

"Human beings do not live by bread alone." The authors believe that in saying this in the context of his own hunger, Jesus confronted demonic power with a spiritual truth of utmost practical relevance for the material life of humans. What does it profit a person or a society to gain utmost wealth at the price of losing justice, compassion, and joy of soul?

We have claimed modesty for the mission of the church to America's cities, but have opposed the kind of modesty that cloaks the sins of doubt and little faith among the churches. If, "where there is no vision, the people perish," vision becomes a central ingredient of our very survival. What institutions in American society are more charged by their own charters with the promulgation of a convincing vision for the whole society than the churches? Can the churches ignore the prolix realities of the cities without falling into false spiritualism? The Christian faith concerns a Creator who refuses to be above it all, who enters the creation as a creature to bring this great work to completion in a *shalom* above all that humans—including Christians—are likely to ask or think.

The authors of this volume confess our abiding temptation to think too small about the vision and the tasks that belong to church people in this urban society. We have tried to state the theological, the political, and the urgent practical case for large involvement of the churches in America's search for a more just human life for the people of our cities. The reorientation of a public policy requires getting at the roots of injustice. Religion is very much a matter of the deepest roots of all human things. Therefore, the incursion of religion into the search for better social policy need not be pretentious; it may be the only way by which policy and religious faith achieve authenticity.

We Christians are told in our primary document that "faith without works is dead." In our time, faith without public works of *shalom* will be especially dead. Only by serving the whole Human City and the wholeness of all its inhabitants, will we point them to "a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

NOTES

¹*The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 63.

Redeeming the City: Theology, Politics & Urban Policy. Edited by Baquarriello, Schriver & Greyer, N.Y.: The Pilgrim Press, 1982

APPENDIX A:

Claiming the Media for Doing Justice in the City

THE RECENT phrase, "the electronic church," suggests that there is clearly a new way of being church, the congregation being linked not by physical presence around the preached and sacramental Word, but by physical presence around the preached and sacramental Word, but by microwaves bounced off an orbiting communication satellite. Some of the larger, traditional churches have begun to enter the field with a great deal of alacrity, but the phenomenon of the electronic church has not benefitted yet from the theological analysis it desperately needs. Here we recall Marshall McLuhan's cogent pun, "the medium is the message." The medium affects the one who uses it as well as the one who receives the communicated message. Television is not changing the churches as much as the churches are changing themselves by their use of the medium. This ought to be a focus of theological discussion, lest the churches unwittingly act themselves into a way of being that is not faithful to their own self-understanding.

That necessary discussion cannot be pursued here. Our concern is that the medium itself is potent for the work of justice, which is the work of the church. This possibility has become clear more so since the medium brought politics into the pulpits. Before then, the churches used television principally for evangelization or doctrinal exposition.

Obviously, the drift of this book is not in the same direction as that of the majority of television preachers. But the possibility for television leads us to present two perspectives on the uses of television for the future of cities. The first case, "Television and the Image of the City," analyzes the impact of the content of television's message about the city, decides it is wanting, and suggests more positive communication. The second case, "Television and the Shape of the City," describes the benefits to the city were the citizens to become producers instead of merely consumers. It

3. The "Watergate Tapes" was a dramatic recreation of actual conversations which had been taped, and enabled a national audience to pursue the meaning of a set of events which had been hard to lift off the printed page.

There are difficulties which account in part for current television coverage. For example, the visual immediacy of TV tends to lead to the depiction of events or episodes which are short-lived and visually exciting. Houses and factories burn down in a few short dramatic moments. Immediate confrontations are more easily caught by the camera than are the slow processes of legislative action or the growth of bureaucracies. The scene of a crime or auto accident is more apt to get coverage than a meeting of the local school board. Directness of relationships is often oversimplified. Actions are presented as the result of one cause. Someone's decision has direct and obvious consequences. The governor refuses to sign a bill, and schools are short of funds. Nurses go on strike, and a hospital is shut down.

Dramatic personalities make for good media. People identify with visible individuals who act out their parts, become heroes or villains, and give emotion to events. Mayor Richard Daley becomes the personification of the city of Chicago. Gloria Steinem, with her slick upper-middle class style, becomes the symbol of the liberated woman.

Many of the important dynamics of the city are difficult to capture through these immediate, direct, personal relationships. Patterns of action by large numbers of people over long periods of time are critical for understanding the city. And there are many variations in between the immediate, the direct, the personal, and the long-run, indirect, and impersonal which require attention to understand what the critical choices and opportunities for action are in the city.

To the degree that this is the case, a challenge is posed for the managers of the television media. The challenge is to find ways to interpret the city which enable citizens to understand that wise action is needed and effective action is possible. Three types of television treatment of the city might be developed to deal with these issues, each of which has distinct problems and opportunities. They will be referred to as: The Prism, the Problem-Solving, and the Panorama approaches.

The Prism approach looks for the dramatic event or confrontation in which a number of forces in city life come together, and are explored in the course of an unfolding drama.

Illustrations of this approach might include dramatic recreations of events such as:

- an important court case, where basic patterns of urban development are brought into the courtroom.
- an important municipal decision, such as the choice some cities are making of whether or not to invest in older neighborhoods.
- an important citizen referendum where advocacy would need to be developed, giving viewers an opportunity to judge, for example, whether or not investment should be made in a deep water tunnel system government officials or urban planners might want to construct.

The Problem-Solving approach would look at the dimensions of some major urban problems, explore alternative definitions, and perhaps tell the story of the variety of ways in which people in different neighborhoods or institutions are trying to deal with the problem.

Illustrations of this approach might:

- examine problems in meeting the basic requirements for food, energy, shelter, water, air, and waste management, and explore alternative technologies for use in city neighborhoods.
- examine health, education, and security, the limitations of large bureaucracies in meeting these needs, and the alternative ways which people in city neighborhoods are finding to meet these problems.
- examine the flow of resources in urban regions, and the problems of investment and credit deprivation in many city neighborhoods, with an exploration of the various forms which urban re-investment is taking.
- examine the problems of authority, or its absence, powerlessness, as people try to get handles on institutions and resources needed to deal with neighborhood problems.

The Panorama approach would develop the longer sweep of dimensions and trends in city-building. It might use a contemporary version of the "Civilization" or "Cosmos" series in which a narrator walks viewers through visual reconstructions of the life of the city.

Illustrations of this approach might include:

- the major forces of technology, resource availability, and population growth which contributed to the growth and form of the modern industrial city.
- the changing patterns of governance of the city as they have been tried, tested, and modified through time.
- the interactions of ethnic groups in the city, how they have contended with each other, struggled for their places in the economic

and political mosaic of the city, and contributed to its religious and cultural richness.

- the struggles to deal with the problems of scale in the city between large and small systems of commerce, industry, governance, and association; the role which technology has played in these struggles (including television) and the prospects for new choices, including the prospects for neighborhood, and audience interactive television.

TELEVISION AND THE SHAPE OF THE CITY.*

Charles Najinsky flipped to the local news section of the town newspaper to find this advertisement staring out at him:

Fairmont Community College announces the opening of a Citizens' Information Center for the use of persons interested in community issues like the following:

- effect of new industry on residential property values
- zoning law and its effect on your neighborhood
- improved municipal services: garbage, water, sewage
- impact of unemployment on Fairmont
- preservation of green space
- air and water pollution
- citizen desire to get acquainted with differing national culture

The Center has been financed on an experimental basis by a coalition of the college, the State of New Jersey, and three local religious bodies representing the Jewish, Protestant, and Roman Catholic faiths. A major aim of the Center is to put citizens interested in similar problems in touch with each other. Call 988-2561 for further information.

For at least five years Najinsky had watched the paint peeling in his neighborhood. His wife had already suggested that they sell the house before his retirement to avoid being caught here forever. "Well," he said to himself, "let's give it a try." He called 988-2561.

"We're building a file of people in each residential section," said the woman on the other end of the line. "When as many as six persons express an interest in a similar problem, we send a letter to them, with all the names, addresses, and telephone numbers. Would you like to register your name, address, and telephone number with us?" Najinsky thought a moment: would the whole thing get to be a hassle? "I guess so," he said

*This section is taken from Donald W. Shriver, Jr. and Karl A. Ostrom, *Is There Hope for the City?* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 165-73.

dubiously. He put down the phone wondering if anything would ever come of it.

More did come of it than he had expected. Seven names appeared on the letter which arrived two weeks later. One of them was a casual acquaintance from the box factory where he worked. Another he had met one Sunday at Mass. The other five were strangers. But that very night, one of the strangers called to ask him if his living room was available for a get-together. "Sure," he said. "Let's make it Wednesday night."

Five men, four women, and three young children came. Most of them lived in their own homes, but two families were renters, and one of these was black. It was the first time a black couple had ever been in that living room—a fact that pushed Najinsky close to calling off the whole deal. But before the evening concluded, their mutual concern for the neighborhood won out. The nine adults agreed to divide into two groups, one to study zoning and industrialization laws, the other to conduct a telephone poll of residents of every street represented by some family in the initial group.

Only three months later, the results began to startle Najinsky and (what they came proudly to call) the "Fairmont Fair Deal Association." Forty homeowners and fifteen landlords had decided to paint their houses. A cooperative arrangement for the purchase of paint had been worked out at 40 percent of hardware store prices. A retired grocery store manager in the neighborhood had been enlisted as a mini information center for bulk purchases of several items such as grass seed, snow shovels, and roofing materials. In the meantime, largely through the help of the Citizens' Information Center, they discovered that zoning law permitted "medium industry" to locate in Fairmont and restricted all but a few neighborhoods to twelve-family apartment buildings. Builders were urging the county government to remove all restrictions on the size of apartment houses, and there was even talk of large purchases of current low-density residential tracts for this purpose.

"What we've got to decide," said Najinsky at an open meeting of the Association at the synagogue, "is whether we want this town to remain a place where you can get to know your neighbors." (His wife, Lola, said later to him with a laugh, "A year ago, Charlie, you didn't know any of the people at that meeting. You don't know anybody just by living in a place.") The upshot of the meeting was a series of delegations to the planning commission, the county board, and the president of a large residential construction company. In the midst of all this, a delegation from Foamcut, Inc., in the person of the latter's executive vice-president,

paid a visit to the officers of the Fair Deal Association: "The Federal Government is financing the purchase of the area of the South Bronx in which our present factory is located. They expect to build an apartment complex and some office buildings there. We're thinking about moving to New Jersey, and to Fairmont in particular. We are committed, by the way, to bringing as many of our present workers with us as possible. Some of them are having their residences cleared away too. You should know that a hundred and fifty of our workers are black or Puerto Rican. I'm wondering if, as an Association, you'd work with us to be sure that they can be housed in this community."

"Well, I guess we'll think about it," said Najinsky. "We'd have to think a *lot* about it before we tell you." The comment led to adjournment of the meeting.

Actually, Najinsky felt that there wasn't much to think about. Just when they were beginning to develop some real stability and spirit in the community, outsiders wanted to push the place downhill again. He'd almost stopped thinking about it, when he was invited one Sunday after Mass into Father O'Malley's study. "You know, Charles," said O'Malley, "your work with the Association is something we all can be proud of. It's the one thing we've done in this parish with the Protestants and the Jews that really makes sense. But I have a problem for you to think about. I don't want an answer from you right now, but I want you to think about it. A social worker from the South Bronx came to see me this past week. Her name is Harrisene Little. She was brought up there, loves the people there, is doing some remarkable things to help them. She came to me out of concern for thirty men and women who work for Foamcut, and who want to continue working with the company if and when it moves to Fairmont. They can't commute from the Bronx, and they would like very much to walk to work. They can pay modest rents, and they could live in any of those twelve-family apartments which the builders are willing to put up here. Everybody knows what a bombed-out area the South Bronx is. This would be our chance to help bear the responsibility for improving the lives of the people who live there. Would you consider working in the Association to get the cooperation of people on this thing? The Association could easily become a tool for locking up this community against people different from ourselves. As a Christian I don't want that to happen. I hope you'll think very hard about it."

That was the only kind of thinking you could do about it: hard thinking. Riding home in his car, he grumbled to his wife: "This Association thing just gets me in deeper and deeper. I was beginning to enjoy

living here, but I can see one big hassle coming out of it now. I wish that social worker would just stay in the Bronx. What business does she have coming all the way over to New Jersey to see O'Malley? This thing is getting out of hand. Why don't they leave us alone?" Lola Najinsky left his question hanging in the air.

The forces insulating citizens, institutions, and locales from each other in American urban society are legion. The modern city is a highly differentiated society, if nothing else. Its split-upness is more easily experienced than its integrity. All through this study we have insisted that religious faith yearns toward the integrity—the peace, the wholeness, the salvation—of persons and communities. The threat of modern urbanism to integrity in all senses is immense. Charles Najinsky has begun to experience a form of integrity renewal. As his path crosses that of Harrisene Little, he stands at a critical point: Will he expand his network of urban community and responsibility, or will he retreat into one of the differentiated ghettos which the metropolis itself makes only too possible?

The question is posed to him as part of a process which the churches of Fairmont initiated in concert with a local college and a state government. The institutional innovation—a Citizens' Information Center—has a growing number of examples in cities across the United States. Our Urban Policy Study strongly implies the need for some such innovation if all the potential members of the People of God are to have the opportunity of identifying themselves to one another and of expressing their identity politically. *Precisely within the split-up, multicentered life of urban society the People of God need a practical method for seeing and encountering one another and their community in all its shifting boundaries—from the locale to the metropolis to the very globe.* The theology of the church has always held that the People of God are not coincidental with the members of particular confessional churches. Some expressions of the ecumenical spirit in recent times proclaim visions of justice and mercy for the whole global village. The size and complexity of the human neighborhood on all its levels demand comprehensive structures of church ministry.

Jefferson clearly envisions the necessity of national and state government; but he insists that all large political structures should be grounded in local public spaces where citizens speak, take responsibility, manifest courage, and win distinction in ways beneficial to others. Such a political order invites the involvement of every person. It encourages mutual respect between citizens and . . . provides a basis for self-respect as well. The early Christian church exemplified these features, and down through history the

church has anticipated in other ways such a political philosophy. That secular politics should embody its own intercessory prayer "for all sorts and conditions" of human beings, the Christian church has every reason to hope. For the nourishing of such a political order and as one of their basic ministries, the church and the synagogue also have reason to support Citizens' Information Centers in the Fairmonts of this country. Such centers could render a richer variety of public service than the tame word "information" or the scare word "politics" may suggest. In neighborhood centers citizens can foster art, tell stories, perform drama, make movies, learn to use a portable television camera, encounter the culture of foreigners, listen to music, and hear unfamiliar political ideas in the company of other persons. Culture, the seedbed of politics, grows more authentically in quiet human fellowships than in a frantic commercial television studio. Should not the facility of a television camera be as available to ordinary citizens as the facility of a television receiver? Our local and world politics might be more imaginative and human if we engaged more regularly in sending as well as receiving messages in our urban-global communities. The economics of buying-and-selling have dominated the first generation of televiwing in the United States. With imagination, compassion, and sound political instinct, city churches might turn this medium toward more humane uses.

An organizational device of the sort suggested here can help deliver any person or social group from the same tyranny. We cannot be sure how this stream in his biography will turn, but Charles Najinsky is beginning to experience just such deliverance. His trek toward community with his urban neighbors began with a specific interest of his own—the value of his house. This seems psychologically universal for most of us. Two fundamental principles for the construction of a citizens' information network peek out here: (1) It must be responsive to the particular conscious needs of the user, and (2) it must help the user place his or her need in the context of the needs of other citizens. Such an information network might be called "contextual." If lopsidedly responsive on either of two such sides, the system will fail to express a Biblical—or oikonomic—political ethic: simultaneous service to persons and community.

On the one side, most of us neither expect nor desire to be equally well informed or equally active on all issues agitating our neighborhoods, our cities, our nation, or our world. Each of us needs the capacity to get more information on some issues than on others. How clogged the channels of information may be on any such issues can be tested if you ask yourself

what three problems worry you most about your own city, and how you would get accurate and action-relevant information on those three problems within the next twenty-four hours. One wonders how long it took Harrisene Little to discover the link between the housing needs of thirty Bronx residents and the possible help of the Fairmont Fair Deal Association. The question required real research, and such research is often unavailable to citizens until long after it might do them concrete good. What good does it do to read in the paper one evening that the construction company has bought out half your block at bargain prices?

But faithfully and ethically speaking, a contextualized information system must be responsive not only to an individual citizen's need but must also relate that need to the need of others. Ordinarily we expect politicians to be "brokers" of the diverse, sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping, expressed needs of the public. One can imagine how frustrated the local politician may come to feel in the housing debate in Fairmont. If the Fair Deal Association fails to develop any common cause with its potential neighbors at Foamcut, and if the conflict becomes an issue in the next county election, candidates for office may be tempted to exploit a community conflict which might have been best solved in other, more human ways. *Public officials in Fairmont will have the opportunity to practice justice and mercy, the more just and merciful are their voting constituents.* Some problems beat on the doors of politicians because citizens have failed to engage themselves in those problems, not even to the extent of talking together about them. Citizens should do more talking together: That is one simple conclusion to which this study has led. More stringently put: *Every citizen in a democracy should have opportunity to express his or her selfhood in the public arena; but none should have opportunity to ignore the selfhood of other citizens.* If an information system is to nurture justice, it must serve a plurality of interests. It must help neighbors to hear what they desire to hear and also what they may not desire to hear. It must provide enough information about others to identify the real problems of their mutual relationships. And it must facilitate hope for the solution of those problems. In short, such a system will promote personal fulfillment, build community, and open person and community to as large an *oikoumenē* as they both can bear.