



# THE VISIONARY PASSION FOR URBAN MISSION

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In October 1909, Ellen White wrote a motivational letter to the churches encouraging the members to envision a new mission focus for the city of Portland, a town of close to 100,000 citizens.<sup>[i]</sup> For a number of reasons, the project was close to her heart. Firstly, she was instructed by God to encourage a renewed interest in sharing the “banner of truth” in the eastern states with increased vigour and urgency. Secondly, while visiting the city of her childhood years, she confronted a spiritual decline. In this context, she recalled the revival that took place in the town before the Great Disappointment. More importantly, she reflected on the transformational impact of God’s love in her personal life. It ignited a burden and passion for the conversion of her friends. “When I was but a child, the Lord placed upon me a burden for souls. I worked earnestly for the conversion of my playmates.”<sup>[iii]</sup>

Ellen White’s desire to conquer the cities for Jesus emerged from the depth of her discernment of God’s love. The appreciation of God’s passion drives human mind beyond the boundaries set by mechanical methodologies. More so, it ignites a new impetus to immerse one’s dreams in the incomprehensible depth of God’s vision for life. In tracing the history of urban mission, I am inspired by the story of God’s patience in leading the church towards a more concentrated and dynamic focus the cities. In 1909 Ellen White wrote, “As I look over the past testimonies I see that for years the importance of working the cities has been urged. But . . . excuses have been made and this great work has been sadly neglected.”<sup>[iii]</sup> Further, she refers to “the unworked cities in

Europe, Australia, and America, and in the regions beyond” stating “these cities have been neglected for years.”<sup>[iv]</sup>

At the same time, her voice paved a visionary pathway, a space for recapturing and experiencing the transformational nature of God’s ways, in reaching people. In 1905, she wrote an inspirational reflection about Jesus’ ways. “The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No questions of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. He passed no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul.”<sup>[v]</sup>

In Ellen White’s mind, involvement in Jesus’ ways was all inclusive. Her understanding of mission focused on the inspirational visioning of “service to God” through every occupation of life. It implied engagement and with people and sharing of the saving knowledge of Jesus wherever they are.<sup>[vi]</sup>

<sup>[i]</sup> [www.biggestuscities.com/city/portland-oregon](http://www.biggestuscities.com/city/portland-oregon) Accessed 4 Aug, 2017.

<sup>[ii]</sup> Letter, January 17, 1910.

<sup>[iii]</sup> Letter 47, 1909.

<sup>[iv]</sup> Ms, 11, 1908.

<sup>[v]</sup> Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 25.

<sup>[vi]</sup> Ms 79, 1898.

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23-24 February 2018

