

The Suburbs of Egypt

By Tim Honan

...there are those who are still in Egypt and make the short trip to the suburbs to tell us in newer softer language that things are improving. They tell us that the pyramid model is undergoing an internal retrofit. We now have task masters in Hawaiian shirts, who call us "dude".

There are many topics relating to the system of religion and the attending conversations about pastors, home churches and contemporary Christianity that greatly confuse just where we are going in a spiritual context. It seems I can look over my shoulder and still see very clearly where I have come from. Like the children of Israel headed into the desert with Moses, we are still within the political boundaries or if you will, the shadow of Egypt.

Many of us have only gone a short commute from Egypt (a figurative spiritual place of slavery and rational religion). Now we are out just a short distance and in many ways our lives still depend on many of the rational and cultural elements that make the system go. For those of us who are "out of the church" per se, we tend to be reactionary to the place we have been. We can still see the city outline in our minds and are still reacting to it. We are afraid to venture further and leave behind the uncomfortable familiar. We have our reasons for disliking where we have come from, but not much of a clue where we are headed. To some degree we are feeding on the pain of the past. Many of us are unwilling to truly apprehend change. We don't understand the new nature of the citizen of the kingdom that God wants us to understand. We only know one kingdom and that is Egypt. We know the streets, where to get a good meal and how to stay alive making bricks. We sense we don't have the skills for this new kingdom as much as we hate the old one.



Then there are those who are still in Egypt and make the short trip to the suburbs to tell us in newer softer language that things are improving. They tell us that the pyramid model is undergoing an internal retrofit. We now have task masters in

Hawaiian shirts, who call us "dude". They say that they are emerging from the old Egypt and would like to bring their building efficiencies to our homes in the suburbs. Help us build small pyramids. They have vast money and materials to help us. They ask, "Why leave all that history, money and accomplishment behind?" Sure there were mistakes but "we're working for change on the inside of the pyramid". In their mind you need lots of workers, money and plans laid out by men who model their organizations in the model of Egypt to build the "Kingdom of God". They will give lip service to the fact that the "Kingdom of God is in you" but there is no physical evidence to that fact. It is an eminently rational model--a kingdom constructed by and for men.

I do not want to react to where I have been, but respond to where I am going. In one sense I only know how to make bricks. It's hard to leave a familiar skill and learn something completely new. We don't want to be pastoral, apostolic, or prophetic bricklayers. Many of us have laid down those skills, willing to relearn how to build in a "kingdom" that is eminently spiritual and not rational. It is difficult to leave the small order of men in Egypt and go on to a much larger spiritual order that God operates in. Having left the suburbs we don't want our going to be defined by being "out of Egypt" or for that matter "post Egyptians" For a time it has been tough going against the pull of Egypt, realizing how deep our citizenry goes. Breaking culture and tradition is something we didn't figure on having to do. Christianity as we know it is eminently parallel to our culture. We seem to lean more towards moral imperatives and behavioral adjustments of our culture than spiritual freedom. Sorting this out is no easy task. It comes down to rediscovering ourselves as individuals. In Egypt we were only effective as a crowd.

And in the crowd we draw our strength. With the Kingdom of God within us we understand that there is more to us than we realize. Our spiritual poverty made us easy to manipulate and control. We have grown accustomed to the easy efficiency and predictability of smooth religion.

Outside of Egypt, life is turbulent to our rationally ordered minds. Our fears cook our hearts daily. We clamor for spiritual food served up neatly. We demand the unknown be revealed. We settle for smoothly delivered deceits. We haven't made the transition to a spirituality based on bits of information, digested over time. The

God we follow seems to have all the time in the world. We move on past the suburbs slowly, spiritually weakened by religious efficiency and confused hearts.

We complain about Egypt as a matter of course but the argument against Egypt actually is a necessary component in establishing its legitimacy. The argument is about arguing and not real change. The pros and the cons have a vested interest in the status quo. The reactionary finds he needs Egypt to establish himself. In reality, Egypt is all he has.

So here's to moving beyond Egypt and its great shadow of influence, past the suburbs.

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