



RELIGION AND THE GOOD OF THE CITY

REPORT 3: THE FUTURE CONDITIONS OF THE CITY

OCTOBER 2017

CARDUS

CARDUS
SOCIAL CITIES

ABOUT THE SOCIAL CITIES RESEARCH PROGRAM

What makes a great city and how do we get there?

Our Social Cities program explores this complex question through integrating work in a variety of social infrastructure project areas.

Cities that are enriching for all citizens require that all of the resources within and around them interact as effectively as possible. This includes social and institutional resources that range from the very local, where we spend most of our lives, to the regional, national, and global contexts we are part of.

The complex network of relationships between people, institutions, and culture represents what we at Cardus call social architecture. We explore the existing social architecture and propose ways in which it might change to better serve the common good.

It is important that we understand the networks of institutions that make up our society. Taking stock of the best ideas and practices in research and policy development thinking can lead to thriving cities.

Cities are complex, social, and essential. Within these three assertions there are key issues related to building better cities that we are pursuing through our projects.

MILTON FRIESEN
Program Director, Social Cities
Senior Fellow
mfriesen@cardus.ca
905-528-8866 x124
Hamilton, Ontario

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ABOUT CARDUS

CARDUS IS A THINK TANK dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Headquartered in Hamilton, Ontario, Cardus has a track record of delivering original research, quality events, and thoughtful publications which explore the complex and complementary relationships between virtues, social structures, education, markets, and a strong society. Cardus is a registered charity.

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REPORT SERIES INTRODUCTION

If we imagined living in a time when it was not fashionable to treat religion as superstitious, socially irrelevant at best and malignant at worst, when ignorance of both the history and practice of faith were not worn as badges of honour, but were able instead to adopt an open and descriptive posture about how social goods are generated, then we would find our reports about reality characterized by accounts of how religion has contributed significantly to many of the common goods we enjoy. We could find ourselves collecting data about those goods, as Robert Woodberry ("The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," American Political Science Review 106, no. 2 [2012]: 244–74) did using a two-hundred-year historical lens, and conclude that to the extent that liberal democracy, education, social equality, and improved physical health are good things, organized religion (yes, organized religion, not just an internal, personal, psychological state of communion and private conviction) has been a powerful generator of many of the things we wish to attain for ourselves and others around the world.

But we don't live in that world. Although it may be changing, popular communication and even academic research have tended to think it proper to overlook the contribution of religion to the social and cultural goods of the city even where evidence has suggested that it exists in substance and extent, both historically and at present. We live in a time when reporting on the failures of organized religion can seem to be the only legitimate form of coverage. Like the necessity of little-seen plankton in the oceanic food chain, it may well be that the continuous birth and rebirth of religion constitutes a basic stratum for civil life.

Without formal research or conscious investment in data, religious practice has emerged, grown, changed, and been part of us since as far back as human history can reach. We are only now beginning to understand what that means.

When W. E. Allen drafted his short paper "Life History of Marine Plankton Animals" while working as a scientist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (*Ecology 8*, no. 1 [1927]: 60–62), very little was understood about the role that these tiny and very diverse life forms have among all other ocean life. Allen, however, had an inkling based in the science he did know—that something important was at stake, even if not fully understood:

> It is true that the difficulties of field study in the sea are so great that we are unlikely to attain to exhaustive knowledge of any single species; but, in approaching any problem, a single established fact affords a better basis of attack than any number of suppositions, and, where the whole is unattainable, fragments of life history may rightly be used to indicate tentative conclusions of great value. (60)

Today we have become very aware of the role that phytoplankton play in food production, marine environmental change, and atmospheric quality—up to 50 percent of the world's oxygen is generated by phytoplankton (Abigail McQuatters-Gollop et al., "The Continuous Plankton Recorder Survey," *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science* 162, [2015]: 88–97). Allen was right and the survey that began in 1931 as a result of his efforts continues to collect data about phytoplankton.

The story of phytoplankton provides an illustration that is useful (rather than substantive—religion and phytoplankton are not at all the same thing) for our own deliberations. Without formal research or conscious investment in data, religious practice has emerged, grown, changed, and been part of us since as far back as human history can reach. We are only now beginning to understand what that means.

As far as we can know, cities will remain the primary context for human civilizations. As such, we can safeguard what we value, limit what is hazardous, and deepen the richness of human experience much more effectively if we know in what our social infrastructures consist.

In this series of three papers, three postures will be adopted, each one animated by a series of questions designed to provoke our thinking.

1 Report 1: Contemporary Cultural Context of Socio-Cultural Goods of Religion

How are we advancing the understanding of the socio-cultural goods of religion—especially Christianity as the dominant faith in North America? How does religion contribute to the well-being of cities? What form do these religious public goods take? What are their shortcomings that would be valuable to address?

2 Report 2: State of Research and Influence of Socio-Cultural Goods of Religion

What insights does research provide that could inform people and help shape public relations and policy efforts on behalf of the socio-cultural goods of religion? What are the stories that can be told? What do educators, journalists, and cultural influencers need to know? How could this work be undertaken?

3 Report 3: Future Conditions of the Socio-Cultural Goods of Religion

Future research, collaboration, and learning need intentional focus and investment. How will this investment become more difficult in the coming years? How will it get easier? What would it look like for religious faith to be seen as a vital contributor to the common good that we depend on? How might the history of religion and the common good inform our future?

I hope these themes and questions will serve to sustain existing research and examination while provoking new frameworks, new approaches, and new investments of resources. As far as we can know, cities will remain the primary context for human civilizations. As such, we can safeguard what we value, limit what is hazardous, and deepen the richness of human experience much more effectively if we know in what our social infrastructures consist. Even if that description is never complete, we may still reach "tentative conclusions of great value" regarding, in this case, the role of organized religion among us.

—Milton J. Friesen
Program Director, Social Cities
Senior Fellow

INTRODUCTION: FUTURE CONDITIONS

SESSION 3: FUTURE CONDITIONS

Future research, collaboration, and learning need intentional focus and investment. How will this investment become more difficult in the coming years? How will it get easier? What would it look like for religious faith to be seen as a vital contributor to the common good that we depend on? How might the history of religion and the common good inform our future?

Context: Religion as a Socio-Cultural Good in the City
Jan. 31 – Feb. 1, 2017 Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel

A group of twelve carefully selected contributors met for an evening and a full day for the incubation of ideas and exploration of how religion contributes to the good of the city today. Their thoughts were presented as a pre-meeting submission which was then discussed face-to-face followed by an invitation to offer a two-thousand-word op-ed-style written response based on those interactions.

Our work is intended to advance understanding, explore possible collaborations, and stimulate ongoing, strategic, and thoughtful work around the role of religious communities in cities. The intention is to complement the significant academic work that has been and is being done around these themes from sociology, anthropology, religious studies, historical studies, and myriad other disciplinary spaces.

The justification for this particular injunction is that however much is being done formally by researchers and practically by women and men in religious communities of all kinds in modern society, there remains far more yet to be done in making connections practically, conceptually, and creatively.

In the future-issues dimension of this exploration, Philip Bess challenges us to consider how the faltering of modernistic building and design habits will introduce new difficulties

and new possibilities that religious communities are positioned to sustain. Stanley Carlson-Thies also taps into a historical root to understand contemporary challenges, including the exclusion of religion from public life and the counterpoint that immigrants introduce as they bring expectations of religious practice with them. Lee Hardy complicates the story of religion and the common good, in particular the Christian church patterns that have characterized exurban patterns in American cities with consideration for what changes to those patterns could mean for us. Brian Grim uses a descriptive approach that encompasses the scope and scale of religious contributions in the United States with significant implications for long-term civic viability.

Our work is intended to advance understanding, explore possible collaborations, and stimulate ongoing, strategic, and thoughtful work around the role of religious communities in cities.

Each of the four authors' distinctive perspectives provides a much-needed stimulus to think deeply and knowledgeably about the future of religion and our common good.

Special thanks to the Fieldstead Foundation for their generous assistance in support of this roundtable event in Chicago.

Symposium photo credit, Tony Carnes

IMAGINING THE SUSTAINABLE CITY: THE NOTRE DAME PLAN OF CHICAGO 2109

Philip Bess *is a professor of architecture at Notre Dame University. He teaches graduate urban design and theory, with a particular interest in Catholic and classical humanist intellectual and artistic traditions in modern American life. He directs the ongoing project After Burnham: The Notre Dame Plan of Chicago 2109, and works as a design consultant with others at the office of Thursday Associates. He is an expert on urban neighbourhood baseball parks and the author of* City Baseball Magic *(as well as other books and essays), and in the summer of 2000 he worked with Save Fenway Park! to save Fenway Park the home of the Boston Red Sox.*

I'd like to begin by articulating three premises that underlie the substance of what follows. The first is my most succinct understanding and characterization of religion. The second is my assessment of the current condition of church-state relations in the United States. The third simply identifies and characterizes the Catholic religious and intellectual tradition from which, as a professor of architecture, I act, write, and speak.

In the first instance, I'm going to characterize religion as a shared acknowledgment of sacred order, oriented communally toward worship, and orienting individuals toward vocation as their existential relationship to the cosmos. The "shared acknowledgment . . . oriented toward worship" is critical in distinguishing religion from individual spirituality. Like most people, religious people are spiritual, but religious people are spiritual in a communal way. There is a deep, if too often unappreciated, communal ordering and sense-making in religious practice that transcends simple spirituality, and indeed any understanding of religious belief as simply an individual and private matter.

Second, though I'm not able to speak with any authority about how Canada might differ, the United States has a legal and cultural history of religious pluralism, religious freedom, and non-establishment, currently in jeopardy. Under the American Constitution and Bill of Rights, there is no religious test for public office, and the law protects the civil rights

Figure 1: Chicago 2109 Proposed Metropolitan Transportation and Land Use

of believers, agnostics, and atheists alike. But although this legal arrangement—a product of one strand of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment—emerged from and in the context of Christian culture, it is wrong to conclude that the United States therefore is (or is properly understood as) a "Christian nation." The United States is not a Christian nation, nor is it a secular nation. Rather, the United States is a religiously pluralistic nation with a secular government. This certainly has not meant that in the United States there have been (and are) no tensions between religious believers and the state. Nevertheless, this American legal arrangement and the culture it has encouraged together have resulted in a national history where by and large a plurality of religions have flourished in relative peace, both among themselves and with the state. That relative peace appears to be breaking down and the culture that fostered it is in disarray—not least because the culture of Enlightenment liberalism from which American culture emerged is itself in disarray. Enlightenment liberalism has been superseded almost everywhere in Western culture by the triumph of therapeutic individualism and the deterioration of certain fundamental institutions of civil society (notably family, church, neighbourhood, and voluntary association) that mediate between the individual and the state. Moreover, it would be a mistake to understand this deterioration as unconscious and entirely unwelcomed. In many powerful quarters of the contemporary secularized West, the institutional disarray I have described above is regarded as progress.

Third, religious traditions remain bearers of a long memory of who we are and what is possible. In Catholic social teaching—the intellectual tradition from which I live, work, and write—religious freedom (though a late development of Catholic doctrine compared to sixteenth-century Anabaptists and to Lactantius, fourth-century advisor to Constantine) is taught as a great social good mandated by the church's understanding of the dignity of the human person. Articulated in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Human Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Catholic Church regards religious freedom as a moral imperative and a civil right whether or not there exists an established state religion.

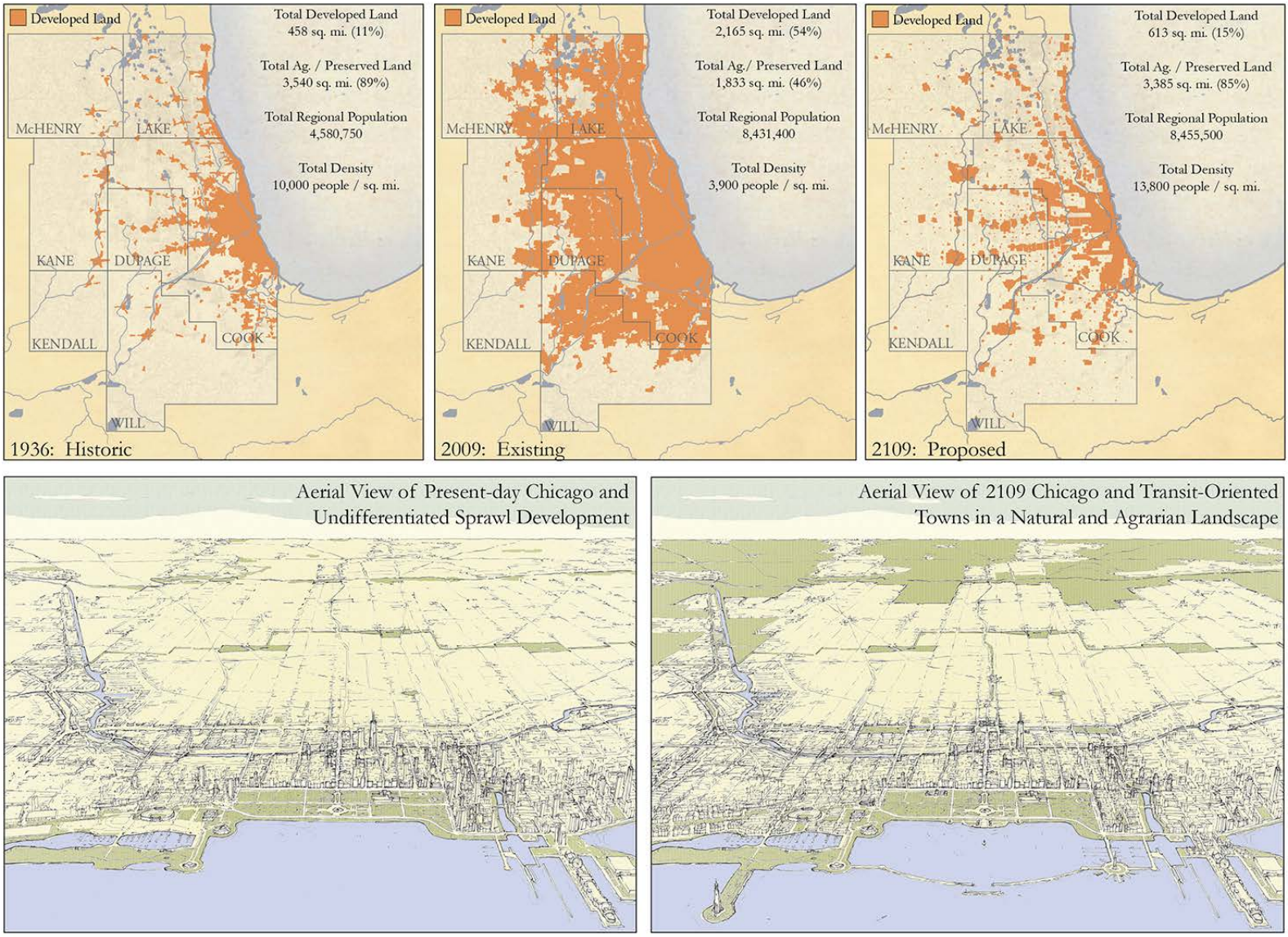
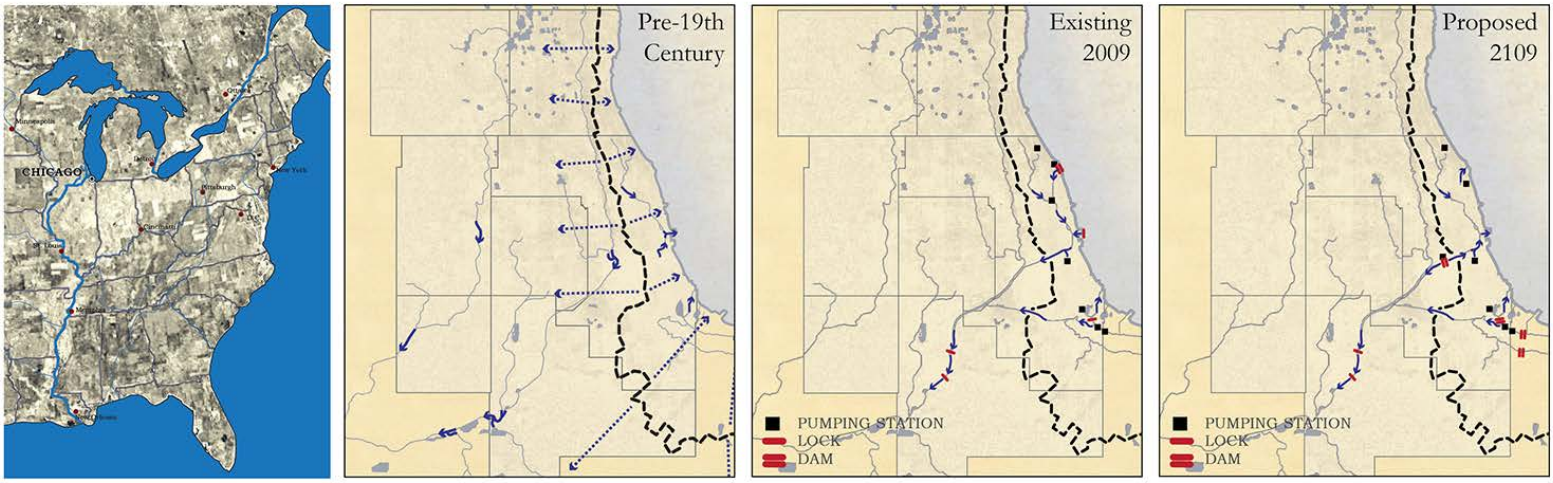


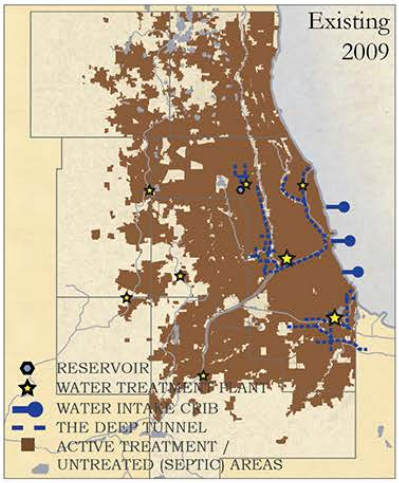
Figure 2: Historic and Proposed Metropolitan Chicago Land Use

In light of these premises, allow me to address the key questions posed for this session, which speculate about the near and long-term futures of religion in civil society. I am convinced that future research on, collaboration in, and learning about these subjects require intentional focus and investment. I am also convinced that these will become more difficult in the coming years and that we can consider those difficulties in the related dimensions of both economics and culture.

Economically, in the United States, with below-replacement birth rates, declining immigration, and the dissolution of the two-parent family, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain (let alone extend) either the physical infrastructure of our (still default) sprawl settlement patterns or the financial infrastructure of our social safety net (notably unfunded pension obligations, but perhaps also our health insurance and social security programs as currently constructed). This portends economic shrinkage attended by social stress and increasing social conflict, including scapegoating. Under duress, the frictions between an-



Chicago straddles a natural subcontinental divide separating the Great Lakes watershed from the Mississippi River watershed. Extensive engineering in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries linked the two watersheds and effectively reversed the flow of the Chicago River, redirecting it to the Mississippi River watershed. This carried Chicago's wastewater away from the the source of its drinking water, but has created subsequent environmental complications. For 2109, the project proposes to replenish Chicago's regional aquifer and address its storm and wastewater problems by vastly increasing the permeable surface in the region, re-reversing the Chicago River, and localizing city and regional storm water management and wastewater treatment.



Constructed wetlands are a localized 'passive' wastewater treatment system that purifies wastewater through natural processes both environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing. Wetland cells remove pollutants through physical, chemical and biological processes, and dissipate ammonia with rushes and prairie grasses, returning pure water to the ground. Additionally, a variety of proposed Light Imprint strategies improve the ability to collect, store, and purify water, and return more of it to regional aquifers.

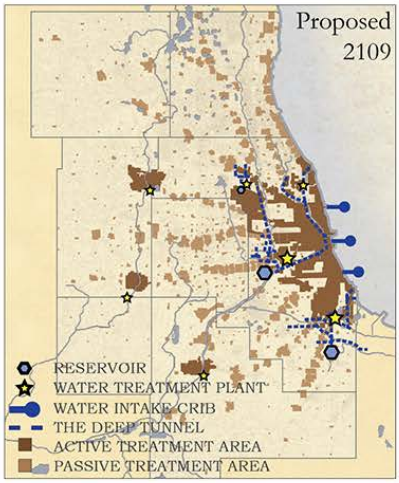


Figure 3: Chicago 2109 Metropolitan Waste and Storm Water Issues

ti-religious progressives and various religious communities could very well intensify. Religious communities form readily identifiable communities and in certain cultural environments can become easy targets for scapegoating (both by those in political power and via social media), i.e., as a focus for pent-up resentment and feelings of powerlessness. For Christians in particular I might add that scapegoating temptations can work both ways, and that Christian and other faith communities may need to work hard to avoid succumbing to their allure.

Culturally, in many areas of the United States (and perhaps Canada and Europe), Christians (and eventually other religiously observant persons) cannot for the immediate or foreseeable future presume the good will of a secularist (not, n.b., merely secular) state, a secularist press, or secularist educational institutions. I distinguish between secularist and secular because although a secular state does not presume any given religious perspective it nevertheless both respects and engages religious communities as an import-

ant, even constitutive, part of civil society. Secularists, on the other hand, regard religion as essentially private and would regard as properly civic only those institutions and "players" that are not religious. These two perspectives lead society in very different directions.

One way that exclusionary secularism may manifest itself is by the withdrawal of tax-exempt status from religious communities and their educational and charitable ancillaries...

One way that exclusionary secularism may manifest itself is by the withdrawal of tax-exempt status from religious communities and their educational and charitable ancillaries, and the denial of state tuition loans and state research funds to religious institutions of higher learning that do not adopt secularist state policies at odds with their own religious beliefs. Such policies, counter to current practices, would seriously undermine the common-good contributions that now come from religious communities.

In our deliberations together, we have seen how people like Tony Carnes and his team are uncovering religious activity now largely unreported or otherwise hidden from public view. He describes New York City as a post-secular city—i.e., as a world-leading cultural city also deeply and pervasively religious. This is not necessarily surprising to people with any degree of historical perspective because cities from their origins typically have exhibited an orientation to the sacred, more often than not manifested clearly in the formal order of the cities themselves. Religious presence is not so readily apparent in the formal order of today's hyper-modern cities, and we therefore typically assume our utilitarian, globalized economy has permanently displaced if not discarded completely the sacred sensibilities heretofore characteristic of traditional urban life. But it seems very likely this is not the case, and I think we can become more astute in noting, talking about, and understanding both how cities continue to exhibit sacred sensibility and religious commitment, and how both religious sensibilities and commitments might manifest themselves in cities in the future.

This work of understanding and advocacy, however, is intensive, and certainly in the short run will not get any easier. In particular, if Christian institutions (and their ancillaries) are threatened with the loss of tax exemption and government funding (which of necessity may be drastically diminished in scope), maintenance and expansion of Christian institutions will require self-funding from a combination of both accumulated financial capital and (just as importantly) a disciplined (re)development of human capital.

As an example of the latter from a not-too-distant American history, consider the vast American Catholic school system once run by religious orders whose way of life included a cheerful and generous voluntary poverty. Voluntarily poor or not, however, durable wealth creation, the restoration and advancement of civil society, and the promulgation of the gospel will depend much upon how well we as Christians inculcate among ourselves habits of disciplined generosity. Once they are habits, they will (by definition) be easier—and also more likely to be recognized as a resource for the common good, as social capital for the wider culture rather than a liability to be shed.

Figure 4: Chicago 2109 Metropolitan Settlement Types, from lowest density and smallest area to highest density and largest area: hamlet, village, town, city (neighbourhood)

Figure 5: Chicago 2109 Proposed Historic Centre Sacred Axis, looking northwest

To the question of what religious faith that contributes to the common good might look like, my reply as an architect and classical humanist urbanist is that it could look something like the walkable mixed-use urbanism of pre-1950 European and American villages, towns, and city neighbourhoods characterized by streets, squares, background private buildings, and foreground civic and religious buildings, arranged in a more or less legible hierarchical order. Achieving this is not as simple as it may seem, not least because many Christians themselves have reflexively adopted both suburban habits of mind and contemporary secularist assumptions about the private character of religion—an understanding that would seem inevitably to marginalize public religious practice.

This presumes a couple of things: that the global economy will continue humming away indefinitely, unaffected by the social dislocations it engenders, and that in these circumstances secularist sensibility will prevail. But these are not givens, and historical and anthropological perspectives on both urbanism and religion challenge secularist religious assumptions, and suggest an agenda for religious communities in the public realm.

For Christians, this agenda must involve better thinking through how—Christian sins and imperfections notwithstanding—the happy Christian duties to proclaim the forgiveness of sins and to share the love of God have manifested themselves institutionally in countless acts of charity and education, and physically in beautiful buildings that adorn the public realm, in ways that attract people to God (and even some to a life of religious devotion).

How do Christians (how do Christian architects and urbanists) begin to model these kinds of redemptive communities in the less-than-perfect social circumstances in which we currently find ourselves? One of the challenges faced by aspiring traditional architects and urbanists (and their teachers) is the mobility encouraged—sometimes required—by the arrangements of modern life. When students seek my advice about professional life after

graduation, I tell them to go wherever they need and can afford to go—New York, Boston, Chicago, London—to get their professional credentials and continue learning their craft. But to those who really want to make a life making a place, I advise looking for some undervalued down-and-out locale off the beaten path, some pre-1945 town or city with "good bones": a main street, a network of streets and blocks, some pre-1950 housing stock. In that place, be an architect, a builder, a developer who fills in the gaps as it were, who enfleshes the bones. My Notre Dame students make beautiful hand drawings, so to build start-up capital I advise them to scan their architecture school drawings and sell the originals. (No one I know has taken me up on this!) Start small. Build or renovate. Rent or sell. Repeat. Build with local financing. Have a good life helping to make a good place over time—exactly the way most good places have been built over time! In today's world, this is countercultural activity. But in the larger perspective such activity is, precisely, cultural. As G.K. Chesterton wrote, "We love Rome because it is great, but Rome first became great because it was loved."

In that place, be an architect, a builder, a developer who fills in the gaps as it were, who enfleshes the bones.

Such practices reverberate deeply back into Western Christian traditions both Protestant and Catholic. The ur-communities of Christian witness and conversion in Europe were the Benedictines, who pursued a communal monastic life guided by the Rule of St. Benedict. Their life together of voluntary poverty was organized around daily prayer and work (*ora et labora*), with special mandates to stability of life (meaning they stayed put unless sent elsewhere by their abbots), to teaching, and to charity and hospitality. (Benedictines were not to beg, but rather to give.) Although they typically lived within the walls of their monasteries, their way of life attracted others to them. Over the course of centuries these originally rural religious communities often became centres of towns and cities, demonstrating in the process a certain economic truth that history has confirmed over and over again: that productive work conjoined with ascetic discipline produces durable wealth.

I don't mean here to romanticize pre-modern life, or to suggest that accumulated wealth is its proper end. Wealth can corrupt even religious communities, and in the history of the Christian church corruption by wealth is often a proximate cause of religious reform. Moreover, in the Christian tradition the strong gospel mandate is that accumulated wealth is to be given away. Nevertheless, wealth is much more than money. It is a means to life opportunities, but it is also embedded in tangible material goods that when shared, can be

a means of sacramental presence. For all these reasons and more, it is important for Christians both to model good work and to sponsor good work.

The Notre Dame Plan of Chicago 2109 is not a unitary proposal to be imposed, but rather a visionary framework within which to promote a thousand different projects.

Much of that work will occur *in situ* in existing cities and suburbs, but some of that work may be the work of reform and may be visionary. At the University of Notre Dame, where I teach, given our classical humanist approach to architecture and urbanism, our proximity to Chicago, and Chicago's astonishing history and troubled present, I've been working with students to begin thinking about the bicentennial of Daniel Burnham's 1909 *Plan of Chicago* by looking both backward and forward. We will draw on classical humanist traditions of architecture, planning, and the imperatives of Catholic social teaching—the dignity of the human person, social solidarity, subsidiarity in the organization of political life, law and government for the common good (with special attention to the needs of the poor), environmental stewardship, and religious freedom. Our ambition is to envision metropolitan Chicago in 2109 as a flourishing agrarian-urban unit.

The Notre Dame Plan of Chicago 2109 is not a unitary proposal to be imposed, but rather a visionary framework within which to promote a thousand different projects. Nevertheless, its scope and ambition are comprehensive, addressing problems (and proposing some solutions) on issues ranging from transportation (Figure 1), to land use (Figure 2), to storm and wastewater management (Figure 3), to settlement-type size, density, form, and structure (Figure 4). It will also address sustainable building construction and materials, the phased adoption of a regional land value tax, and the symbolic content of Chicago's formal order itself. This last issue in particular is addressed by our proposal to establish a north-south "sacred" cross-axis at the heart of Chicago's historic centre (Figures 5 & 6) that gives places of prominence for representative houses of worship from Chicago's existing religious communities, and is also a physical embodiment in the public realm of America's historic principles of religious free exercise and non-establishment.

We do not presume that achieving any of these ambitions will be easy, nor do we imagine the ambition represented by our sacred axis proposal in particular would go uncontested. (It was not uncontested even in the design studio in which it originated.) Nevertheless, we envision this kind of alternative developmental urbanism for Chicago because we believe

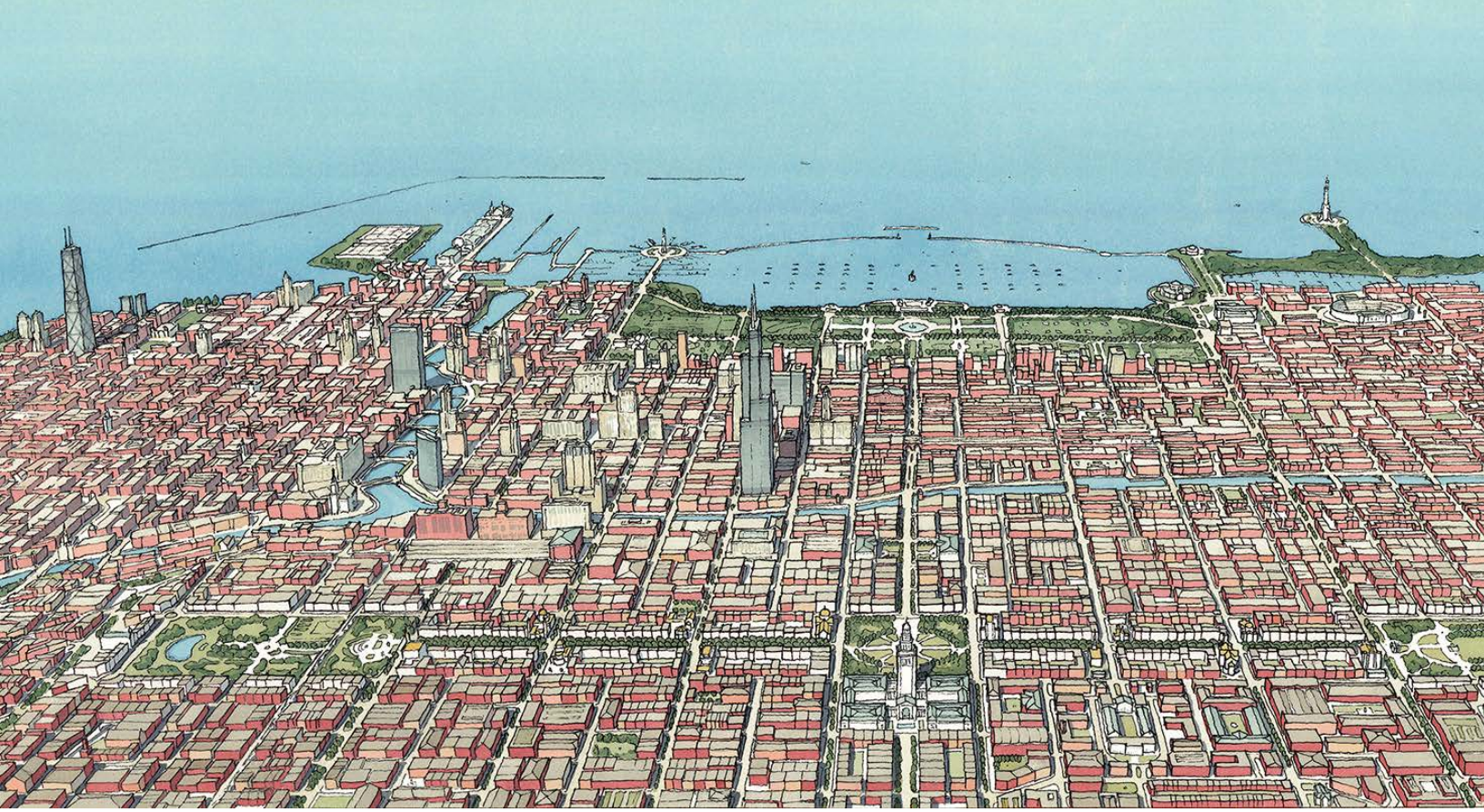


Figure 6: Chicago 2109 Proposed Historic Centre, looking east

the current trajectories of secularist culture, the global economy, hyper-modern architecture, and suburban sprawl ultimately are economically, environmentally, and anthropologically unsustainable. We think that if the human race has a future, then both religion and traditional urbanism have a future.

I am both anxious and hopeful about the future. I am most anxious about our apparent trajectory toward (and the near prospect of) civil war. My hope comes in part from the gospel and in part from the students I have taught, for whom I pray. But my conjectures about the future of religion have to do with both religion's and my convictions about metaphysical realism: that reality is real, and that human beings flourish when we conform ourselves to reality in virtuous ways. Both religion and traditional cities have long, if not always, existed to promote human flourishing. If we are to flourish, it seems to me most likely it will be in traditional cities in which religions are recognized for the social and spiritual goods they provide, and hold places of honour in the formal order of the city.

[For a more complete account of *The Notre Dame Plan of Chicago 2109*, go to www.afterburnham.com]

PUBLIC RELIGION(S) IN A PLURALIZING PUBLIC SQUARE

Stanley Carlson-Thies *is founder of the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance, which promotes the religious freedoms that enable faith-based organizations to make their uncommon contributions to the common good. IRFA is a division of the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C. He has served on former president Barack Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and as a founding member of former president George W. Bush's White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives. He co-authored with Steve Monsma* Free to Serve: Preserving the Religious Freedom of Faith-Based Organizations *(2015).*

Among other things, conceptual failures, a current moral certitude, and a lack of historical understanding make it difficult for our contemporaries easily to see what I know from my daily experience: religious people, religious motivations and convictions, and religious organizations make large and vital contributions to the flourishing of our cities (and rural areas).

If "religion" is understood narrowly as a matter of worship and personal practices (prayer, dietary restrictions, distinctive clothing, etc.), it will be a mystery how it can contribute significantly to social good. Acquaintance with our own Western history will open eyes to a much broader view of how religion can influence society. For example, and not quite randomly: Harold Berman's *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* shows how our bodies of law, including business law, grow out of developments a millennium ago in the Catholic Church and in its fights with secular authorities.

Peter Spufford's *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe*, along the way of his main theme, documents the role of medieval monasteries in maintaining some critical bridges on trade routes, giving shelter to travelling traders as well as pilgrims, and organizing "muscle" when needed to protect groups of travellers entering lawless parts of those routes. Jean Gimpel, in *The Medieval Machine: The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages* (1976), accessibly tells of the many and varied contributions monks and monasteries made to technological advances and to the reclamation of European wasteland. Other historical

accounts remind us that law schools, universities, orphanages, and hospitals— all major contributors to the common good— grew from religious roots. If so, what are the multifarious contemporary contributions of religion?

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A better acquaintance with such history will help analysts transcend a narrow, asocial view of what religion is and does. Religion is more than worship, personal habits, and inner beliefs about eternity and divinity. Religion can motivate people to (non-religious) "pro-social" action, such as donating to secular charities, working to recover a failing marriage for the sake of the children, or volunteering at a soup kitchen. Religion can guide people in their "secular" lives to do some things and not others: to shape a business to prioritize social goods and not only profit, to vote for public policies that foster public justice and not only private gain, or to develop an addiction-recovery program that presumes people are spirit and psyche as well as physical.

The large and growing distance between contemporary sexual morality and the traditional convictions about sexual conduct and marriage maintained by theologically conservative religions militates against academicians and other influential people from seeing the many ways religion contributes to our common good. Those religious convictions and practices are generally regarded as not simply retrograde but rather specifically harmful and bigoted. Why, then, suspect that adherents and organizations of those faiths do contribute to the common good?

This evaluative hurdle is not just mental, such that a few vigorous counter-arguments can clear the way for a more accurate assessment of religion's positive contributions. Rather, the judgment that the practices of these religions in these matters are wrong and should be suppressed is increasingly encoded in laws and regulations.

When the main public attention that comes to, say, Catholic or Protestant schools and adoption agencies concerns their desire to maintain practices concerning marriage and sexuality that lawmakers and cultural leaders aim to suppress, it cannot be easy to acknowledge the significant contributions these institutions and faith communities make to the common good through the services they offer and the positive social values (integrity, generosity, etc.) that they foster in their own circles.

Similarly, the institutions of various faith communities are being anathematized by local community foundations in the United States that impose diversity or inclusion policies requiring grantees not simply to serve everyone, without bias based on religion or sexuality, but also to hire without regard to these characteristics. How likely then are those foundations or those local publics to regard such faith-based organizations and their sponsoring faith communities as making positive contributions to the common good?

Fortunately, there are countervailing trends that enhance the chances of bringing to light positive contributions, even from disfavoured faith communities. One is the diversification of information sources: mainstream media and most of academia may be skeptical of or hostile to many faith traditions and their institutions and practices, but there are now multiple alternative communications channels and also research sources (think tanks, research institutions not associated with universities). Notable examples of alternative institutions to create and disseminate research include *Cardus Faith in Canada 150 and Social Cities, A Journey Through NYC Religions,* and the *Religious Freedom & Business Foundation.*

The increasing heterogeneity of Canadian and American society also decreases the plausibility of consensus secular values. A significant part of that heterogeneity is due to inflows of immigrants who bring vigorous, morally conservative religion with them, further undermining any consensus on what constitutes the good of all. Moreover, the very notion of a postmodern society and academy undermines a consensus on anti-religious values.

Academic research itself may open eyes and thus positively influence the decisions of research funders and policy makers. Ram Cnaan's extensive and pathbreaking work on the social contributions made by churches and other religious institutions, beginning in the 1990s, was instrumental in greatly expanding academic interest in the social contributions of religion and in significantly boosting the funding for such research. See, for instance, his 1999 book, *The Newer Deal: Social Work and Religion in Partnership*, which documented social work's neglect of religion and the actual contributions to social good religion has made.

Given (shallow) assumptions that Europe is secular and that its welfare states leave no need unmet, recent research that documents the continuing presence and social contributions of religious institutions in the European Community might help undermine a narrative that religion is of no earthly good. See, e.g., Justin Beaumont and Paul Cloke, eds., *Faith-Based Organisations and Exclusion in European Cities* (2012).

A conceptual change would also aid in making the case for the positive contributions of religion to our common life. As a rule, "the public" and "the common good" are assumed to be univocal or uniform phenomena; thus it should be obvious which kinds of motivations and organizations are making positive contributions—not, for instance, those not on board with contemporary sexual mores.

With a more capacious, pluralistic understanding of "public" and "common good" we can have a broader, more accurate, sense of the contributions religions make to the (diverse) common good.

Canada and the United States are diverse and getting more so. They are religiously, philosophically, and morally heterogeneous. There is no single, uniform "public." There is no obvious and uniform "common good." These are not concepts or phenomena which obviously should be secular, excluding religion, when so many citizens hold to one or another religion, philosophical code, or set of moral values. The actual public is diverse and divided. To serve it adequately, to serve the common good, cannot mean to disregard that diversity of convictions, needs, and values. Rather, we need an understanding of the common good that can incorporate these different, even conflicting, views and requirements.

With a more capacious, pluralistic understanding of "public" and "common good" we can have a broader, more accurate, sense of the contributions religions make to the (diverse) common good. We can see, for example, that a religious community that home-schools its children, rather than sending them to the public school, is contributing to the common good of an educated citizenry, and that many, though not all, of the varied teachings of different religious and philosophical communities about how spouses should relate to each other contribute to solid families and thus contribute to the common societal good.

Similarly, fully accepting the reality that there is no religion in general but only diverse religions will enable us better to discover the actual contributions of religion to the good of cities.

A short personal story: I once gave a talk about "charitable choice," a United States public policy innovation that makes it easier for religious organizations to win government funding, to a roomful of seniors and staff at a Quaker retirement home. Hoping to communicate more clearly, at one point I swept my hand across the room and said something like, "I mean a faith-based organization just like this wonderful Quaker residence." Blank looks. Then, a resident raised her hand and said, "But this isn't a faith-based place, this is a Quaker home." And, indeed, the walls had no icons or "religious" art and the routines did not incorporate

"religious" activities. And yet the literature said it clearly: because of the institution's Quaker roots, decision making incorporated resident input and was consensual. Great effort was made to discover each resident's gifts and capabilities and to enable him or her to offer those to everyone else. Were not these in fact specifically Quaker (i.e., religious) contributions to the good of the residents and staff and thereby to the common good more generally?

In a different way: it is often because of their faith that people choose public interest law rather than corporate law, government service rather than Wall Street, movie making that traces a redemptive thread through the challenges of life rather than simply action and entertainment, a career in real-estate financing for low-income housing rather than real-estate financing for McMansions. Books such as American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us, by Robert Putnam and David Campbell (2010) can help us see the otherwise invisible role of religion in strengthening our lives together.

It is important to understand that religious commitments are often present indirectly through various non-profit initiatives, low-profile community service, and through members of faith communities serving in non-religious roles. The dynamics within and across these faith communities and the wider organizational context of their work are significant and important though not often well understood. The Faith and Organizations project, now completed, which was hosted at the University of Maryland, is one example of an organization that committed to explore and explain this contribution (http://chrysaliscollaborations.com/faith-and-organizations-project-publications-2/). There is a growing need for these types of initiatives if we are going to more fully understand the value of the religious communities among us.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND THE SHAPE OF MINISTRY AND MISSION

Lee Hardy *teaches philosophy at Calvin College and philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is currently researching a book that examines the new urbanism movement. He has also authored* The Fabric of this World*, a book that explores the philosophy of human labour and a theology of vocation, now translated into French, Spanish, and Chinese.*

It is often tempting to think that since the church deals in matters of the spirit, its material context should have little bearing on its ministry and sense of mission. In this brief essay I want to suggest that because human beings are embodied creatures, the shape of the material world—in particular, the shape of the built environment—will have an effect on their spiritual lives, both in relation to God and to each other. Here I will focus on the question of the physical location of a church and the implications location has on its ability, as the gathering point for a community of believers, to identify and contribute to the common good of the society it should serve.

Many have observed that in North American society we witness the steady triumph of private life over public life. Already in the 1830s, visiting Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville referred to this preference for the private as the spirit of "American individualism." By that term he did not mean that Americans were especially selfish. Far from it. He meant rather that the centre of American concern was the well-being of the family, not society at large. "Individualism," he wrote in *Democracy in America*, "is a word recently coined to express a new idea. Our fathers only knew about egoism. Egoism is a passionate and exaggerated love of self which leads a man to think of all things in terms of himself and to prefer himself to all. Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself" (de Tocqueville, 506). In the democratic culture Americans invented for themselves, private

life trumps public life.

Will the hyper-privatized configuration of the exurb have any effect on Christian ministry and sense of mission? Will exurban church location make any difference?

After World War II, with almost universal car ownership and the mass production of affordable single-family detached housing, the spirit of American individualism came to grand physical expression in the suburb: a belt of land area devoted to the private life of the family far removed from the public realm of the city. The classic American suburb of the 1950s and 1960s was nonetheless still oriented to the urban centre as a place of employment, cultural amenity, and civic life. Commutes were typically edge to centre. Since the 1970s, however, we have seen the explosive growth of a new and historically unprecedented form of human settlement: the exurb. This is centreless sprawl that has made the private automobile the only viable mode of transportation, where various land uses—residential, commercial, office, civic, and industrial—are strictly segregated and scattered across the countryside, and where most commutes are no longer between edge and centre, but from edge to edge. If there is any centre to this system, it is the home—where all trips originate, and to which they return. That is to say, there are many centres and they are all private. The public realm has virtually disappeared.

Will the hyper-privatized configuration of the exurb have any effect on Christian ministry and sense of mission? Will exurban church location make any difference? Consider Saddleback Community Church, as represented in a study by geographer Justin Wilford in his book, *Sacred Subdivisions*. Saddleback Church is located in southern California's exurban region of Orange County. One might think that in this widely dispersed area the church campus, at least, functions as the centre of worship and congregational life. But it doesn't. The church and its Sunday worship services count rather as the front door of the believing community. This is where the crowd shows up. Once committed to membership and Christian discipleship, the members of the congregation are referred to weekly small-group meetings in more than 3,800 private homes. Small-group meetings, as it turns out, are at the core of the ministry. That is to say, there are many centres to the church and they are all private. The ministry's structure mirrors the structure of the built environment. "The home for Saddleback churchgoers," writes Wilford, "is the affective center around which all other religiously significant activity turns" (Wilford, 163). Religious practice is "centered on domesticity, close interpersonal relationships, and individual improvement" (Wilford, 116). So much for the public good.

Saddleback not only reflects the spatial configuration of exurban life, but a good deal of its culture as well. Given the absence of a public realm where people identify themselves as citizens in the shared pursuit of the common good, the exurban setting encourages people to think of themselves as consumers whose main concern is the private satisfaction of individual desires. Saddleback markets itself accordingly. In the midst of many preference subcultures, Saddleback will offer many worship styles, times, and venues. In his "Mapping the Future! 2004 State of the Church Message," given at Saddleback Church, senior pastor Rick Warren offers worship options tailored to tastes: "Then you can say, 'Today I think I'd like to go to the polka worship.' Or, 'I feel like heavy metal today. What mood are you in for?' It'll be like going over to Edwards 21 Theaters, 'Now showing at 9:00, 9:15, 9:30, 9:45, 10:00.' You can choose the time, the style and even the size of the service you'd like to be involved in" (as quoted in Wilford, 80). The comparison of the church to an entertainment venue might make some uneasy, and with good reason. There is a danger in the market approach to selling church. Instead of conducting a common worship and liturgy developed within the Christian tradition to transform individual desires and preferences according to the spiritual priorities of the Kingdom of God, it may conform worship and liturgy to the desires and preferences of unreconstructed individuals. Conformed to the world rather than transformed by the gospel—a worry already expressed by St. Paul in the twelfth chapter of his letter to the Romans.

The reference to Saddleback gets us to the era and culture of the 1990s, the heyday of exurban development, and the rise of the mega-church. Since then, there have been signs of the Christian church's rediscovery of locality and the common good. Consider the New Parish movement coming out of Seattle. It had its origins in questioning the mega-church model as an outsized affinity group located on the edge of town. There, write Paul Sparks and the authors of *The New Parish*, "churches drew people out of the diversity of their own neighborhood contexts; . . . in a homogenous gathering, they would 'consume' a worship event crafted with excellence appealing to a specific audience" (Sparks et al., 44). Instead, New Parish churches focus on establishing a "faithful presence" in existing neighbourhoods—primarily urban ones—with their diverse demographics and cultural mix, (Sparks et al., 46) where the primary mission is devoted to the work of the "commons"—to what we share with others in the areas of education, civic life, economic activity, and the natural environment (Sparks et al., 95–96).

The faithful presence of a church, then, means to seek a flourishing life for all within a given place (Sparks et al., 47). Its civic role is more a matter of inhabiting a place than issue advocacy, which runs the risk of reducing the church to another special interest group in the politics of the culture wars (Sparks et al., 111). The emphasis is on self-giving service, not political dominance. "A theology of faithful presence first calls Christians to attend to the people and places that they experience directly," writes James Davison Hunter in *To Change the World* (Hunter, 253). "Faithful presence gives priority to what is right in front of us—the community, the neighborhood, and the city, and the people of which these are constituted. For most, this will mean a preference for stability, locality, and particularity of place and its needs. It is here, through the joys, sufferings, hopes, disappointments, concerns, desires, and worries of the people with whom we are in long-term and close relation—family, neighbors, coworkers, and community—where we find our authenticity as a body and as believers" (Ibid.). Urban neighbourhoods—mixed use and mixed income, with their walkable streets, their squares and commons, their rich public realm—both support and elicit this shift in the focus of Christian ministry and mission.

We can see a similar movement in the case of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, in New York City, whose senior pastor was, until recently, Timothy Keller. By its numbers, Redeemer could be considered a mega-church. It draws over 5,000 attendees to its services each week. But the spirit is different than the exurban phenomenon we considered above. In his book *Center Church*, Keller writes, "Christians should seek to live in the city, not to use the city to build great churches, but to use the resources of the church to seek a great, flourishing city. We refer to this as a 'city growth' model of ministry rather than a strictly 'church growth' model" (Keller, 172). On this model, churches are "looking for ways to strengthen the health of their neighborhoods, making them safer and more humane places to live. This is a way to seek the welfare of the city, in the spirit of Jeremiah 29" (Keller, 175). Members of churches "work for the peace, security, justice, and prosperity of their neighbors, loving them in word and deed, whether or not they believe the same things we believe in" (Keller, 171). Here the common good comes back into focus.

To better serve its parishioners' neighbourhoods, and to avoid undue focus on a singular pastor, Redeemer has decided to get smaller rather than bigger. It subdivided itself into three locations in Manhattan—the West Side, the East Side, and downtown. The Urban Vil-

lage Church in Chicago follows a similar approach when it comes to church growth. Rather than aspiring to become a large church in one location and expecting its members to leave their neighbourhoods and travel miles by car to attend its services, it stays small, local, close, and embedded. It grows by replicating itself, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. With signal emphases on hospitality, justice, inclusion, service, and discipleship, it has established a vital presence in four Chicago neighbourhoods—Hyde Park, South Loop, Wicker Park, and Andersonville—with the intent of growing by starting an additional local faith community in the Windy City every one to two years. Like Redeemer Presbyterian, it intends to grow by replication rather than expansion.

Clearly, the ministry of the Word is central to Redeemer's work. It is theologically conservative and its members can find pastoral support for their personal struggles. But its sense of mission is defined by the urban context in which the church is situated. And if the church, as Lesslie Newbigin puts it in his essay "The Role of the Parish in Society" is to function as the "first fruit, sign, and instrument of God's new creation," as a pilot plant for redemption, the urban context is in many ways ideal. The city, Keller notes, is "humanity intensified—a magnifying glass that brings out the very best and the very worst of human nature" (Keller, 135). The city is the site of diversity, contrast, and contest—racial, ethnic, social, economic, cultural, and intellectual (Keller, 171). It is, in addition, a centre of cultural production—whether local, regional, national, or global. What better place for the community of faith to model, as best it can, the grace, hope, and reconciling power of the gospel? The city occupies a specific patch of ground where people unlike each other have to live together. What better crucible for the church to both learn from and contribute to the common good of the human community? "The question," writes Newbigin, "that has to be asked about the church and about every congregation is not: How big is it? How fast is it growing? How rich is it? It is: What difference is it making to that bit of the world in which it has been placed?" The city is an excellent bit of the world for the Christian church to make a demonstrable difference.

The relation of Christianity and the built environment is clearly a two-way street.

The relation of Christianity and the built environment is clearly a two-way street. One can consider the effects of urban morphology and civic institutions on the character of ministry and mission in the Christian church; one can also speak of the influence of Christianity on

urban morphology and civic institutions. The new direction in this relationship, as far as I can tell, is represented by the concepts of "faithful presence" and the "new commons." The concept of faithful presence takes its cue from the Incarnation. God's presence to humans—especially the most vulnerable—in Christ is to be imitated by those who would follow Christ. This is the cultural counter-movement to the bourgeois tendency toward privacy, material comfort, and social isolation found in the suburban and exurban ideals. The commitment to the "new commons"—that is, devotion to the common good, to those things we hold in common with others irrespective of religious belief and upon which human flourishing depends—comes from a kind of red-letter reading of what it means to be a follower of Christ. It is less a matter of political advocacy and power bids on behalf of Christian special interests and more a matter of the promotion of human flourishing across the board, especially on the local level, through acts of self-giving service. Devotion to the new commons will not only involve acts of direct charity, but also—and in the long run more importantly—investment in the civic institutions, urban form, and communities upon which the common good depends. In my view, walkable urban neighbourhoods represent the most favourable material conditions for a Christian mission and ministry that focus on faithful presence and the promotion of the new commons. Conversely, devotion to the new commons will include the support and development of walkable urban neighbourhoods. It's a two-way street.

In my view, walkable urban neighbourhoods represent the most favourable material conditions for a Christian mission and ministry that focus on faithful presence and the promotion of the new commons.

THE HALO EFFECT: THE ECONOMICS BEHIND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

***Brian Grim** is president of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (RFBF) and a leading expert on international religious demography and the socio-economic impact of restrictions on religious freedom. Brian recently served as chair of the World Economic Forum's global agenda council on the role of faith (2015–2016). Prior to becoming the foundation's president in 2014, Brian directed the largest social science effort to collect and analyze global data on religion at the Pew Research Center.*

In my vocational journey spanning the globe from China to the Soviet Union, and from the Middle East to Europe, and now back to the United States, some of my best and worst professional and personal experiences have been in religious organizations. As a religious devotee and scholar of global religion, I can appreciate what the Baptist Sunday school teacher, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and former United States president Jimmy Carter meant when he observed that "religion can be such a powerful force for good and evil." And therefore, (regardless of how you evaluate his one-term presidency) I agree with Carter's conclusion that "the protection of religious rights becomes critically important" because research overwhelmingly shows that freedom of religion and belief, when robustly respected by societies and governments, is a pillar of peace. In a previous book with Penn State professor Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution & Conflict in the 21st Century*, we specifically looked at how violence and conflict can result from religions seeking to establish a monopoly over society, or governments trying to control and restrict the free practice of religion.

A robust and complementary approach to advancing religious freedom, however, is needed—one that focuses on the good religion does specifically in the United States, from inner-city black churches in Chicago providing free HIV/AIDS screening community-wide to conservative churches across the nation joining their liberal counterparts in helping refu-

gees find new homes in the United States. I am convinced that in an age when fewer Americans participate in local congregations—and therefore don't have firsthand experience with organized religion—it is important to provide a more balanced understanding about the role of religion beyond the many daily headlines.

Indeed, bad news about religion scrolls across our newsfeeds every day. The media rightly, but far too narrowly, focus on concerns ranging from clergy sex abuse scandals to religion-related terrorism to bigotry under the guise of religious freedom, and stories of religion's impending demise feed the narrative. These headlines, however, miss the real story of how religion contributes to a more stable American society and sustainable economy.

It's as if American headlines on religion's weakness and demise have become a fact that everyone believes—secular and religious alike. But when a sizeable portion of America's 187 million religiously affiliated adults has begun to feel marginalized, and in their words "persecuted," it's high time we had a real look at the facts. Why? It is not healthy that America's majority population has a persecution complex (real or imagined). No doubt, this sense of besiegement contributed in no small part to the election of Donald Trump as the forty-fifth president of the United States. If America is to remain a dynamic, innovative, and inclusive society, the majority and minority populations need to feel an equal stake in and commitment to the success of the American project. Otherwise, as the 2016 presidential election showed, disenfranchisement can lead to intolerance, and intolerance to potential conflict, and conflict to destructive socio-economic consequences, a topic covered in *The Price of Freedom Denied.*

Indeed, without a realistic assessment of religion's role in American life, we will become increasingly ignorant of how our country came to be and misinformed about one of the key forces that keeps America going. If religious defeatism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, we will lose a lot. We'll lose such things as 320,000 initiatives by religious congregations to recruit volunteers for organizations such as the Red Cross, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and the United Way. And 135,000 parenting assistance programs, 130,000 alcohol/drug abuse recovery programs, 125,000 marriage improvement initiatives, 120,000 projects to help the unemployed, 94,000 veterans' and veterans' family support groups, along with 78,000 programs to address mental illness will all be gone if not for the initiatives of local religious congregations in every urban and rural corner of our country. Indeed, holding a proper appreciation of the positive contributions of religion is important if we are to continue to be a thriving society where everyone, religious or not, can flourish.

A POSITIVE STORY

So, to balance our understanding of religion, it's useful to look at the economic value of such good works.

According to a 2016 study, religion annually contributes about $1.2 trillion of socio-economic value to the United States economy ("The Socio-Economic Contribution of Religion to American Society: An Empirical Analysis," in *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion,* Brian Grim and Melissa Grim, 2016). That is equivalent to being the world's fifteenth largest national economy, outpacing nearly 180 other countries and territories. It's more than the global annual revenues of the world's top ten tech companies, including Apple, Amazon, and Google. And it's also more than 50 percent larger than the global annual revenues of America's six largest oil and gas companies. You could say that's a lot of spiritually inspired fuel being pumped into the United States economy.

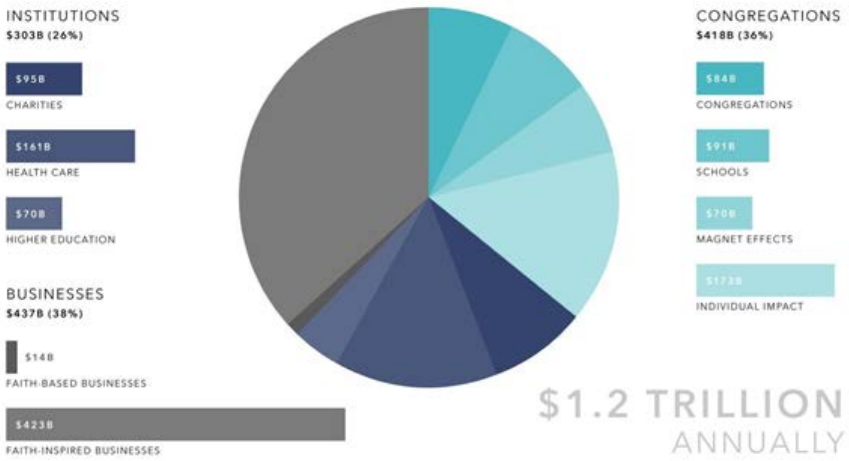

Image: Religious Freedom & Business Foundation

These contributions fall into three general categories: $418 billion from religious congregations; $303 billion from other religious institutions such as universities, charities, and health systems; and $437 billion from faith-based, faith-related, or faith-inspired businesses.

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

First, religious congregations of every denomination add $418 billion annually to the American economy. These local congregations number more than 344,000, employ hundreds of thousands of staff, and purchase billions of dollars' worth of services in every corner and crossroads of the country's urban and rural landscape.

These local congregations do much more than just provide places of worship. Each year, congregations spend $84 billion on their operations, ranging from paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to personnel, to paying for goods and service as diverse as flowers, sound systems, maintenance, and utilities. Almost all is spent right in the local community.

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Schools attached to congregations employ 420,000 full-time teachers and train 4.5 million students each year. By comparison, this is the same number as the total population of Ireland or New Zealand.

The impact of faith-based schools in the United States is significant. For instance, St. Benedict's Catholic Prep readies 530 mostly poor, mostly minority boys for college and beyond. In an area where public schools are working hard just to keep young men from ending up in gangs, in jail, or dead, St. Benedict's sends 95 percent of its graduates to college, including a sizeable number to Ivy League schools. Graduates such as Uriel Burwell return to make an impact. Upon graduating from Drew University, Uriel returned to his childhood neighbourhood to build fifty new affordable houses and rehabilitate more than thirty homes. His efforts attracted more than $3 million in funding to build additional affordable homes and apartments in the area.

Indeed, congregations are like magnets attracting economic activity ranging from weddings to lectures, congresses, and even tourism. For instance, 120,000 congregations report that people visit them to view their art and architecture.

Finally, and most importantly, it's what congregations do in their communities that makes the biggest socio-economic contribution. These programs affect individuals and families in a variety of important ways.

For example, congregations provide 130,000 alcohol recovery programs such as the Saddleback Church's "Celebrate Recovery" program that has helped more than 27,000 individuals over the past twenty-five years. Congregations also provide 120,000 programs to help the unemployed. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has employment service centres in each of their stakes across the country (and across the world).

Islamic Relief USA, for instance, responded to the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, by hiring twenty local staff and distributing 135,000 gallons of water during the height of the water crisis.

Some of this work runs counter to stereotypes some may have about religious groups. For instance, nearly 26,000 congregations are engaged in some form of active ministry to help people living with HIV-AIDS. That makes one HIV-AIDS ministry for every forty-six people who are HIV-positive. Recently, under the sponsorship of Walgreens and the "First Ladies" (pastors' wives) of Chicago, nearly fifty Chicago churches hosted free screening for HIV and other diseases.

In fact, the data show that congregations overwhelmingly include a society-building, outward, community focus, with over 320,000 congregations helping to recruit volunteers for programs outside their walls to non-religious groups, ranging from Big Brothers and Big Sisters to the United Way and the American Red Cross.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

If we extend our view beyond what happens at local congregations and schools, we can find tens of thousands of other religiously affiliated charities, health-care facilities, and institutions of higher learning also doing these sorts of good works every day. These add another $303 billion of socio-economic impact to the United States economy each year.

These include charities such as the Knights of Columbus, whose 1.5 million members respond to disasters and other human needs. One in six people visiting a hospital in the United States is cared for in a Catholic facility. And it's not just Catholics. Health-care services, such as those provided by the Adventist Health System, employ as many as 78,000 people in forty-six hospitals.

Institutions of higher education, such as Jewish-affiliated Brandeis University, is one of thousands of religiously based colleges throughout the country. Even small religious charities can have strategic impact. Islamic Relief USA, for instance, responded to the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, by hiring twenty local staff and distributing 135,000 gallons of water during the height of the water crisis.

FAITH-INSPIRED BUSINESSES

Religion-related businesses add another $438 billion to the United States economy each year. These include faith-based enterprises ranging from halal and kosher food industries to religious media such as EWTN and the Christian Broadcast Network.

The largest group within this sector are not religious companies per se, but faith-inspired or religion-friendly companies. Tyson's Foods, for example, employs a large force of chaplains for their multi-religious workforce.

Across the country, associations of CEOs seek to put the moral and ethical teachings of their faith to practice in their businesses. One such association is C12, with over 2,500 members, some of whom have businesses worth billions of dollars.

The religion that inspires many businesses in the United States also has a way of spilling across borders. One American CEO, Don Larson, motivated by his faith, has started a company in Mozambique that not only stocks the shelves of America's major food stores—from Giant and Wegmans to Whole Foods—but empowers tens of thousands of people. His innovative business model is based on what he calls a "reverse tithe" from which 90 percent of profits go back into the local community. That means many American consumers are participating in a faith endeavour, perhaps unawares.

Perhaps the most surprising business included in the study's tally of religion-inspired businesses is Walmart, the world's largest company by revenue, which employs 2.2 million people worldwide.

Walmart's religious roots are cogently described in a book by Professor Bethany Moreton, who documents how one of the most rural and underdeveloped states could produce one of the world's largest and most tech-savvy companies. The secret, according to Moreton, was creating a new service economy based on the religious sentiments of Arkansas that

equate serving others with spiritual virtue. Many early employees and managers saw, as her book title suggests, that *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* is a simultaneous venture that led to the making of Christian free enterprise.

While the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation study does not classify Walmart as a Christian company, or even a faith-based company, it recognizes that religion was an important element in its creation. Without the specific religious milieu of Arkansas in the 1970s and 1980s, the service economy may not have become what it is today.

Notably, Arkansas is part of the American heartland sometimes demeaningly called "fly-over territory"—the red Republican centre of the country that coastal elites must fly over to travel between the East and West coasts. It is one of twenty-seven states with fewer religiously unaffiliated people than the national average (the average is 23 percent; in Arkansas it's 18 percent). Of those twenty-seven states, twenty-one voted for Trump, including Arkansas.

This is a cautionary tale for secular investors who might mistakenly think that the so-called flyover states are not economic dynamos yet to be awakened. It seems that America's red centre is stirring and along with it a new generation of business innovation may blossom. Only time will tell.

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