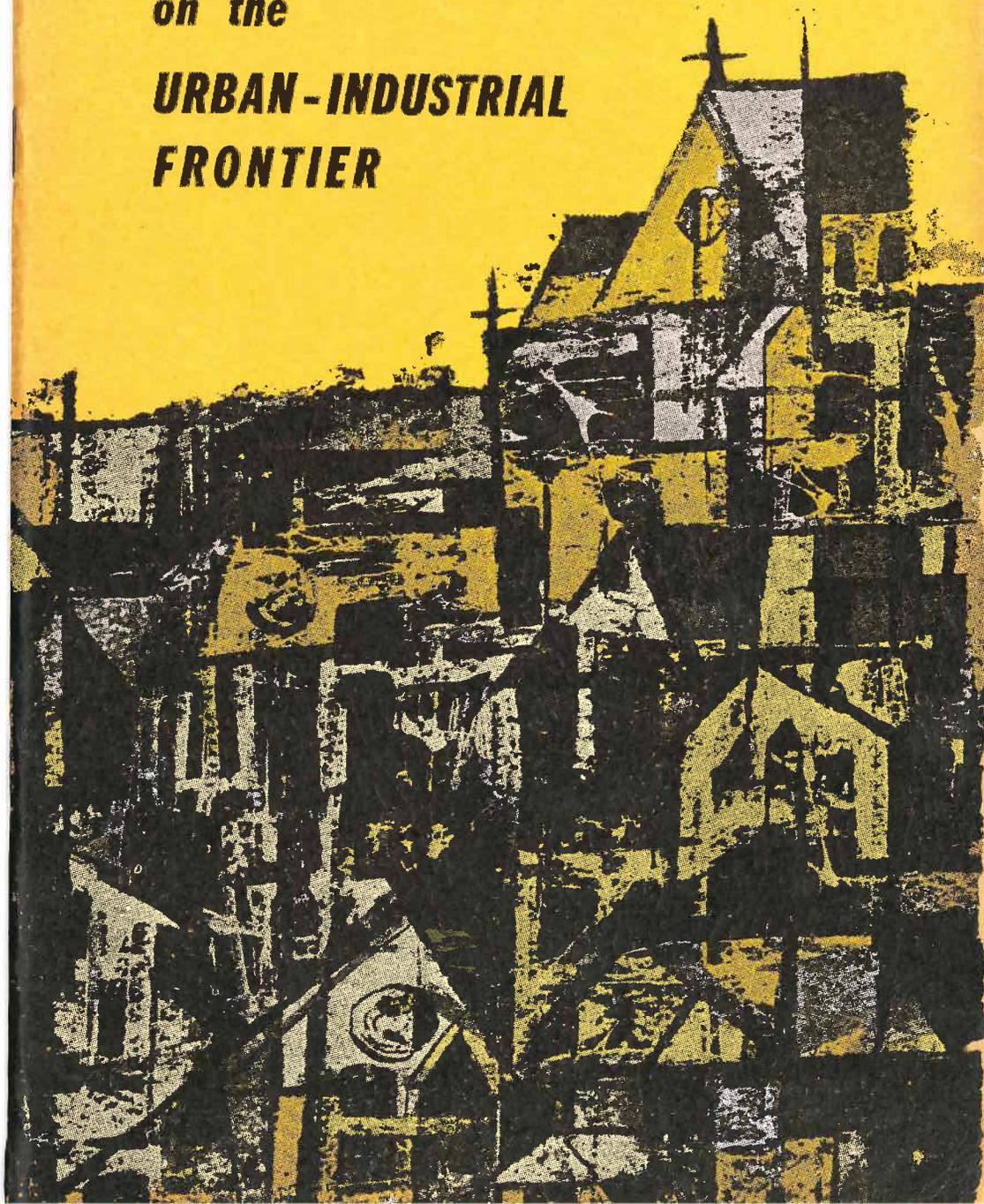


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THE PRIMATE CITY: MODERN ASIAN SKYLINE

By The Rev. Richard P. Poethig

WE have always thought of the world cities as being either in Europe or the United States. In my New York public school days I remember being carefully schooled in the fact that New York and London were competitors for the world's largest city. Today our children learn that Tokyo holds this honor, and our grandchildren will be taught that three of the five largest world cities are in Asia.

The urbanization of Asia has become one of the major phenomena of the twentieth century. In the first fifty years of this century Asian urban population in cities of over 100,000 had multiplied more than five times, from 19.4 millions in 1900 to 105.6 millions in 1950. In the same time Europe's urban population had risen from 32.1 millions to 83.1 million in 1950; and in the Americas the urban population figures rose from 18.6 millions to 74.6 millions. If we are interested in percentage increase, Africa's urban population had increased more than seven times in those fifty years from 1.4 millions to 10.2 millions.

In the world today one out of eight people lives in cities; area-wise roughly one out of twelve lives in cities in Asia; one out of five in Europe and one of three in North America. In 1950 of the cities in the world with over 100,000 population 289 were in Asia; 261 in Europe and 116 in North America.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASIAN URBANIZATION

But these figures do not adequately portray the *way* in which urbanization is taking place in Asia, and for that matter in Africa or Latin America. Most of Asia, and the other developing areas of the world, are still basically agricultural nations with large rural populations. In a study by Jack Gibbs and Kingsley Davis on International Urbanization covering 51 countries, the percentage of the population living in cities of over 100,000 inhabitants* accounted for 10.3% in the Philippines; 9.5%

* Note: 100,000 is the figure which designates a Metropolitan Area.

in Ceylon; 7.8% in Thailand; 5.1% in Pakistan. These figures on Asian urban population point to two facts in relation to over-all population; *First*, that Asian countries are still basically rural in their population make-up; *Second*, that urbanization is concentrated in one or several large cities. This development of larger cities in underdeveloped nations is in contrast to the *system* of cities which has developed in Western nations.

The concentration of population in a few urban centers is verified in the findings of two UNESCO Seminars; one conducted for Asia in 1956 and the other for Latin America in 1959. The basic similarity in the findings of the two Seminars provides clues to trends in the urbanization of the rapidly developing regions of the world. *First*, is the growth of what the Asian Seminar on Urbanization called *primate* cities. Within the smaller countries of Asia one city grows beyond any other urban center in the country. It is usually five to ten times the size of the next largest city. Even in the larger countries like India urbanization is concentrated in a small number of cities. Here five cities totalling 11 million people have one half of the urban population.

Second, the growth of cities in Asia and Latin America has been characterized by *over-urbanization*. This is to say that the growth of urban areas has taken place beyond the ability of these areas to provide for the larger populations. In the developing nations the level of urbanization has increased faster than the level of industrial development to provide jobs for people.

Third, the fact of over-urbanization has been rooted chiefly in the *migration* of peoples from the economically-poor rural areas. Both the Asian and Latin American Seminars hold that urbanization has taken place not so much from the *pull* of population into the orbit of cities by the attraction of industry and jobs, but from being *pushed* out of the rural areas because of low productivity or scarcity of land. Other contributing factors to the growth of cities can be seen in the varied experiences of Asian nations:

- i) Both war and civil war have helped swell the population of urban centers. In Taiwan the influx of Chiang Kai Chek's nationalist army added to the urbanization of that land. In Korea, the civil war brought on social dislocation and the cities served as relief distribution centers for the refugees seeking shelter and provisions.
- ii) In Malaya, urbanization has taken place around that country's export trade. The personnel needed for transporting, financing and handling the export of rubber and tin has increased the population of the Malayan port cities. In a similar fashion trade has built up the "entrepot" cities

of Singapore and Hong Kong. But Hong Kong's growth can also be attributed to the vast refugee population which it has sheltered.

- iii) In Indonesia, the population growth of Djakarta has been attributed not only to the emigre rural population, but to the *social mobility* of people desiring to raise their status. Men in industry, women domestic servants, and people seeking higher education all are part of the 100,000 annually who move to Djakarta.

In Africa the urban situation is following similar lines. One of the great movements taking place in Africa is the number of youths who leave their village homes and seek greater opportunity and the bright lights of city life. In one report from Nigeria, school officials claimed that between 80 to 90% of children finishing primary school leave their villages and town for the cities. Let me quote a Christian Council of Nigeria report:

The reason for trek to the big city is always the same; after a few years of education, youths refuse to return to the primitive farming methods of their parents. The problem these young people face in the city is all too frequently that it may take them anywhere from one to three years to find a satisfactory job, and some are still only semi-employed at the end of four or five years. It takes only a moment to compute the number of workers or under-employed there will be at the end of ten years if recent migration of school leavers to the cities continues.

This leads us to the *fourth* trend in urbanization:—the socio-economic implications of urbanization in the under-developed countries of the world. Urbanization in capital or primate cities has a paralyzing effect upon other areas of the country. Not only does it draw off the youth of the rural areas, but it centralizes development within its own environment. The influx of people into an urban center occurs faster than the economy of the city is able to provide jobs for them. Unemployment and under-employment bring in their wake inadequate housing and squatter conditions; poor sanitation, disease and high mortality in that order. The city grows much faster than the local government is able to provide additional educational, health and welfare facilities. Inadequate facilities in turn intensifies the problems of juvenile delinquency, mendicancy, and crime. Thus the growing city becomes its own major problem.

THE URBANIZATION OF MANILA

Let me focus this study of urbanization briefly on Manila. Manila fulfills all the characteristics of what the UNESCO Asian Seminar called

a *primate* city. Within the past twenty years Greater Manila has doubled its population from one million in 1941 to over two million in 1961. The Greater Manila area is approximately 8 times the size of the next largest city, Cebu. The growth of Manila as a city has come from many factors the major of which is the lack of opportunity in the rural areas. This factor is coupled with the expectation of a better future in the city.

Of the country's total national income in 1959, the combined income of both agricultural and non-agricultural workers accounted for 41.7% of the national income. Of this amount agricultural workers received only 23.4% to the 76.6% of the non-agricultural workers. Those engaged in agricultural employment in 1959 were 5 1/2 million (5,525,000) or 56.9% of the labor force. This gives some idea of the low level of income which prevails in the rural areas in comparison to the urban and town workers. This is the reason for the large number of students from the provinces who refuse to return to their areas upon graduation.

Manila's growth has had a direct effect upon the growth of other urban areas and provincial towns. A Directory of Key Establishments in the Philippines compiled for 1959-60 indicates that Manila has 53% of the nation's industrial work force and over 40% of the nation's total employing establishments of all sizes. The centralization of development in Manila has added to the problem of unemployment and under-employment. The growing number of people who have come to Manila have flooded the labor market. This is not only true of rural emigres, but of the student population as well. It is estimated that over 50% of the 360,000 being added to the labor market annually are high school and college graduates. Out of a Philippine labor force of 9,708,000 in 1959, the unemployed totalled 749,000 or 7.7% of the total labor force. If we add the number of under-employed to this figure we have 1,793,000 or a ratio of one unemployed or under-employed worker for every five employed workers. This figure helps make up the number of those people who move into the squatter sections of the city which become the cess-pools of human misery and crime.

URBANIZATION AND THE CHURCH

Wherever you go in Asia today, you will find basically the same problems—the movement toward urbanization and the great expectations for a higher standard of living through modernization and industrialization. Let me outline briefly how this drive to urbanization affects the church in the Philippines.

First, urbanization draws off many rural and town young people to the city. It is usually the most adventurous who leave first, mainly in

search of work or to go to school. In their stead others follow, continually drawing off the leadership from the rural and town areas. Even when a region is successful economically, there is no guarantee that the young people will remain in the area. More money locally stimulates young people to search for adventure and entertainment in the bigger towns and urban centers. One Ilocos province pastor complained that the youth of the successful tobacco region went off with money in their pockets to the bigger towns on the week-ends, thus deserting the local Christian Youth Fellowship programs.

Second, the allurements of the city for young people creates the problem of young girls in the provinces hired for household help in the city of Manila. Often young girls seeking to escape the boredom of their areas are taken in by the "sales-pitch" of the labor recruiter. Poorer families seeing the opportunity for a source of income from their daughters' work, allow them to go off to the city. The girls, however, are usually heavily in debt for their transportation, board and food before they are hired in Manila. Many of the girls never do find household jobs but end up in night club hostessing and prostitution. This has become a major problem in the Bicol region and Samar where some of our evangelical families have allowed their daughters to go to Manila for jobs. Some girls have never been heard from again.

A third effect of the migration of our young people to the city has been their urbanization and their eventual loss to the church. Very few of our churches provide effective programs for the unmarried young adult who comes to the city to complete his education or to find work. The young adult has very specific needs both vocationally and socially. He wants to find his proper niche in society and a good spouse. His absorption in these pursuits brings him into relationship with other groups socially, vocationally, educationally, recreationally and civically. All of these interests compete for his time. If the church cannot answer his specific needs, the young adult is drawn off into other avenues and loses touch with the church.

A fourth aspect of urbanization is the insecurity the church feels in the life of the city. The church is often a transplant of traditional social and cultural patterns in the midst of urban change. In contrast to the cosmopolitan make-up of the city, churches hold fast to familial, language and regional interests. This conservatism leaves them outside the mainstream of the city's life.

The city is multi-lingual, multi-communal, multi-structural while the church becomes a society protective of family patterns which it has

carried over from the past. The church's concern for preservation of the family is a noble task, but often it creates an exclusiveness which restricts the church from reaching out to assimilate new people. As the city's life moves toward an inter-mingling and inter-communication between varieties of people the "family" church becomes a closed corporation ministering to its own select group of people.

Fifth, besides the danger of becoming a church limited by family, language or regional interests, the church in the city faces the added dilemma of becoming a "class" church. As H. Richard Niebuhr has so effectively pointed out in his *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, when Protestantism developed out of its Reformation beginnings the various churches, denominations and sects embodied the aspirations and outlook of particular social classes. In the Philippines within the "old-line" Protestant groups there is a growing middle class, professional constituency. While this growth in middle-class membership can in part be attributed to the general social change in the class structure in the urban and towns, the Protestant ethic with its emphasis upon individual responsibility and personal improvement has greatly effected the social structure of the evangelical community. While many within the evangelical community have grown in their urbanization, in their educational achievement and in their cultural interests, this is not always true of the pastors in urban churches. The pastors in city churches, over 90% of whom have come from rural and town backgrounds, have not been trained to face the demands of the city and to communicate with the *new elite* of the city population. Thus many of the rising middle class gravitate to the few churches where there is a relevant ministry to the city's life.

The growing middle class-professional structure of the Protestant churches raises a sixth problem for the urban ministry of the church. As the middle class structure of the urban churches has grown, the evangelical movement has neglected or has been unable to communicate with those in the lower economic groups and the new urban-industrial classes. In this situation it is not surprising to find other religious groups making inroads among the new urban masses. The million peso cathedrals of the Iglesia ni Cristo built from the offerings of the common *tao* of the town and urban populations stand as a witness to the impact which new religions are making upon the "uprooted" rural peoples who live in cities around the world.* The "new" religions of Japan and the nationalistic sects of Africa fulfill emotional and social needs which the

* The number of adherents of The Iglesia ni Cristo in Manila, which is 16,674 in comparison to 24,268 total of all other evangelical Christians in the city, points up the urban base of this sect.

Christian churches have not been able to provide in the transitional period from a rurally-rooted orientation to modern urban-living.

A PROTESTANT URBAN AWARENESS

In our work in the city the evangelical churches must be alert to the new ministry which they are called upon to perform. First, they have to take seriously the process of urbanization which has left the churches with a traditional understanding of their ministry outside the main stream of city life. They need to see their ministry beyond the limits of their own church rolls to the total life of the community. Christian congregations need to be prepared by their pastors and their lay leaders for a new life in the city. The task of the church is not to preserve the social patterns of the rural areas, which sooner or later must face the impact of urban change, but to prepare their people to live fruitful, faithful lives within the new organizational structures of the city.

Second, the church needs to be aware of the new social structures which are taking shape under the pressure of urbanization. Trade unions and industrial workers, entrepreneurial and middle classes, social and neighborhood associations, civic and political groups, make up the new organizational life of the city. The church's ministry, to be effective, much reach out into these social groupings. The task of the church is not only to make its Christian presence known, but to be open itself to the purpose which God is unfolding within these new structures.

Third, the church's ministry needs to be present in urban society to restore community and to speak for justice in those areas where social change has divided man from man and has abandoned individuals to the mercy of social evils. The church needs to be involved in the power structures of modern urban society in a relevant way. The church needs to present the Christian concern for human dignity and human community so that these values will continually weigh upon the consciences of those who make the decisions in contemporary urban culture.

AN INTER-CHURCH APPROACH

The urbanization of Asia raises specific organizational tasks for the church in the modern city. The small number of Christians in the midst of a complex and rapidly expanding urban situation makes urgent the development of an inter-church approach to the life of the city. In Manila non-Roman Catholics of all traditions compose only 3% of the city's population. Evangelical Protestants of all varieties compose less than 2% of the population. No one church has the financial or organ-

izational resources necessary to carry out an effective approach to the city. Most churches can do little more than hold their own against the absorptive powers of the city.

What would an inter-church approach entail?

First, it would be necessary to strengthen inter-church cooperation regionally. Inter-church cooperation would provide a united voice for dealing effectively at the regional level with community problems which cannot be met alone. The present zone meetings of pastors and laymen being used by the Philippine Bible House in preparing laymen for Universal Bible Week are a good starting point for other study and action projects within the particular sections of the city. From the zonal groups there could develop an inter-zonal council to weigh the major problems of the city and to plan an interdenominational strategy in meeting the problems of urbanization. In some areas churches might come together to pool their resources in developing new forms of the ministry to meet needs in their neighborhood untouched before.

A second aspect of a united ministry within the life of the city would be the development of urban pastor's seminars. Such seminars would bring pastors together to deepen their understanding of the new patterns of life people face in the city. Urban seminars conducted on an inter-church basis would have better call upon the services of sociologists, economists, psychologists, civic leaders, government people and other resource persons involved in the life of the city. Studies of particular city districts would uncover areas of need and possible avenues of cooperation among the churches in penetrating the new structures of the city's life. Cooperation from pastors and their churches would make possible research studies aimed at discovering the nature and life of the city church.

Another aspect of this inter-church ministry within the life of the city would be training courses and conferences for the laity. The laity of the churches are deeply involved in the life of the city. Many of them are the only Protestants in their place of work. They feel alone in the midst of the demands that the city's life makes upon them. Churches on the other hand, are primarily concerned with training their laymen in the particular doctrinal emphasis of the denomination. Within the city a broader understanding of the Christian faith is necessary. Urbanization is total in its impact upon the city dweller. No matter what their religious background, people face the same problems in their struggle for meaning in the city. The city draws people into its orbit and recreates them according to its own impersonal, secular, autonomous pattern of life. Building on this common experience which city folk face,

the churches working together could establish courses for their laity relating the Biblical Faith to the issues of city life. These issues shared and understood from within a Christian perspective, could strengthen laymen in their ministry of reconciliation among their associates in the city's life.

Another part of the church's organizational strategy is the freeing of some pastors from congregational responsibilities to develop ministries among the new social groupings in the city. By working together regionally on an inter-church or a group ministry basis, churches could carry out a variety of ministries which would not be possible as a single congregation. A pastor, without special congregational responsibilities could concentrate his ministry within a specific work group or in a specific area of social need. A mobile ministry might be performed on the docks among stevedores or in a business district among office workers. Another ministry might be carried out among alcoholics or dope addicts. Still another ministry might be concentrated in developing a knowledge of the agencies and the political power structure of the city. Such specialized knowledge would help the churches in expressing their social concern on behalf of those people caught in situations of disintegration.

CONCLUSION

With the rapid development of city life in Asia, the traditional patterns of reaching and gathering people for the church have undergone drastic change. The churches must face the task of rethinking their ministry together in relation to the new social structures into which people are being absorbed. Failing to meet this responsibility, the churches will become self-interest groups vainly trying to preserve their little islands against the tides of urban social change. Facing up to the challenge of rapid urbanization, they can open a new day in mission and provide a new dimension for understanding their unity in Christ.