and large, disconnected from the rhythms that once gave rise to the rituals of both sheltering and worshiping. There has been a matching architectural celebration of machine-based living.

One reason that has been given is the 14th-century invention of the mechanical clock.[6] Up until then, everyday life was organized between sunrise and sunset, winter and summer. The Horarium sought to cut time into smaller measures, an attempt to regularize the religious schedule throughout Christendom. But the lack of a universal "hour" troubled church leaders like Saint Benedict. The mechanical clock was the first timepiece ever to run at a uniform rate and not be restricted to certain temperatures or lighting conditions. Today, through transmission and adaptation, the clock measures most of our actions, many of our rituals.

Besides the mechanical clock, high-energy buildings have overridden nature and reduced our need for ritual adaptations. This is not to say that ritual has disappeared entirely from our modern lives. Every building has a ritual component: changing classes at school or checking in and out of the factory or office, usually accompanied by some degree of socializing. But most such actions are by the clock. The spontaneity that went along with traditional adaptive modes is missing for most of us.

In fact, during the last half of the 20th century, we saw the near demise of ritual. In the 1970s, anthropologist Mary Douglas wrote about a "mysterious and widespread explicit rejection of rituals as such. Ritual has become a bad word signifying empty conformity. We are witnessing a revolt against formalism, even against form."[7] Douglas was speaking principally about the church but she might as well have been speaking about life in general. In either case, perhaps the reasons that ritual has been rejected are not so completely mysterious as she suggests.

Today, 30 years after Douglas wrote those words, we are seeing evidence of people longing to bring their lives into greater har-

mony with nature through ritual. Architect Carol Venolia recently wrote of inviting friends four times a year for a potluck with foods of the season. While she says that her intent is for people to "bring something that evokes our place on the year's cycle," she remarks on the "stirred-up" spontaneity of the events. "Each time we gather, I'm delighted by the unpredictable mix of offerings."[8] While this example may seem trifling, it points out an important correspondence. More than signifying "empty conformity," ritual can evoke spontaneity and choice.

In great part, our longing for nature results from unprecedented global urbanization and our separation from the land. In 1950, only New York contained 10 million people. By 2015, there will be 25 cities of roughly 10 million or more, six of those over 20 million. By 2030, 60 percent of the world's people are expected to occupy cities.[9] Consequently, we are fast losing our connection to nature.

At the same time, our hunger for ritual results not only from urbanization but also from the way we make most of our buildings. When buildings isolate us from any environmental change that could summon us to action, we lose a motive for ritual, a stimulus for creativity. Today, we mechanically lighten the night and darken the day, heat the winter and cool the summer. When we so completely override nature, we not only lessen the need for many customarily repeated acts of sheltering but we also lose a creative impulse.

It is becoming the same the world over. Hong Kong is one of the densest cities in the world, and consequently one of the most dependent on the machine. The harbor on one side and the mountains on the other have limited outward expansion. Hence, growth has been directed upward. We excuse this detachment from nature by citing world trade, commerce, land values, and construction costs: all the same reasons used in dozens of other world-class cities.