SPIRITUALITY & THE CITY : Sion Lecture delivered 23rd June 2011 at Lambeth Palace

Just before the American Presidential election in November 2008, I saw a poster outside Old South Church in Boston and read: "Voting is a civil sacrament". What an interesting phrase – the public realm is sacred and citizenship is a kind of spiritual practice. Following that thought, I want to suggest that the meaning and future of human cities is a critical *spiritual*, not simply social or economic issue of our age.

Since the days of Plato and Aristotle, Western cities were understood as powerful symbols of human community and, in particular, as paradigms of our public life. Unfortunately, since the nineteenth century, particularly in the UK and USA, the private sphere (inwardness, family and friends, home) has often been idealised as the backstage where we are truly ourselves, relaxing unobserved before playing out different roles on the public stage.[1] However, from a Christian perspective is public existence simply a role? Following Augustine, Christian theology affirms that there is no absolutely private identity. To be human implies a common life with a common task. It is important to note the intimate link between our identity and a Trinitarian theology of God. The core of the Christian life is to become united with God in Jesus Christ through a Spirit-led communion, *koinonía,* with one another. God's own relational nature is fundamental to this life. God *is* persons-in-communion, a mutuality of self-giving love. From this we understand that *koinonía* underpins existence.[2]

In practical terms, what does "public" imply? Some social theorists such as José Casanova focus public life on the political sphere.[3] Another American, Lyn Lofland, interprets "the public" more broadly as the context where we interact with strangers.[4] Here, diverse people struggle to establish a *common life*. To live publicly means learning how to be truly hospitable to what is different and unfamiliar. For Lofland, the city is *the* public realm par excellence.

What about spirituality? For many people the word merely implies a quest for interior experience or individual self-realisation. Yet, Archbishop Rowan Williams has noted that "we are systematically misled, even corrupted, by a picture of the human agent as divided into an outside and an inside – a 'true self', hidden, buried, to be excavated by one or another kind of therapy".[5] Rather, our identity is constructed human interaction and communication. An unbalanced *rhetoric* of interiority has serious moral consequences because it suggests that our outer life is of secondary importance.

Interestingly, Evelyn Underhill suggests in her classic book *Mysticism* that a defining characteristic of Christian spirituality is that union with God impels a person towards an active rather than purely inward life.[6] Her favourite example was the fourteenth-century Flemish priest John Ruusbroec. He understood the contemplative life as something that joined humans to each other in mutual service. "A person who has been sent down by God from these heights [contemplation] is full of truth and rich in all the virtues…He will therefore always flow forth to all who need him, for the living spring of the Holy Spirit is so rich that it can never be drained dry……He therefore leads a common life, for he is equally ready for contemplation or for action and is perfect in both."[7] Ruusbroec adds that people who practise the attainment of inwardness and disregard charity are of all people most guilty of spiritual wickedness.[8]

A number of recent writers also suggest that contemplative spirituality is vital in the public realm. The Spanish theologian Gaspar Martinez notes that modern Catholic theologies engaged with public or political life also focus on spirituality, for example Johannes Baptist Metz, Gustavo Gutierrez and David Tracy.[9] Robert Egan, writing on Christian mysticism, suggests that in Christian terms all inner transformation is ultimately for the sake of transformative action in society.[10] Equally, the Chilean theologian Segundo Galilea writes powerfully concerning the need for a contemplative basis to our responses to injustice. Such responses are ineffective if they are purely political for we cannot be truly compassionate without becoming part of Jesus' own compassion. Galilea therefore argues that, in terms of social change, contemplative practice underpins the inner conversion needed for real solidarity.[11]

From a different theological tradition, Jürgen Moltmann, in his little book *Experiences of God,* writes of the ethical dimension of mystical "experiential wisdom". He maps out a five-fold contemplative process which begins with our engagement in the pains of the world. Action for change inevitably leads to a realisation that a fully Christian response must be embedded in contemplation, specifically

of Jesus Christ in the scriptures. Contemplation then provokes a movement away from self and false images of God towards an encounter with the living God. This is what mystical theology calls “union”. However, for Moltmann “union” is not a detached spiritual state. At the heart of God we encounter the cross of Christ who dispossessed himself in self-giving love. Union thus becomes a new point of departure towards renewed, socially-engaged discipleship. “Mysticism does not mean estrangement from action; it is a preparation for public, political discipleship.”[12] Now I will return to the theme of cities as spiritual challenge.

The City as Spiritual Challenge

Cities represent and create a climate of values that define how we understand ourselves and gather together. In his provocative study, *The City: A Global History,* Joel Kotkin notes that throughout history, successful cities have performed three critical functions – the provision of security, the hosting of commerce and the creation of sacred space.[13] Historically this has been expressed by religious buildings that embody a transcendent horizon in the city. However the point is that the city itself is, or should be, a sacred place, embodying a vision of human existence.

The world is rapidly becoming urbanised. The contemporary growth rate of cities presents a critical issue. In 1950, 29% of the world’s population lived in urban environments. By 1965 this had risen to 36%, by 1990 to 50%. This is predicted to rise to around 60% by 2025, 70% by 2050 and at least 75% by the end of this century.[14] In the first part of the 21st century the “big story” is a global migration of people from countryside to city. Humanity for the first time faces a mega-urbanised world. This also means that we are dealing increasingly with mega-cities most of which are in the new economic giants - Mumbai 18m, Sao Paolo 17+m, Shanghai 14+m, Seoul 13m.

However, these sprawling cities are in crisis – burdened by crime, congestion and pollution. As Eduardo Mendieta, a leading American urbanist suggests, this means in effect that the mega-urbanisation of the world is simultaneously “slumisation”. Currently, one in six city-dwellers is a slum dweller. At the current rate of increase, by 2050 one in three people on the planet – 3 billion – will be.

As we confront urban futures in the twenty-first century, a key question is ‘what are cities *for*?’ If cities are to have *meaning* rather than simple an unavoidable existence, there needs to be greater reflection on their civilizing possibilities. Cities have a capacity to focus a range of physical, intellectual and creative energies simply because they combine differences of age, ethnicity, culture, gender and religion in unparalleled ways.

In Western countries, over the last fifty years, cities have often undermined place identity. The French anthropologist Marc Augé distinguishes between place, engaged with our identity, relationships and history and creative of social life, and non-place (“curious places which are both everywhere and nowhere”) where no organic social life is possible. He points to supermarkets, airports, hotels, motorways, working at a computer. These experiences bring about a fragmentation of awareness and incoherence in relation to “the world”.[15]

Equally, the monumental architecture that characterises many of today's commercial cities does not stand for the value of people or for effective relationships. Rather, it speaks the language of size, money and power. Since World War II, modern cities also frequently lack an identifiable centre to express the life of a multifaceted community. Where did this tendency come from? Paradoxically, it began with a Christian-inspired quest for more beautiful and healthier cities to counter 19th century industrialized cities, dominated by crowded slums and belching factories.[16] The prophet was Dana Webster Bartlett, a Congregationalist pastor, who had ministered in the tenements of St Louis and was a founder of the City Beautiful movement. He went to Los Angeles at the beginning of the 20th century and promoted the movement of manufacturing away from city centres to the edges and the move of working class people from teeming tenements to single-family homes with gardens. Thus were born suburbia and urban sprawl. By the 1930s Los Angeles demonstrated to the world a new urban vision – dispersed, multi-centred and largely suburbanized. The downside was the absence of public parks or other great public areas of earlier cities and the loss of compact community. In the

long term, the City Beautiful movement, by idealizing suburbs as a new kind of urban gospel, encouraged car ownership, increased pollution and led to social incoherence.

This process was further exacerbated in Europe by a view of urban planning (derived in part from the Swiss architect Le Corbusier) which divided cities into distinct "zones" for living, working, leisure and shopping. The consequences were the separation of these areas by distance and clear boundaries and a fragmentation of human living. This may also be said to reflect a growing secularisation of Western culture. There is no spiritually centred meaning for the city. It becomes a commodity, fragmented into multiple activities and ways of organising time and space.[17]

A Christian Anti-Urban Rhetoric?

Western thinking about cities was deeply influenced over a thousand years by Christian theology. Christianity has sometimes been accused of an anti-urban bias. The scriptures certainly get off to a tricky start. The Book of Genesis seems deeply gloomy about cities. Cain, symbol of human pride and violence, is portrayed as the founder of Enoch the first city, an alternative to God's Eden (Gen 4, 16-17). The people of Babel with their tower seek to replace the authority of God (Gen 11, 1-9). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are classic symbols of corruption. Yet, there are other positive biblical images of the city. In the Psalms, God is enthroned in the sanctuary of Zion in Psalm 9, the city is a living reminder of God's power and faithfulness in Psalm 48 and those who live in the city are required to share God's peace with one another in Psalm 122, 6-9. In the New Testament, Jerusalem is the focus and climax of Jesus' mission. The cities of the Roman Empire become the centre of Christian mission in Acts, particularly in the strategy of St Paul. Most striking of all, on the last page of the New Testament (Revelation, 21), a new holy city, harmonious and peaceful, becomes the image of the establishment of God's reign. Christianity rapidly became an urban religion.[18]

However, the eminent American social theorist Richard Sennett blames Christian theology, in part, for the soulless nature of modern cities in the West based on "a divide between subjective experience and worldly experience, self and city."[19] This reflects an unacknowledged fear of self-exposure and mixture, viewed as a threat rather than as life-enhancing.[20] For Sennett, Augustine's classic, *City of God,* is a foundational expression of the triumph over the everyday city of an inner spiritual 'world' restlessly searching for eternal fulfillment. In this context, human social places are a distraction.[21]

Augustine's Human City

Augustine was indeed suspicious of attempts by any ruler to suggest that theirs *was* the perfect politics let alone God's Kingdom on earth.[22] Yet, most scholars agree that his *City of God* does not deny the status of the secular realm. The "secular" simply implies the *saeculum,* 'this age', the here and now. We need to distinguish carefully between Augustine's theological concept of the "earthly city" (*civitas terrena,* realm of sin) and the social reality of the everyday city. This is a neutral space where the spiritual reality of 'the city of God' and the counter-spiritual reality of 'the earthly city' co-exist, like the wheat and tares, until the end of time. Augustine is not indifferent to the moral foundations of the human city and did not deny a place for the public sphere within a Christian interpretation of the world as theatre of God's action.[23]

Christian Urban Visions

More broadly, Western Christianity came to embrace a spiritual vision of the city. During the 11th and 12th centuries, Europe underwent a major urban revival, the first since the end of the Roman Empire, outstripped only during the industrial revolution. This had a serious impact on religious perspectives. A striking consequence of the new urbanism was the development of the great cathedrals. In the urban cathedral, paradise was symbolically evoked and also brought down to earth at the heart of the city.[24] To enter it was to be transported into a transcendent realm by the spaces, floods of light through glass-filled walls and increasingly elaborate liturgies. For Abbot Suger of St Denis, often credited with the birth of Gothic, the architecture of church buildings was intended to be a microcosm

of the cosmos, evoking a peaceable oneness between Creator and creation. This was a utopian space where an idealised heavenly harmony was anticipated in the here and now.[25]

At best, the great churches promoted a constructive urban vision. They were repositories for the cumulative memory and aspirations of a city where people engage with human pain, achievements, hopes and ideals. These "memory palaces" are a constant reminder that the very act of *remembering* in itself is vital to a healthy sense of identity. The American philosopher Arnold Berleant suggests that the great cathedrals act as guides to an 'urban ecology' that transforms the city "from a place where one's humanity is constantly threatened into a place where it is continually achieved and enlarged".[26] Such an urban icon speaks of the 'condition of the world' and offers communion with something deeper than merely a well-ordered city.

The City as Sacred Landscape

However, there was also a sense that the streets themselves embraced a wider sacred landscape. In European Catholic countries, street corners still frequently retain religious plaques and statues. For example, the rich collection of street shrines in the *città vecchia* of Bari, ranging from the twelfth century to the present day, has been the subject of extensive study.[27] The sense that a city is a sacred landscape was reinforced by processions and rituals. In the pre-modern city, Christian ritual was a *public drama,* not only in church liturgies but also in feast-day pageants, mystery plays and street processions (the ancestors of modern carnivals). Christian cities also sometimes made the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21 a model for urban planning. Thus, the 1339 Statutes of Florence emphasised the existence of the sacred number of twelve gates even though the gates had by then expanded to fifteen![28]

Later in the Middle Ages, the birth of the great Italian piazza owes much to the new religious orders – for example, Franciscans and Dominicans - and their preaching churches. These developed great open spaces in front where crowds gathered to listen to sermons (in Florence, Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella or Santissima Annunziata). The colonnaded piazza – a kind of laicized cloister – also offered a vision of the city, metaphorically (it engendered a concept of public space for intermingling) and practically (it opened up new urban vistas).

Italy also promoted the ideal that city life, where like the Heavenly City a diverse and organized citizenry lived together in peace, was as much a way to God as monasticism. A poetic genre, the *laudes civitatis*, articulated a utopian ideal of civic life in which every citizen could contribute to building up the whole. The faith of the citizenry underpinned a city's claim to holiness. Thus a Milanese hymn praised the inhabitants because collectively they fulfilled *all* the requirements of the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 25: that the hungry be fed, strangers welcomed, the naked clothed, sick cared for, prisoners visited.[29]

The great medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas described a city as the most complete of human communities.[30] For Aquinas, cities and politics were important because he understood community as vital to human flourishing. He offered a Christian reading of Aristotle's notion of cities as creative of the virtues. Aquinas noted that cities begin pragmatically but ultimately continue for the sake of 'the good life' – that is, the properly human virtues of courage, temperance, liberality, greatness of soul, companionable modesty.[31] These only arise in cities because virtue is learned precisely through human interaction. Based on this vision, Aquinas believed that it was unnatural for humans to live outside community.[32]

Protestant Ethic of Space

Richard Sennett specifically suggests connections between the sterility of modern urbanism and what he calls "a Protestant ethic of space".[33] For him, Protestantism promoted "the compulsive neutralising of the environment" - for example the way modernist planners designed the 'neutral city'. This reflected a puritanical suspicion of pleasure and colour. "The sacred" should be sober rather than fun. Certainly Protestantism affirmed the unbridgeable gulf between the holiness of God and the

world of sinful creatures. It also relocated “the sacred” to the community of believers and sometimes downgraded physical mediations of God’s presence.

Yet, despite such changed sensibilities, the second great Western urban expansion during the Industrial Revolution provoked in Protestant thinkers the city as a religious symbol in a new guise. There was a renewal of paradise imagery. Heaven was now described as an *active* place, modelled on the productivity of new industrial cities. The morally righteous would not find in heaven a place of eternal *rest* for that would be lazy and frivolous. Rather they would lead industrious and busy lives of decent work and public service. This is especially striking in the book *Physical Theory of Another Life* by the American Scott Isaac Taylor. William Clark Wyatt a late nineteenth-century New York pastor also suggested that “Heaven will be a busy hive, a center of industry”.[29]

In the 20th century, Protestantism had other positive impacts on city theory and design. For example, during the extension of the London Underground Piccadilly Line to the suburbs in the 1930s, stations were designed to be focal points and to raise the spirits of local people. Their architect Charles Holden was a deeply religious Quaker and Frank Pick, the director of the London Passenger Transport Board who commissioned the stations, was a Congregationalist preacher who believed that even a tube station was a quiet act of devotion.

Michel de Certeau, Le Corbusier and the Modern City

In reflecting on more recent urban realities from a Christian perspective, the writings of the French Jesuit Michel de Certeau (died 1986), a social scientist and historian of Christian spirituality and priest, are especially provocative.[34] In his famous essay for architects, “Ghosts in the city”, it is clear that one target was Le Corbusier, a great figure of twentieth-century architecture and planning. Le Corbusier stood for two aspects of planning that de Certeau abhorred: a tendency to obliterate the past and to subordinate people’s lives to abstract, elitist concepts of ‘space’. Interestingly, Le Corbusier was influenced by aspects of Christian symbolism but fundamentally believed in a utopianism based on a kind of mystical Gnostic matter-spirit dualism.[35]

For Le Corbusier, true knowledge and value were found in the inner, individual life. Consequently, his city plans made it difficult for people to gather together casually because uncontrolled socialising was a distraction. He sought to eliminate anything that reinforced public life as a determining factor in human identity. Not surprisingly, Le Corbusier disliked participatory politics. Totalitarianism offered efficient bureaucracy without wasting time on political debate.[36]

Le Corbusier espoused the “radiant city”, with glass towers reaching to the sky offering a transcendent horizon. In this spirit, Le Corbusier called the skyscrapers of Manhattan “new white cathedrals”. They engineered a kind of euphoria and not only embodied transcendence in their sublime height but offered a ‘total vision’ symbolised by panoramic vistas. The *city itself* was the Temple and consequently Le Corbusier’s city plans had no churches

In contrast, de Certeau was concerned that the urban regeneration of Paris in the 1960s, which created upmarket apartments and shopping precincts, also displaced existing communities and forced them to disperse to outer areas where low-cost housing projects are still problematic islands of alienation inhabited by new waves of immigrants. De Certeau’s attack on Modernist regeneration for erasing history was not nostalgia. Rather, he emphasised the power of narrative to shape environments and to transform them. In terms of everyday life, it is story as much as layout that enables people to *use* the city as a means of creative living. Stories take ownership of spaces, define boundaries and create bridges between individuals. For de Certeau, a city is a narrative tapestry woven by its users - their chance encounters, the stories they tell each other, the dreams they share. His understanding of narrative also embraced the *history* of “place” because without respecting the past a city becomes dysfunctional.

De Certeau’s viewpoint was partly political but there was also a clear spiritual underpinning to his pleading with architects.[37] His defence of provisionality, objection to utopian visions, and belief that a harmonious arrangement of human environments implies more than rationality reflects Augustine’s theology learned from his mentor, the great theologian Henri de Lubac.

In a second essay, "Walking in the City" de Certeau expressed another favourite theme, resistance to systems of control that leave no room for difference.[38] Standing on top of the World Trade Center, he wrote of the temptation of looking down upon the city and totalising it. Lifted out of Manhattan's grasp, we could become simply *voyeurs,* reading the city as if it were a simple text. But this is an illusion.[39] What he calls the 'concept-city' of politicians and planners was dying. What outlives it are the people who walk below, "the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to control or suppress".[40] These everyday practices are a city's lifeblood. That is why de Certeau believed that allowing for the casual was so important. "[T]o eliminate the unforeseen as an illegitimate accident and an obstacle to rationality is to forbid the possibility of a living practice of the city."[41]

De Certeau rejected the urban utopias of people like Le Corbusier partly because they reduced 'transcendence' to abstractions about 'space' and 'light' but mainly because they sought to impose a kind of secularised salvation through social engineering and abstract design.

Spirituality in the City

I now want to think briefly about some elements of spirituality related to the rebuilding the city both physically and socially.

Some twenty years ago *Faith in the City* was the controversial and influential Church of England report on Britain's cities. In 2006 a new ecumenical Commission on Urban Life & Faith published a further report, *Faithful Cities.* Reflecting a theme that also preoccupies planners, architects and policy-makers, the report asks: what makes *a good city?* Words used include 'active', 'diverse' and 'inclusive', 'safe', 'well-led', 'environmentally sensitive', with an 'active civil society', 'values the inhabitants' and with 'opportunities for all', 'attracts wealth creators' but also 'shares its wealth', big enough to be viable but small enough to be on a human scale. In a sentence, the "good city" enables human aspirations to be productive rather than repressed or selfish. Fundamentally, the "good city" is person-centred and inclusive.

The Spiritual and Spatial Structures

Although *Faith in the City* opens up interesting areas it says relatively little about the built environment compared to civil society. Indeed, many of us may not be used to thinking about spirituality in relation to spatial structures. So, first of all I want to speak briefly about three ways in which buildings and spaces may shape a spiritual environment. We need urban planning and building designs that express more than a purely utilitarian approach to human needs. They need to speak to us of the "condition of the world".

One design question concerns *awe*. Awe may refer to God or to a more diffuse sense of transcendence. What makes buildings or spaces "awesome" in a constructive sense? It surely implies more than sheer amazement at design innovation or at the overwhelming presence of buildings that materially dominate the skyline. "Awesome" also reflects *motive and purpose.* I suggest that genuine reverence and awe are more likely in relation to structures that reinforce the overall value of people, and of shared public life, rather than merely project the profiles of socio-economic elites. In this context it is interesting to reflect on debates about the contemporary genre of "iconic buildings". These have replaced the symbolic landmarks of yesteryear that had a power to persuade or that enshrined reminders of the foundational values of a society.[42]

People's reactions to iconic buildings are ambivalent. On the positive side, thoughtful architects suggest that, apart from being impressively designed and highly visible, iconic structures should once again act as collective symbols that animate a place and articulate its very nature. Two prominent architectural thinkers make interesting comments. Laurie Peake suggests that an authentic iconic building has a material spirituality because it embodies a kind of ascetic self-denial. "This may be seen as their principle role, a selfless denial of their own significance for the betterment of their context". [43] They are a "symbol of aspiration, rising above the dreary mediocrity of buildings measured by profit margins and speed of construction" and they function as a landmark, "giving us

security on the horizon in a fast moving world".[44] Charles Jencks further suggests that an iconic building, like religious icons, has "a trace of sanctity about it, the aura of a saint. By definition it is an object to be worshipped, however fitfully".[45]

However questions remain. In practice, do so-called iconic buildings these days, particularly if they are not public spaces, merely shock people in ways that suggest a fundamentally contemptuous culture? In the midst of our current financial crisis this has a sharp edge when what are described as modern icons are often commercial buildings or investment banks (for example, Norman Foster's prize-winning Swiss Re building for Credit Suisse). As Jencks sharply comments, if religion or other meta-narratives are no longer central to the life of a city, are we left simply with money, size and power as the new "universals" to be worshipped?

A second way that space shapes a spiritual city concerns how we design city centres and public spaces. Some European cities diminished by the sterility of public space constructed in the 1960s and 1970s are once again redesigning their centres in ways that more effectively symbolize a city's aspirations. For example, Leeds in the North of England, a great 19th century industrial city, had its grand and elegant public buildings obscured by unimaginative post-war reconstruction. The centre has recently been regenerated again in ways explicitly inspired by the Canadian urban thinker Jane Jacobs with her strong sense of public space and social community.

The eminent British architect and urban advisor, Richard Rogers, is a proponent of humane city designs. This is especially evident in his promotion of what he calls "open-minded space".[46] This has spiritual resonances. Such space (for example the piazza or public square) is person-centred. Its function is left open rather than predetermined by planners or politicians. It does not prioritise efficiency but human participation. Consequently, it is accessible physically, intellectually and spiritually. "Open-minded space" evokes inclusivity, encourages diversity and enables creativity and play as opposed to control and constraint. Like Michel de Certeau, Rogers believes in indeterminacy, the human ability to transcend imposed, static order. Rogers grew up in Florence and writes of the purposeful Italian custom of *passeggiata* – casual "wandering about in public" - that leaves room for surprise and celebrates people's social personae. Public squares offer a physical and spiritual *centring* for a city and its inhabitants.

Finally, many people sense that there is a "spiritual deficit" not adequately addressed by contemporary city design. So, an interesting question concerns the continued significance and role of traditional sacred spaces such as churches or other religious buildings in today's plural environment. How can we enable sacred spaces to be widely accessible without losing their integrity? What public role do they have beyond serving the worshipers or acting as focuses for evangelism? How might such spaces function effectively? Interestingly, some famous sacred spaces have mixed use. Thus, somewhere like St Martin-in-the Fields houses worship, concerts, a restaurant and shelter for the homeless. It is worth remembering that mixed use has a long history. In the Middle Ages urban churches (and in Arab countries, mosques) often had multiple uses for meetings, communal feasts, markets, schools and nursing. The distinction between the sacred and secular blurred within such buildings. Arguably sacred space has always portrayed a holistic vision of human life.

Urban Virtues

A Christian approach to city spirituality also involves our overall "conduct of life" and human interaction. This includes the notion of virtue. So, what are urban virtues for the 21st century? Interestingly the meaning of virtues like urbanity and civility derive explicitly from city life. The American urban philosopher Eduardo Mendieta writes about *frugality.*[47] Charles Leadbeater of the think-tank Demos promotes a similar notion of renunciation and restraint in relation to our need for a renewed sense of mutuality. Mutuality demands the surrender of absolute claims to individual choice in favour of civic community. As Leadbeater admits, this is counter-intuitive in a consumer culture.[48]

The report I mentioned earlier, *Faithful Cities,* suggests that we go beyond the liberal catchword, tolerance, when confronting conflict and otherness in the city. Tolerance implies the magnanimity of insiders towards others. It also promotes a safe parallelism which allows other groups to exist but

maintains clear boundaries. Tolerance doesn't really ask us to change. *Faithful Cities* offers an alternative - the biblical notion of "hospitality". It also refers to chapter 53 of the Rule of St Benedict on receiving guests as if they were Christ. The Rule explicitly defines guests as those who are strangers rather than known. Hospitality implies a relationship with those who are unexpected and unlike ourselves. However, "hospitality" may merely suggest something that householders offer to guests to a private home.

Christian spirituality involves a vision of how human life is intended to be and how it can be transformed. Spirituality embraces a narrative of "redemption". In this context, city spirituality must be robust enough to confront the dark side of life by offering both language and practices to confront structural evils such as violence, injustice and social exclusion. Consequently, I want to suggest other related urban virtues, derived explicitly from Christian tradition, reconciliation, solidarity and seeking the common good.

The leading South African theologian John de Gruchy suggests that the doctrine of reconciliation is "the inspiration and focus of all doctrines of the Christian faith".[49] A Christian approach to reconciliation is not simply socio-political with an incidental spiritual gloss. Protestantism tends to emphasise reconciliation between God and humanity as a result of the Cross (cf. Rom 5, 6-11) whereas Catholicism tends to emphasise that the love of God poured out upon us as a result of the divine-human reconciliation creates a new humanity where the walls of division are broken down (cf. 2 Cor 5, 17-20 & 6,1). In practice, both dimensions must be held in tension.

Interestingly, the older *Oxford English Dictionary* defines reconciliation as "the reconsecration of desecrated places". People who are excluded in our cities are "desecrated" because their status as images of God is effectively denied. "Reconciliation" is a challenging idea. The related notion of "solidarity", derived from Catholic and Anglican social teaching, is even sharper. Solidarity is a moral imperative based on a belief in the fundamental unity of humanity rooted in the doctrines of the Trinity and Communion of Saints. True solidarity implies that those of us with "more" at the expense of other's "less" are called to make sacrifices. It demands an intentional commitment to seeking the "common good" as the underlying social value.

What is this "common good"? In traditional terms derived from Aristotle it is the fitting goals for a good life. A truly good life is orientated to what is shared with others because the individual good is inseparable from the good of all. Thomas Aquinas added that the good to be sought by all in common is ultimately God. Thus seeking the common good fulfills the double commandment to love God with all one's strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Additionally, Ignatius Loyola in the 16th century wrote of making "the *more universal* good" the key criterion in discernment and choice about ministry. The classic understanding of the common good counters any largely utilitarian approach to general welfare. Aristotle and Aquinas both believed that the common good includes bonds of mutual loyalty and affection that build authentic community.

A leading American Christian social ethicist, David Hollenbach, offers a challenging exposition of the continued contemporary validity of seeking "the common good" in religiously plural and socially diverse cities. This necessarily involves negotiation and, as Hollenbach admits, is not a quick fix. What matters is not immediate success but our commitment to an open-ended process of making meaning, creating values and discovering a shared vocabulary.

This common pursuit of a shared vision of the good life can be called intellectual solidarity…..for it calls for serious thinking by citizens about what their distinctive understandings of the good imply for a society made up of people with many different traditions. It is a form of solidarity, because it can only occur in an active dialogue of mutual listening and speaking across the boundaries of religion and culture. Indeed, dialogue that seeks to understand those with different visions of the good life is already a form of solidarity even when disagreement continues to exist.[50]

Living in common, being in communion, in Christian terms does not imply the simple absorption of what is different into my framework. The theological underpinning is the Christian understanding of God-as-Trinity in whose image we are created and into whose life we are collectively being drawn. The ultimately mysterious life of God is imaged precisely as a communion of mutually co-inherent relationships in which the unique personhood of each is not absorbed but eternally confirmed. This is

the true image of “solidarity” for humankind. While the language of reconciliation and solidarity implies a human task they are ultimately beyond our capacity to achieve. Reconciliation is *the work of God.*

The Letter to the Ephesians also relates reconciliation to participation in the life of the Christian community. This community becomes the carrier of the vision of a new humanity in which Jew and Gentile are reconciled as members of one body. As Christians we classically enact our theology and spirituality of community in celebrations of the Eucharist. The report *Faithful Cities* touches on this in a brief but pregnant paragraph:

> Those with eucharistic traditions – in which the ritual of sharing bread and wine is central – must remember that the Church is not concerned to defend its own physical place but to offer a table of friendship as a gift in any and all places. Christian communities must model the organic nature of the city…(6.18).

The trouble is that certain versions of Eucharistic spirituality concentrate on building up the Church community for itself. In this case, the Eucharist becomes the celebration of a spiritual equivalent of well-protected “gated communities” such as we find in upscale districts of large cities such as London, Paris and Manhattan or nowadays in New Delhi and Shanghai.

However, this overlooks the *risk* of celebrating Eucharist. To live eucharistically in the city commits us as Christians, not least as ministers and leaders, to move beyond our comfort zone and to invite our communities to cross the boundaries of fear and prejudice in an embrace of strangers in whom we are to recognise God’s presence. I recall the courage of a Church of Scotland minister in a Glasgow housing estate, later joined by a Catholic priest, who confronted local hatreds by opening his church day and night as a safe space for Muslim refugees after one of them had been murdered.

The redemptive narrative of the Eucharist tells a different story from the one shaped by human prejudices. There is an uncomfortable tension between this sacrament of reconciliation and efforts by Christians to resist the implications of human solidarity. To paraphrase Archbishop Rowan, in a sacramental view of human existence, symbolized by baptism and Eucharist, we are bound into solidarity with those we have not chosen and whose presence we have not negotiated.[51] This begins within our faith communities but is ultimately to be witnessed to as a human virtue in the city. The 1982 WCC statement on the Eucharist reminds us:

> Reconciled in the Eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection. As Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table-fellowship with them during his earthly ministry, so Christians are called in the Eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the Eucharist”. (WCC Eucharist 24)

This returns us to Joel Kotkin’s remark that successful cities have embodied a sense of sacred place. In his final chapter, “The Urban Future”, Kotkin notes that all major religions have produced models of urban meaning. Yet the sacred role of cities is largely ignored in contemporary discussions. The “new urbanism” rarely refers to the need for a shared moral or spiritual vision with the power to hold cities together. Yet, more important than new buildings, public spaces or attention to sustainability is the value people place on urban experience. A successful city is, in the end, a state of mind that embraces a vision capable of co-existing with strangers and of undertaking the challenging process of seeking the common good in the midst of diversity. This theme is eloquently developed, particularly in relation to interreligious collaboration, by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, in his *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society.*[52] Kotkin critiques world religions for losing touch with their urban visions and failing to contribute these to contemporary debates about the future of cities. Yet, as he comments, without some kind of “shared belief system it would be exceedingly difficult to envision a viable urban future”.[53]

So, to end on a practical note, in the midst of invitations by government to contribute to the “Big Society”, faith groups locally and nationally must be confident about promoting their own distinctive understanding of, and contribution to urban and public futures – asking what the authentic common good is - rather than simply filling gaps created by public funding cut-backs.

[1]1. Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 42.
[2]2. See, for example, the work of the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), and a more detailed discussion of the relationship between God-as-Trinity and human identity in Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton Longman & Todd/New York: Orbis Books, 1998), especially 75-83.
[3]3. Casanova, *Public Religion,* 3.
[4]4. See Lyn Lofland, *The public realm: Exploring the city's quintessential social territory.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter 1998.
[5] See Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford/Malden Mass: Blackwell, 2000): Chapter 16, "Interiority and Epiphany: A Reading in New Testament Ethics."
[6] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (Oxford: One World Publications 1993). 172. On this point see 172-74.
[7] John Ruusbroec, "The Sparkling Stone," Conclusion, ET, *John Ruusbroec: The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works,* ed. James Wiseman (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 184.
[8] Ruusbroec, *The Spiritual Espousals*, 136-43.
[9] Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the mystery of God: Political, liberation and public theologies.* New York: Continuum 2001.
[10] Robert Egan; Foreword, *Mysticism and Social Transformation,* ed. Janet Ruffing (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001); and "The Mystical and the Prophetic: Dimensions of Christian Existence," *The Way Supplement* 102, Autumn 2001, 92-106.
[11] Segundo Galilea, "The Spirituality of Liberation," *The Way* (July, 1985), 186-94.
[12] Jürgen Moltmann, "The Theology of Mystical Experience", 73 in his *Experiences of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).
[13] Joel Kotkin, *The City: A Global History.* New York: Random House 2006.
[14] These figures are cited by Sir Crispin Tickell in his Introduction to Richard Rogers, *Cities for A Small Planet,* London: Faber & Faber 1997, p vii.
[15] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity.* London/New York: Verso 1997, especially pp 51-2 & 77.
[16] Kotkin, Chapters 14 & 15.
[17] For interesting remarks on the relationship between the fragmentation of intellectual discourse, starting with the medieval separation of theology and spirituality, and the contemporary secularisation of the city, see James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics and Theology in the work of Johann Baptist Metz*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, pp 10-12.
[18] See, for example, Wayne Meeks, 'St Paul of the cities' in Peter S. Hawkins, ed., *Religious Interpretations of the City,* Atlanta: Scholars Press 1986, pp 15-23.
[19] R. Sennett*, The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, London: Faber & Faber, 1993, p xii.
[20] Sennett, pp xii-xiii.
[21] Sennett, pp 6-10.
[22.] Augustine's commentary on Genesis is cited in R. Markus, *The end of ancient Christianity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990, p 78.
[23] For a recent study of the secular realm in Augustine, see R. A. Markus, *Christianity and the secular,* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2006
[24] See P Sheldrake, 'Reading cathedrals as spiritual texts', in *Studies in spirituality,* 11, 2001, pp 187-204.
[25] B. Bedos-Rozak, 'Form as social process' in V. Chieffo Raguin, K. Brush & P. Draper, eds., *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp 243-44.
[26] See A. Berleant, *The aesthetics of environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p 62.
[27] See N. Cortone & N. Lavermicocca, *Santi di strada: Le edicole religiose della cittá vecchia di Bari,* 5 volumes, (Bari: Edizione BA Graphis, 2001-2003).
[28] See Chiara Frugoni, *A distant city: Images of urban experience in the medieval world.* Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991, p 27.
[29] See Peter Raedts, 'The medieval city as a holy place' in Charles Caspers and Marc Schneiders, eds., *Omnes Circumadstantes: Contributions towards a History of the Role of the People in the Liturgy*. Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1990, pp 144-54.
[30] *Sententia Libri Politicorum. Opera Omnia,* VIII, Paris 1891, Prologue A 69-70.
[31] E.g. Aquinas, *De Regimine Principum,* Chapter II in R.W. Dyson, ed., *Aquinas: Political Writings,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, pp 8-10.
[32] E.g. Aquinas, *De Regimine Principum,* Chapter II in R.W. Dyson, ed., *Aquinas: Political Writings,* Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press 2002, pp 8-10.

[33] Sennett, p 42.

[34] For Michel de Certeau's thinking about cities, see 'Walking in the city' and 'Spatial stories' in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* ET Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; Part 1: Living, especially 'Ghosts in the city', in *The Practice of everyday life,* volume 2, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1998; 'The imaginary of the city' and other isolated comments in *Culture in the plural,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2001.

[35] For criticisms of the Cartesian 'rhetoric of interiority' that imbued Le Corbusier, see W. A. Davis, *Inwardness and existence ,* University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

[36] For a study of Le Corbusier's theories of self see S. Richards, *Le Corbusier and the concept of the self.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

[37] De Certeau, 'Ghosts in the city'.

[38] De Certeau, 'Walking in the City', pp 91-110.

[39] 'Walking in the City' p 92.

[40] 'Walking in the City', p 96.

[41] De Certeau, 'Indeterminate' in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p 203.

[42] See for example, L. Peake, 'Smashing Icons' in *Will Alsop's SuperCity,* Manchester: Urbis 2005, pp 39-49 and C. Jencks, 'The iconic building is here to stay' in *City* 10/1, April 2006, pp 3-20.

[43] Peake, p 41

[44] Peake, p 49.

[45] Jencks, p 4.

[46] Richard Rogers, *Cities for a small planet.* London: Faber & Faber 1997, pp 9-10.

[47] Eduardo Mendieta, "Invisible cities: A phenomenology of globalisation from below", *City* 5/1, 2001, pp7-25.

[48] Charles Leadbeater, *Civic spirit: The big idea for a new political era.* London: Demos 1997, especially p 30.

[49] John de Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice,* London: SCM 2002, p 44.

[50] David Hollenbach, *The common good and Christian ethics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, pp 137-38.

[51] See "Sacraments of the New Society", Chapter 14, in R. Williams, *On Christian Theology.* Oxford/Malden MA, 2000

[52] Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society,* London/New York: Continuum, 2007.

[53] Kotkin, p 159.