

A CRITIQUE OF THE URBAN MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN LIGHT OF AN EMERGING POSTMODERN CONDITION

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The world is becoming an urban society. The urban expansion witnessed during the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century is unprecedented in the history of the human civilization. Simultaneously, the Western world faces the paradigm shift from the modern era to a postmodern condition. Both movements have remarkable implications for the mission of the church in urbanized, postmodernizing societies. Shaped by the modern worldview, the church is now further ostracized by the postmodern condition.

While the literature of urban mission has grown in the past few years, little consideration has been given to the particular issues and implications of urban mission in the context of postmodernity. Thus this study addresses the relationship between the urban mission of the church and the emergence of the postmodern condition.

This investigation of urban mission in the light of the postmodern ethos is based on the historical, philosophical, sociological, and cultural analyses of the modern and postmodern eras provided in chapters 2 and 3, respectively. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between the urban mission of the church and the postmodern condition primarily by locating the emergence of postmodernism in the context of urbanization and globalization. Some urban missiological implications and suggested principles for reaching the postmodern mind in the urban context are drawn from the findings of this research and are presented in chapter 5.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the centralizing power of the city—added to the pervasive influence of a global market—makes the urban environment the locus of the postmodern condition. Consequently, the challenges and opportunities for urban mission have never been greater. In spite of the major threats postmodernism poses for mission, the current urban sociocultural outlook offers opportunities that did not exist a few decades ago. Therefore, within the context of the combined forces of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism, an extensive review of the strategies and methods of urban mission is vital for the development of postmodern-sensitive churches as the church seeks to fulfill its calling to participate in God's mission to urbanized, postmodernizing generations.