

Creating the City of Man - Architecture for a United World

by Carl Teichrib

Sometimes the grandest ideas are lost in the dustbin of obscuring. Take, for instance a brittle, oversized book I found tucked in a forlorn corner of the Indiana State Library.

Published in Rome just before World War I, and armed with the unusual titled of *“World Conscience”— An International Society for the Creation of a World-Centre*, this book, written by Hendrik C. Andersen (a Norse-American sculpture living in Rome), detailed a construction project of tremendous magnitude. In actuality, Andersen’s publication wasn’t a book in the general sense; rather, it was a global appeal for international supporters who would back his ostentatious idea. To this end, Andersen’s manuscript contains detailed architectural layouts, letters of acknowledgement from prominent individuals, and a revealing peek into the philosophical positions which acted as the foundation for his concept.

So what was Andersen’s “big idea”? Nothing less then the creation of an international city dedicated to human achievement and world unification.

Dubbed a “World-Centre for Communication,” this undertaking, if it had been completed, would have been a city some ten square miles in size with a central Tower of Progress rising over 1000 feet. Surrounding this Tower of Progress was to be a number of strategic buildings of enormous size, including an International Bank, a World Reference Library, an International Hall of Justice, a variety of International Scientific Congress Buildings, and a Temple of Religions.

When Mr. Andersen proposed this concept to the world — sending copies of his document to major players around the globe — the location for the construction of this city was still up for debate. Drawings showed possible locations in Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, France, Turkey, Italy, and the United States. But whoever’s ground it was to sit on, be it national or neutral territory, the idea behind this International City was broader than any single country.

According to Mr. Andersen, “It would encourage the desire, ever increasing in the world, for unification, and it would give a strong impetus to the progress of religion, science and justice.”¹ And religion, of all the foundational components, was arguably the most important factor in this grand city-planning scheme.

Going back through time to the various civilizations, Andersen parallel traces the history of civilization and religious thought, culminating in Christianity — and he ties all of this into his world-city argument. However, the version of Christ that Mr. Andersen presents doesn't fit the version of Jesus as depicted in the Bible, specifically John 14:6 where Jesus explains, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Acts 4:8-12 and Acts 10:39-43 likewise attests to Jesus' exclusive divine nature). Instead, Hendrik focuses on *man's divinity* as the Christ-point foundation for this super city project.

"He [Jesus] taught men that the kingdom of heaven is within, and that, through love and devotion, through labour and justice, this invisible kingdom would grow strong and imperishable."²

"...the definition, clearly outlined by Christ, of *God in man*, can never pass away."³

"...as we are assured of the divinity of the human soul, we can survey the past with calm and serene judgment, and endeavour to strengthen the future by a deeper comprehension of the God in man and so help through unity, strength and culture, to build the ladder, as in Jacob's dream, that reaches from earth to heaven."⁴

Today we would say that Mr. Andersen's religious points would be at home with the esoteric side of spirituality — particularly in the New Age and occult camps. Annie Besant, a leader in the Theosophical Society (which birthed our modern New Age movement), writes, "Man is not to be compelled; he is to be free. He is not a slave, but a God in the making."⁵ And New Age authors John Davis and Naomi Rice exclaim, "It is time to reveal our divine glory, summon our courage, and demonstrate our wisdom. It is not necessary to worship the Christ, WE MUST BECOME THE VERY CHRIST."⁶

Going beyond this mutually compatible link, the idea of creating a super-spiritual/unifying world-city under the banner of Humanity's Ascension can also be found scattered through the pages of religious and esoteric literature. Mr. Andersen's idea certainly wasn't new.

Atlantis, that mythical land described by Plato, was said to contain a great Royal City (known as the City of the Golden Gates), and over the years occultists and esoteric scholars have propagated that this city was a global-spiritual center.⁷ And in Genesis 11, we find the fascinating account of the Tower of Babel, a building complex representing an elevation of humanity's pride and arrogance to new and lofty levels. Moreover, the notion that certain cities can act as a spiritual magnet, either through man's proclamation of divinity or through the influence of outside ethereal forces, crops up time and again.

Benjamin Crème, the spokesperson for the channeled messages of Maitreya the Christ — a supposedly ascended spirit master who is charged with guiding man's evolution — describes New York, London, Geneva, Darjeeling, and Tokyo as the five main city-centers of cosmic energy on Earth, with Rome and Moscow acting in an important but less direct capacity.⁸

As noted earlier, the belief that cities can become centers for spiritual life and

power isn't new. An interesting article on the spiritual symbolism of cities can be found at the Theosophical Library Online. In this piece simply titled "The City," the writer reviews the historical significance of various religiously oriented cities, including Hindu (the Golden City), Buddhist (Kapilavastu), Judaic (Jerusalem), Roman, and Grecian centers. Strikingly, after detailing numerous examples religiously important cities, the author concludes by saying, "We can recognize the sacred design nurtured in the united mind of the Builders and, once again, lay down a plan for the City of Man."⁹

While the name of Hendrik Andersen has been virtually lost to the dustbins of obscurity, his conviction to create a City of Man follows a long history of humanity's claimed self-importance. Obviously, Man never learned his lesson from the Tower of Babel (see Genesis 11); when Man proclaims himself to be divine, then wrath, confusion, and chaos inevitably follow.

Notes

¹ Hendrik C. Andersen, "*World-Conscious*" — *An International Society for the Creation of a World-Centre* (Rome: Communication Office of Hendrik C. Andersen, 1913), p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10. Italics in original.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵ Annie Besant, *Esoteric Christianity* (The Theosophical Publishing House/Quest, 1901/1982), p. 220.

⁶ John Davis and Naomi Rice, *Messiah and the Second Coming* (Coptic Press, 1982), p. 69. Capitals in original.

⁷ See Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, pp. 33-34. See also, H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*.

⁸ Benjamin Crème, *The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom*, p. 81.

⁹ "The City," *Theosophical Library Online*, [<http://theosophy.org/tlodocs/symbols/CityThe-1281.htm>]. Accessed June 23, 2005.