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The faith community response to the Bush administrations faith-based initiatives

Thomas Clark Wilson
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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THE FAITH COMMUNITY RESPONSE
TO THE BUSH ADMINISTRATIONS
FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES

by

Thomas Clark Wilson

Bachelor of Science
Weber State University
1991

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree in Ethics and Policy Studies
Department of Political Science
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College
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Dean of the Graduate College


Examination Committee Member


Examination Committee Member


Graduate College Faculty Representative

ABSTRACT

The Faith Community Response To The Bush Administration's Faith-based Initiative

by

Thomas Clark Wilson

Dr. Ted Jelen, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Political Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Since George W. Bush won the presidency in 2000 one of his top domestic priorities has been to elevate the role of religion in America. He is attempting to correct a perceived wrong that the federal government has hindered religious group's ability to compete on a level playing field with secular groups in acquiring funds for social service programs. Bush believes that faith-based groups hold the answer for healing society's ills. As a result his administration has set up The White House Office Of Faith-based and Community Initiatives to accomplish the goal of a more faith friendly public square.

Theological, political and practical matters influencing the administrations Faith-based initiatives are examined in this thesis. Responses to the initiative from six American churches are analyzed based on two factors: theological teachings and practical institutional matters (staffing, facilities etc.). This ultimately reveals how each church views the reasons for poverty. Ethical issues are considered and the conclusion that the Faith-based Initiative, though well intended, is not a good idea for America.

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CHAPTER 1

“STOP THE RELIGION TAX IN AMERICA”

Introduction

Religion and politics, two things many don't ever “bring up,” tend to bring out a great deal of passion in Americans. The tension between the two, as well as the need that each has for the other is fascinating. As George W. Bush became the President of the United States in January of 2001 he launched a portion of his domestic agenda, calling it “The Faith-based and Community Initiative,” which was designed to make religion and politics more friendly. The policy is an effort to increase the funding of religious social service programs in America in order to build an army of compassion and to foster a more faith-friendly public square. Though the policy has good intentions in the hopes of increasing faith and healing in society, the policy seems misguided in that the intended result seems unlikely to occur.

On February 18, 2003 a White House Conference on Faith-based and Community Initiatives was held in San Diego, California, one of many like conferences around the United States. A man, just outside the entrance, was pacing back and forth with a large sign that read, “STOP THE RELIGION TAX IN AMERICA!” At the bottom of the sign it identified the sponsor: American Atheists. Most conference attendees looked at him

uncomfortably and then hurried into the conference. For these representatives of various religious groups seeking knowledge on how to access federal funds for their social service programs, it was an unwelcome reminder of the controversy that the Bush administration might be trying to fund religion unconstitutionally. “Religion” and “Tax” in the same sentence warned of church-state separation, a fundamental American principle.

The reasons for attending the conference were varied. A parish nurse was attending to find out about opportunities to get money to build a community center in San Diego. A young intern was visiting the conference from Phoenix, Arizona representing W.H.E.A.T. (World Hunger Ecumenical Arizona Task-Force, Inc.). Her organization’s goal was to “end hunger through education and action.”¹ She was at the conference to network with faith-based groups in an effort to achieve the goal of ending hunger. Another woman was there from Unity Baptist church in San Diego, a small, 60-member church just getting started. She was there to learn about the process of applying for federal grant money, as her church would be ready, hopefully, within the year to begin applying. She was hopeful, but as the conference moved forward, she began to realize that it would require skill to apply for the government funding, skills her small church just did not have.

A statement heard at lunch seemed to sum up the feeling of the day. At the table were two or three representatives from the West Angeles Community Development Corporation, which is a ministry of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ, a church with 20,000 members. The government funds fifty percent of the church’s operating

¹ W.H.E.A.T. information mailer, 2002.

costs. One individual from the West Angeles Church of God in Christ was in conversation with a member of the small Unity Baptist Church (mentioned above) that was just getting started. This individual, the Chief Operating Officer of her church, told the woman from the newly beginning church that the most important thing her church could do, is when choosing a board, to look for people who have money or who know where to get money and have influence to be able to get money. She kept stressing it over and over and over; you need money, lots and lots of money. That was the feeling at the conference. Everyone was there anxiously searching for more money to fund their social service vision.

It was striking to see how much money the White House was putting behind this conference. Hundreds of White-house staff was flown in, and thousands of three-ring binders with hundreds of written pages in each were provided to every conference participant. A beautiful convention center was rented. Lunch was provided free of charge to the thousands that attended. It was an impressive sight and it was obvious the Bush administration was trying to “sell” the Faith-Based Initiative to the people in a big way. Similar conferences have been held in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Denver, Miami and other cities around the United States.

It was clear that if you are in the business of caring for others in need, caring isn’t enough; you need money, lots of money, to do your job. And the thinking from the government and the faith-based groups in attendance was that the government was the answer.

Faith-based organizations have used federal funds for decades to do their work of caring for those in need. It is nothing new. But in spite of these partnerships many faith-

based groups have been hesitant to accept federal money to fund their various social services because they were expected to remove religious symbols from their office walls and avoid talking about anything spiritual. Along with the spiritual restraints that came with federal money, the bureaucratic mess alone was enough for most churches to leave government funds alone. In 1996, under Bill Clinton and the 105th Congress, this all changed with the Welfare Reform Act and its “Charitable Choice” provision. Charitable Choice now allows churches to accept federal money and still keep their programs grounded in theology and religious practice. There are many critics, but some believe it is “a social experiment whose time has come.”² Many religious organizations see that they can now accept government funding and still keep their primary theological underpinnings and purposes intact.

Charitable Choice was a large step toward more government and faith-based partnerships and now President Bush has taken another step with his Faith-Based Initiative policies. It just might be the step that brings many more religious groups into fellowship with the government.

But how are religious groups in America responding to the Bush agenda? Would the response from America’s religious groups towards the faith-based agenda shed light on the Bush policies strengths and weaknesses? Could the response from the religious community show whether or not the Bush policies can reach established goals?

² Sam Walker, “Faith-based Welfare Reform: Religious Institutions Warily Accept Public Funds to Fight Poverty,” (Christian Science Monitor, Boston Massachusetts, 22 April 1997), 1.

Ending Poverty and Despair

American government has a history of funding faith based groups. Recent information shows that faith-based groups manage more than two-thirds of federally supported residences for the elderly. Of federally supported child care facilities, a religious group houses about one in six. The Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist convention operate the nation's two largest "chains" of federally funded child-care services. In 1998, religious hospitals received more than \$45 billion from Medicare, Medicaid and other federally funded programs.³

In spite of America's efforts to assist those who have not fully realized the "American dream" by battling social distress in order to reduce poverty and despair, too many Americans of all ages and walks of life are suffering:

- Around 13.6 million children under the age of 12 – almost a third of America's young people – go hungry.
- More than 5 million seniors were below or near the poverty level in 1999.
- [In 2002], 16.6 million Americans had substance abuse problems.
- More than 2 million children have a parent in prison.⁴

Over the years faith-based groups have offered time, resources, energy and love in assisting those in need, relieving much of the suffering. For example, Catholic Charities has 275 years of experience in helping the poor and the needy with the necessities of life with a large portion of their funding coming from the government. The LDS church has

³ Statistics Quoted in the "White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives" conference manual, San Diego, California 18 February 2003, Section 4, page 2.

⁴ Ibid., Section 2, page 1.

had an internal welfare program since the Great Depression but with little or no government funding. The Bush administration has taken the stance that government has not helped faith-based groups enough in their work, but rather has hindered their work by unfairly putting roadblocks in the way for these faith-based groups to compete for federal funding. President Bush said:

Government shouldn't discriminate against faith; government should welcome faith, the power of faith, whether it comes through the Christian church, through Judaism, or through Islam, can change people's lives for the better: And we must welcome that faith in our society.⁵

Bush has made the issue of leveling the playing field for faith-based groups one of his top domestic priorities, evidenced by the fact that one of his first official acts as President was to create the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives. The goal of this office is to attack need in America by strengthening and expanding the role of faith-based and community organizations in dealing with the social distress in America. The administration has envisioned that as a result of this new White House office, a more faith-friendly public square would emerge.

The central question to be examined in this thesis is to discover how the faith-based community is responding to the Bush policies and what can be learned about the policy itself from the response.

⁵ George W. Bush, August 7, 2002, as quoted in the "White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives" conference manual, San Diego, California (18 February 2003), Section 2, page 1.

Methodology

To answer the question an overview of the history of the Bush policy will be given along with the intentions and goals of the Faith-based Initiative. With this in place a general response from the faith community toward the policy will be looked at and then a more detailed response from six churches towards to the faith-based initiative will be investigated. The six churches chosen for the study are the Catholic Church, Jehovah's Witness', Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, LDS (Mormon) Church, and the Jewish faith. Each churches theology with regards to poverty and their position on receiving government funds to provide social services will be researched. Recognizing there are many religious groups that could have been included, these six churches were chosen due to the fact that collectively they seem to represent a fair cross section of the Judeo-Christian mainstream ethic in America. The second reason these churches were chosen is that the combined theological and practical factors of the six churches sums up a high percentage of factors in American mainstream churches with regards to faith-based issues.

Though America has hundreds of small, independent churches scattered throughout the nation, it is assumed, for purposes here, that institutional factors would prevent them from seeking federal funding even if theological factors would lead them to accept funding. An attempt to discover how the faith-based community is responding to the Bush policies and what can be learned about the policy itself from the response will be made.

An assumption might be made here. Some interpretation of human nature usually forms the basis of any public policy, and the effectiveness of the policy in practice

depends upon the validity of that interpretation or assumption. An interpretation of human nature with regards to poverty is forming George Bush's faith-based agenda. What these interpretations are and whether these assumptions are valid will be discussed in the thesis.

In beginning to answer the question, how the faith-based community is responding to the Bush policies and what can be learned about the policy itself from the response, it would seem a reasonable prediction that churches which have the same theological underpinnings that the Bush policy evolves from would be in favor of faith-based funding for their social service programs. It would hold also that churches that disagree with the Bush interpretation of human poverty would not want to accept federal funding for their social service programs. These predictions will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

A final question will be examined, that of who has the ethical responsibility to intervene in the plight of the poor and the needy, bringing them to a more equal basis with the rest of society and in so doing make society more just? Both government and religion feel that responsibility, but which is ultimately ethically responsible? Since both feel responsible, is not partnering a good way to go about it? These ethical issues will be explored.

Finally, recommendations and conclusions will be made based on the preceding prediction, research and findings.

Thesis Overview

Chapter two will review a brief history of the issue of government and church partnerships, the plight of the poor in America and the major thinkers that have influenced the Bush policy. A key issue comes to the forefront in this chapter, the issue of who or what is at fault for poverty in America. On one side is the argument that those in poverty are poor due to some personal character flaw such as laziness or drug abuse that renders them unable to provide for themselves. This interpretation of poverty is the foundation of the Bush policy. The other side of the argument is that poverty in America is due to structural problems in society such as unemployment (no jobs), faulty economic systems, racism, or lack of adequate, affordable housing. Arguments on both sides of the issue will be given. The issue of causality is important because beliefs regarding fault lead to determining which solutions and policies would be best.

Chapter three give a general overview of how the faith-community is responding to the Faith-based Initiative and then will describe how six faith-based groups in America are responding to the initiative and whether or not they are seeking government funding. Two basic areas will be used to gauge the response. The first will be theological factors. How do the churches' doctrine and teachings affect the response? Emphasis in this area will be to find out how the faith-based group views the cause of poverty. Does the church view poverty as structural or individual and what bearing does that have on their response to government funding? The second area examined will be practical factors regarding the institutional capacity of the religious groups. Does the church have the staffing, the facilities and the know-how to effectively seek government funding? In sum this chapter

will analyze what faith-based groups are saying and doing about the policy. This information will lead to conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter four will focus on some core ethical principles at the heart of the Faith-based Initiative debate. Social justice, and who is responsible for that justice (government, church or individual) will be analyzed. Who has the ethical responsibility to intervene in the plight of the poor and the needy, bringing them to a more equal basis with the rest of society and in so doing making society more just? Both government and religion feel that responsibility, but which is ultimately ethically responsible? Since both feel responsible, is not partnering in the Faith-based Initiative a good way to go about it?

Chapter five will draw some conclusions and policy recommendations will be offered. In researching the issues surrounding the faith-based initiative it is discovered that though the policy is well intended, it does not seem possible that it will accomplish what Bush hopes to accomplish. Outcomes of the policy, though not empirically known at this time, seem to be paradoxical and thus the policy is misguided. Churches would do well to steer clear of increased access to government funding for the well being of the church and the well being of individual spirituality.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES

The historical, political and intellectual background of Bush's Faith-based Initiative is quite controversial. The debate breaks into two traditional camps; both want to help the poor, but for different reasons and with very different plans and policies. The dichotomy is between the "conservative behaviorists" and "liberal structuralists."¹ Behaviorists view poverty from an individual deficiency framework which explains poverty as a result of "inadequacies on the part of the poor themselves. The poor display individual deficiencies in behavior, or have become trapped in a subculture characterized by family disintegration, alcoholism and welfare dependency."² The structuralists view poverty from a structural deficiency framework which views poverty as the result of "socially structured and legitimated inequalities with respect to the allocation of statuses and the distribution of rights in society. Poverty is caused by inequality, which is rooted in the political, racial, and economic structure of society."³

¹ Cornel West, *Race Matters*, cited in Jim Wallis, "The Meaning of Politics," *Sojourners*, (January 1994), 50.

² Stephanie Baker Collins, "Defining Poverty Through the Welfare Debate," in *Welfare in America: Christian Perspectives on a Policy in Crisis*, Stanley W. Carelton-Thies and James W. Skillen Editors, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996), 97.

³ *Ibid.*, 98.

A third theory will not be discussed at length in this paper but should be noted here. “Reformist” or “environmental reality” theory⁴ reflects the desire to reform an inadequate welfare system that lacks comprehensiveness and which is difficult to access and has difficulty distributing resources. In this theory the cause of poverty is environmental factors such as economic depressions, unemployment, changes in the labor force and the location of jobs.⁵

Those who subscribe to reformist or environmental theory seek to reform the welfare system, seeking better coordination, comprehensiveness, and service delivery so that resources are distributed more effectively. They also seek to address environmental concerns through income supplements, minimum wage laws and work guarantee programs.⁶

Some have called for moving past the traditional roadblock arguments between the conservative behaviorists and liberal structuralists by adding the reformist or environmental theory and then combining all three. Adding the reformist or environmental theory to the two traditional theories could prevent the analysis of poverty from being shaped too strongly by one side or the other. Combining all three theories into a comprehensive plan is an idea with possibilities. For purposes of this thesis, only the two traditional theories will be analyzed.

Bush’s faith-based plan fits into the conservative behaviorist theory of poverty discourse. He believes, as will be shown, that being poor is mainly the result of individual

⁴ Peter Taylor-Gooby and Jennifer Dale, *Social Theory and Social Welfare*, (London: Arnold, 1981), 32.

⁵ David Gil, *Unraveling Social Policy*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1981), 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

choice and character. He believes that if an individual who is poor could find the strength to change their behavior and heal their soul they could then make a life for themselves, climbing their way out of poverty. His administration wants more money in the hands of churches because he believes that churches can offer people the strength they need to change and heal in order to get out of poverty. The “liberal structuralists” consider being poor as the result of structural forces such as the economy, racism and changes in the work force. From this view, more money in the hands of churches would not deal with the real issues causing poverty in society. Both sides want to help the poor, but support very different theories and policies.

The Faith-based Initiative

Whatever the motivation, caring for the poor has been a preoccupation of churches and secular institutions in society and a great deal of benevolence has been demonstrated by both over the years. Caring for the poor may be seen as coming from a long tradition of Christian religious charity but more recently it is being viewed as a moral obligation, not necessarily a religious obligation. Donald T. Critchlow claims that religious motivation in caring for the poor played a more significant role in early modern European relief than it has in the modern period, especially the twentieth century, which he suggests has been characterized by a bureaucratic welfare organization, which largely neglects the religious impulse to care for the poor.⁷ Critchlow recognizes the importance of religious philanthropic organizations in the modern welfare state, but emphasizes that

⁷ Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 1.

bureaucratic government on the local, state, and national levels predominates current welfare care in America.⁸ In the twentieth century, it may be argued that religious caring for the poor has taken a back seat to the national government becoming the custodian of the poor through massive welfare programs.

Now, as a new century has dawned, a new presidential administration says, “A great and prosperous nation can and must do better.”⁹ President George Bush said this in reference to taking care of the poor and the needy in America. The president has stirred the national debate about the role of religion in providing assistance to the poor and the relationship that the government should have with religious based groups. His feeling is that many successful faith-based organizations are “out manned and outflanked,”¹⁰ and he plans to assist these “armies of compassion that labor daily to strengthen families and communities”¹¹ with federal tax money. Bush’s faith-based agenda clearly intends to elevate the role of religion in offering assistance to the poor and the needy. He also clearly intends to lower the wall of separation in the relationship between church and state. Once again the questions of how to help and who should help and where the money should come from are being debated in America.

George Bush’s faith-based agenda proposes three different strategies to elevate the importance of religious values in America as well as elevating the ability of religious

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ George W. Bush, “Rallying the Armies of Compassion,” 2001 White House news release, available at www.whitehouse.gov.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

organizations to alleviate social ills. The first strategy is to eliminate government regulations that hinder the work of religious organizations. The second strategy is to end discrimination against various faith-based programs in the opportunity to receive federal funding for social services. A third strategy is to increase private giving to charities and other community organizations by offering tax incentives to individuals who give.¹²

Bush's Faith-based Initiative had its foundations laid when in an attempt to "end welfare as we know it," welfare was reformed in America with the passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.¹³ As part of that reform a provision was included to open up federal funds to religious groups. "Charitable Choice," as it is called, made it illegal for federal grantors to exclude organizations from consideration for funding because of religious beliefs. Public money is still restricted from being used to fund purely religious activities, such as proselytizing, but the law made it possible for religious organizations to accept federal money to perform social services and at the same time keep their religious identity and purpose. Charitable Choice declared that a religious organization could receive federal funds and still maintain exclusive control over "the definition, development, practice and expression"¹⁴ of their religious mission. For example, the government may not force a religious organization that receives funding to remove literature or icons from their facilities and the organization can discriminately hire staff that shares the same religious values.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, H.R. 3734, 104th Congress, 2d Session, P.L. 104-193.

¹⁴ Ibid.

While the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was being debated President Clinton was advocating for church involvement with people receiving welfare assistance. In a campaign speech delivered at the 116th annual session of the National Baptist Convention USA, President Clinton made an appeal to black church leaders. He said:

Under this law (P.L. 104-193), every state, when it becomes effective, every state in the country can say: If you will hire somebody off welfare, we'll give you the welfare checks as a supplement for the wages and the training. It means, folks, when you go back home, your church can receive a person's welfare check and add to it only a modest amount of money to make a living wage, and to take some time to train people and bring their children into the church, and make sure their children are all right and give them a home and a family. I just want every pastor in this audience to think about it. Just think about it. If every church in America hired one person off welfare, if every church in America could get some work to do that, it would set an example that would require the business community to follow, that would require the charitable and other nonprofit organizations to follow. We cannot create a government jobs program big enough to solve this whole thing, but if everybody did it, one by one, we could do this job.¹⁵

Clinton made it clear that he expected religious organizations to assume a greater role in welfare; in turn, other sectors of society would follow the churches lead. Ideally, those helped would join the church that assisted them, become productive citizens, and extend this kind of help to others in need. That a president, while still in office, would challenge the traditional boundaries between church and state by making such an appeal and sign into law the Charitable Choice provision legitimized the call for a welfare system in which religious organizations would play a greater role.¹⁶ Interestingly, Clinton paved the way for the Bush Faith-based initiative.

¹⁵ William J. Clinton, as quoted in, "Clinton Asks Churches to Hire Welfare Receivers," Greensboro News and Record, (7 September 1996), A2.

¹⁶ Ram A Cnaan and Stephanie C. Boddie, "Charitable Choice and Faith-Based Welfare: A Call for Social Work," *Social Work*, (July 2002, Vol. 47 Issue 3), 224.

Charitable Choice represented a historic shift in the care for the needy from the Federal bureaucracy to private/religious charitable organizations. It is a legislative provision designed to remove unnecessary barriers to the receipt of certain federal funds by faith-based organizations. The provision prohibits states from discriminating against religious organizations when choosing providers under certain federal grant programs. While Charitable Choice is designed to improve access to federal funding for faith-based organizations, it did not establish a new funding stream dedicated to these groups. It merely provides faith-based groups the opportunity to get a piece of the federal pie on a more equal footing with other competitors that may not be faith-based.

A Charitable Choice provision was added to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program when it was reauthorized in 1998. In this program, Health and Human Services (HHS) provides funds to the states, which in turn award funds to other local or community providers, including faith-based organizations. In 2000, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) added a Charitable Choice provision to the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant and discretionary grants as well as the PATH program (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness). These Charitable Choice provisions rest on four principles:

Level Playing Field. Faith-based providers are eligible to compete for funds on the same basis as any other providers, neither excluded nor included because they are religious, too religious or of the wrong religion.

Respect for Allies. The religious character of faith-based providers is protected by allowing them to retain control over the definition, development, practice, and expression of their religious beliefs. Neither federal nor state government can require a religious provider to alter its form of internal governance or remove religious art, icons, scripture or other symbols in order to be a program participant.

Protecting Clients. In regard to rendering assistance, religious organizations shall not discriminate against an individual on the basis of religion,

a religious belief, or refusal to actively participate in a religious practice. If an individual objects to the religious character of a program, a secular alternative must be provided.

Church-State Separation. All government funds must be used to fulfill the public social service goals, and no direct government funding can be diverted to inherently religious activities such as worship, sectarian instruction, and proselytization.¹⁷

Bush has followed up on Charitable Choice with his own Faith-based and Community Initiative. On 29 January 2001 Bush signed executive order 13198 creating centers for Faith-based and Community Initiatives in five cabinet departments: Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Labor, and Justice. The executive order charged each department to carry out a:

department wide audit to identify all existing barriers to the participation of faith-based and community organizations in the delivery of social services by the department, including but not limited to regulations, rules, orders, procurement, and other internal policies and practices, and outreach activities that either facially discriminate against or otherwise discourage or disadvantage the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in Federal programs.¹⁸

In 2002 conferences began to be held around America to assist faith-based groups with training on how to apply for federal money in an effective manner. Conferences were held in Atlanta and Philadelphia towards the end of 2002 then conferences were held in Denver (January 2003), San Diego (February 2003) and Chicago (March 2003), and most recently in Miami (October 2004).

On 12 December 2002 Bush signed executive order 13279 directing all federal agencies to follow the principle of equal treatment in rewarding social service grants.

¹⁷ Department of Health and Human Services, www.hhs.gov/news.

¹⁸ Bush Administration, "Unlevel Playing Field: Barriers to Participation by Faith-based and Community Organizations in Federal Social Service Programs," The White House, Washington, August 2001, www.whitehouse.gov.

Bush said that this executive order would ensure that, “Every person in every government agency [would] know where the President stands.”¹⁹ On this same date Bush signed another executive order (13280) establishing Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the Department of Agriculture and the Agency for International Development.²⁰ On 1 June 2004, with the signing of executive order 13342, Bush created more centers in The Departments of Commerce, Veterans Affairs and Small Business Administration.

Bush also directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to revise its policy on disaster relief for faith-based non-profits. Under previous FEMA policy, religious non-profits such as schools, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters could not receive federal disaster relief when they suffered damage. Under the changes announced by Bush, faith-based social service organizations will be eligible to receive aid just like other social service organizations damaged or destroyed by natural disasters. The policy change was retroactive to January 2001. This policy change stemmed from an appeal by the Seattle Hebrew Academy, a private religious school that was denied relief after its building was seriously damaged in an earthquake.²¹

On 27 May 2003 Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton announced that the Old North Church of Boston, known for its part in Paul Revere's ride the night of 18 April 1775, would receive a \$317,000 grant under the nation's Save America's Treasures Historic

¹⁹ George W. Bush, Speech at Conference for Faith Based and Community Initiatives, Philadelphia, Pa., (12 December 2002), available at www.whitehouse.gov.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Preservation Fund Grants Program. Until then, historically significant treasures that are also used for religious purposes were ineligible to receive historic preservation grants. This significant policy change was an important step for the Bush administration in ending a discriminatory double standard that had been applied to religious properties.²²

Charitable Choice and the Faith-based movement are a shift from what many claim has been a century of a diminished role of religion in social services and welfare as bureaucratic forces have taken over.

Intellectual Origins

A key contributor to Bush's ideas on poverty is Marvin Olasky. Olasky is one of the most influential, and controversial, writers and thinkers on welfare issues in America over the last decade. His writings were brought to prominence in 1994 as Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich began quoting Olasky by chapter and verse in Congress as well as handing out Olasky's books to Congressional freshmen, touting the book as required reading. Gingrich had been given the book as a Christmas present from William E. Bennett, who said that Olasky's book, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* was the "most important book on welfare and social policy in a decade."²³ Olasky's writings were very prominent in the 1996 welfare reform debates being quoted and referenced with regularity by those on Capitol Hill. In his book, Olasky described how welfare in

²² White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, News Release, (May 2003), www.fbc.gov.

²³ New York Review of Books, (2 November 2000), cited on www.olasky.com.

America changed for the worse during the 20th century when welfare became a function of bureaucracy rather than a function of religion.

But does Olasky's slant on poverty and welfare history warrant the Faith-based initiative as Bush has outlined it? What follows is a look at Olasky's ideas through the lens of the Faith-based Initiative as well as the debate between the liberal structuralists and the conservative behaviorists.

Change in the "Theology" of Poverty

Olasky said that, "cultures build systems of charity in the image of the god they worship, whether distant deist, bumbling bon vivant, or 'whatever goes' gopher."²⁴ Olasky believes that a fundamental theological change occurred in America as the 20th century dawned. New social understandings attacked the biblical concept of a sinful human nature. The biblical stance that man's nature was sinful was not taken literally any longer and a theological change emerged regarding the nature of man. Olasky noted the change in this way:

Man's basic nature was not corrupt, but good; there were sins but not sin, evil acts but not evil. Problems arose from social conditions rather than inherent moral corruption. The *Encyclopedia of Social Reform* stated that almost all social thinkers are now agreed that the social evils of the day arise in large part from social wrongs.²⁵

Social thought began to focus on an individual's environment rather than character, a change from 19th century theology which attributed being poor to character flaws of some kind. The "theology" turned to the idea that a good environment would save all, and wrongful activity would be tolerated and pressure to change would be

²⁴ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 8.

²⁵ Ibid., 136.

postponed until the person could be placed in a better environment.²⁶ As an example, Olasky pointed out that many in society and in the most influential churches began to believe and teach that immorality was not caused by sin, but rather by lack of good housing.

This movement in social and theological thought, from personal sin to an individual's environment, invited the government into welfare. When character and morality were the issues surrounding poverty, churches and volunteers were on the frontline of the war on poverty and other social ills. With the shift to social injustice and environment being the cause of poverty, government and "trained professionals" marched to the frontline of the war.

These ideas are interesting, but does this mean that churches want government money, or that government money given to churches will solve this theological shift that Olasky perceives as detrimental to society? Would government money in the hands of churches move the theology of America back from environmental factors to personal character? It seems that government giving money to churches may actually deepen the theology that Olasky (and Bush) want to change. If churches can't rely on the character of individual church members to provide donations of time and resources, and therefore look to the government for funding, it seems that the theology of environment would be deepened because the government would still be the provider, not the church members. The church would become dependent on the government. The government would, in essence, be rescuing the church because the church could not provide for itself, the very opposite of the theology to which Bush subscribes. The church becomes what Bush wants

²⁶ Ibid., 137.

to prevent, dependent on the government. The individual character of the church would be called into question. Questions like “Why can’t you provide for your own?” might be asked of the church. What theology would the church turn to in order to provide the answer? Would it be, “Our members do not have the individual character to give.” Or would it be, “We are in a bad environment so we can’t provide.” Accepting money certainly would put a church in an interesting theological bind if the church has a behaviorist theology. The church claims the power and influence to change people’s lives, but needs government funding because the members are not influenced to the point that they give enough time and resources to help the poor.

Trends from 1900-1940

To return to Olasky’s views, he notes that in January of 1909 came the new theological movement’s first political success. A conference was held, known as the “White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children.” The mere fact that the White House, under Theodore Roosevelt, called a conference to deal with poverty represented a shift from local, church and volunteer assistance demanding change in the individual (prevalent in the 19th century), to government, professional and impersonal assistance, which Olasky says characterized the 20th century.

An outgrowth of the conference was the “Federal Children’s Bureau” established in 1912. “The precedent was established; the federal government, which before had taken on only a limited function in public health and education, now was involved in broad questions of welfare.”²⁷ The U.S. Children’s Bureau “quickly became a factory that

²⁷ Ibid., 141.

churned out plans for extension of governmental involvement,”²⁸ and in 1921 the first direct federal child welfare expenditures were given under the Maternity and Infancy Act, also known as the Sheppard-Towner Act. This act paved the way for the Social Security Act of 1935 and other New Deal programs.

Olasky noted that as the government got more involved in welfare and the professional social worker was exalted over the volunteer causing volunteerism to decline.²⁹ The professionals did not have religious attitudes and the feeling that God was needed in people’s lives to help them overcome their situation declined as well. The economy and funding programs was the main issue, not sin or changing character. Government became the chief welfare agent as churches and volunteers faded from the arena. Critchlow suggested that this move to professionalism affects both the government and religion today. Today both government and private organizations (including faith-based groups) rely on highly trained, specialized experts. In this way, expertise, bureaucracy, and technique have replaced religious sentiment and the humanitarian impulse.³⁰

Of course church charity did not completely fade away. Olasky noted, “Sections of the *Social Work Year Book* for 1933 contained impressive statistics concerning ‘Catholic Social Work,’ ‘Jewish Social Work,’ ‘Mormon Social Work,’ ‘Protestant

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 143.

³⁰ Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 9.

Social Work,' and more."³¹ But even though these churches had programs to serve the needs of the public, the general sense was that they had been secularized (due to the theological shift of the nature of sinful man) and that private charity became irrelevant as the government took over welfare.

In the 1920's Herbert Hoover sought to rationalize the involvement of private and public welfare activities through an "associative" state that placed responsibility on private groups and local communities supported by expert federal advice and minimal federal funding and involvement.³² This prevented a national, comprehensive, welfare system as the private sector of business and church cooperated with government to serve the public interest.³³ The Great Depression put an end to Hoover's ideas and provided motivation for major innovations, leading to the modern welfare state as government took over.

Olasky's stance that the movement from volunteerism to professionalism, which led to a decline in religious attitudes and the decrease of feeling that God was needed in people's lives, seems to be flawed when applying it to Faith-based Initiatives. Here again, if a church took money from the government to provide social services would there be an increase in religious attitudes and personal feelings of needing God? The church might be able to help more people, but again, because the funding came from the government, it

³¹ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 149.

³² Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

suggests that government is fixing the church. Reliance on government would be fostered, not reliance on God and an increase of religious attitudes.

Key Decade: The 1930's and The Great Depression

Olasky noted that if the new movement was in question, the Great Depression put an exclamation point on the change. The Depression could not be blamed on anyone, it was no one's fault, it just happened, it could not be attributed to sin or character flaw, it was social "environment" that caused the poverty and other social ills of the Depression era, therefore government, not religion, was best equipped to change the social environment and fix the problems. The Depression made social work a primary function of government and as a result, Olasky cited three subtle changes that took root in American society as the 1930's closed and World War II began. These changes came as professionalism replaced volunteerism and government replaced private, religious charity. The first change was the increase of collective action (doling out checks to the masses) and decrease in personal responsibility for one's own welfare. The second was that giving became impersonal and mechanical in the form of a monetary check given instead of a hand of personal contact and help. The final change was that the traditional ideology of the 19th century was fading.

Here, more money in the hands of churches could be a benefit. Religious organizations do not simply dole out checks; they seem to offer personal contact, love and caring. Even if the government is funding it, religious organizations would add the personal element that would be missing in simply doling out checks.

The 1940's and 1950's

Olasky points out that the '40's and '50's did see a particular resentment from the public for those who claimed entitlements as well as some public distrust towards those "shameless cheats who claim charity they don't need."³⁴ As a result politicians were reluctant to approve new programs or expand older ones. Increases in federal social service spending were gradual at best during this time period. But the stage for revolution had already been set.

The 1960's

Olasky believes that there was a time when dependency was considered dishonorable, when people were held accountable for their behavior and society was not to blame for a person's situation. Adults were expected to work and children were expected to read.³⁵ Olasky says that in the 1960's attitudes changed.

Prior to the 1960's it was largely considered humiliating to go on the public dole. A person would likely take even a low paying job to avoid the humiliation of the public dole. But then in the '60's people were told it was demeaning to shine shoes or be a janitor and that accepting government subsidy meant a person could at least keep his dignity by not having to do menial jobs.³⁶ The government declared war on shame, not on poverty. No longer was there "deserving" or "undeserving poor," for all personality flaws were from social and environmental origins. Society began to teach that behavior should

³⁴ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 166.

³⁵ Ibid., 168.

³⁶ Ibid., 169.

not be scrutinized but rather society had an obligation to everyone who was poor to protect him or her from the shame of poverty. That obligation would be served through entitlements to the poor. Government believed it could eliminate poverty as noted in a 1964 *Economic Report to the President* “the conquest of poverty is well within our power.”³⁷ Many believed that poverty would be eliminated by policy that would “have to focus more sharply on the handicaps that deny the poor fair access to the expanding incomes of a growing economy.”³⁸ These policies called for significantly expanded redistributive social welfare spending, job creation, massive investments in education and targeted area development, and more aggressive anti-discrimination policies.³⁹ Another weapon in the war on poverty that was supposed to eliminate it was applying the tools of empirically informed, rational, economic analysis to the battle.⁴⁰ The economists of the ‘60’s said, “The time is coming when the American people will accept...a guaranteed minimum income at the poverty level as a right in a wealthy country and we propose to start moving in this direction now.”⁴¹ In the 1960’s legal strategists built up a body of cases arguing in favor of a constitutional right to welfare benefits that eventually led to the Supreme Court. Their arguments were rejected as the court did not recognize welfare

³⁷ Ibid., 171.

³⁸ Alice O’Conner, in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 195.

³⁹ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 197.

⁴¹ Ibid., 198.

itself as a basic right. As an example the court found there was no constitutional right to housing or a right to education.⁴²

It should be noted that America is one of the few countries that have resisted recognizing welfare as a basic human right. In 1948 the United Nations adopted the following declaration:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.⁴³

In order to implement the declaration the United Nations opened for signatures in 1966 the *Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*. It was ratified by nearly ninety countries and went into effect in the 1970s. The United States is the only democracy that has not ratified the document. The United States has not ratified a companion document either, the United Nations *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.⁴⁴

Mary Ann Glendon cites three reasons for the resistance of America to recognize welfare as a right. The first is the prudent unwillingness to subject America to international organizations. The second is that Republicans (like Bush) have opposed in principle the vast array of social and economic interests as fundamental rights. The third reason is the adverse legal consequences that would surely arise as claims and lawsuits

⁴² *Lindsey v. Normet*, 405 U.S. 56 (1972) (no constitutional right to housing); *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1 (1973) (no constitutional right to education).

⁴³ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, (Article 25, 1948).

⁴⁴ Richard Lillich, "United States Ratification of the United Nations Covenants," *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 20, (1990), 279.

would flood the courts.⁴⁵ The fight to end poverty continued even though welfare was not recognized as a fundamental right.

The belief in the 1960s that poverty could be eliminated was, some claimed, an overturning of the biblical dictum that the poor would be “with [us] always” (Matthew 26:11).⁴⁶ Perhaps a misunderstood verse in that we will always have poor with us, due to no fault of their own, as the result of accident, injury, old age, etc. Churches in the 1960’s might have been expected to counteract this trend but Olasky suggests this did not happen. The mainline National Council of Churches (NCC) became one of the leading sellers of entitlements.⁴⁷ The council reverends reversed their position held in the 19th century by arguing that the poor had a right to handouts and the “better off” should be ashamed if they did not provide them. The NCC also started arguing that poverty was the result of economic individualism and began brushing off biblical statements about it in light of modern technology and resources that did not exist in biblical times. The NCC fell in line with the government by declaring that Christian attitudes and behaviors should not be emphasized to the poor, but rather societal defects that cause “perpetual poverty”⁴⁸ should be the focus.

⁴⁵ Mary Ann Glendon, “What’s Wrong with Welfare Rights?,” in *Welfare in America: Christian Perspectives on a Policy in Crisis*, Stanley W. Carelton-Thies and James W. Skillen Editors, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996), 86.

⁴⁶ Alice O’Conner, in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 193.

⁴⁷ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 171.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 172.

Not all churches fell in line with the government and voices were raised towards teaching those in poverty Christian attributes and personal responsibility. But Olasky suggests these voices had minimal influence at the time. Mainline American theology in the '60's was that poverty was socially caused and therefore could be socially eliminated. As evidence, Olasky cites the Institute for Religious and Social Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. They sponsored a lecture series in late 1963 and early 1964 in which the mention of God or need for spiritual change was noticeably absent. Their focus was on poverty being eliminated through imaginative planning and proper governmental direction.⁴⁹ Olasky noted that legislation of the '60's reflected the change:

Excitement reigned in 1964 and 1965, and Lyndon Johnson's legislative triumphs—the Economic Opportunity Act, food stamp legislation, Medicare, Medicaid, public works programs, and so on—were immense. The speed of passage, unrivaled since the New Deal, showed a disregard for real-life effects and was more remarkable in that The Great Society legislation was truly a triumph of faith, the social gospel walking on earth: Joseph Kershaw, chief economist with the Office of Economic Opportunity, argued that a guaranteed income is “the next great social advance.... It's inevitable, it's got to come.” Soon, *Time* was reporting that “the world's wealthiest nation seems caught in a paradoxical trap: the more the U.S. spends on the poor, the greater the need seems to be to spend more still.”⁵⁰

“Entitlement” was the cry and organizations emerged that taught the poor how to not only seek entitlements, but demand entitlements. During the 1960's The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) taught the poor that, “the fault lay in the stars (systematic pathologies), rather than themselves.”⁵¹ They trained the poor to demand

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 177.

⁵¹ Ibid., 178.

payments, not ask for them. In its first four years the NWRO trained over 100,000 welfare recipients to do just that.

Black churches, true to the scriptures, refused to support the NWRO. The U.S. Catholic Conference stayed away as did white evangelical, fundamentalist and reformed churches. However, Liberal Protestant churches provided the NWRO 47% of its budget in 1967 and the National Council of Churches provided much of the rest. NWRO's single largest contributor from 1970 to 1973 was the United Church of Christ. United Methodists gave \$35,000 a year and United Presbyterians gave \$25,000 per year during the first few years of NWRO.⁵² These churches saw the NWRO as a vehicle for the liberation of the poor. This was more evidence of the ideological split.

The 1960's saw welfare rolls skyrocket. Olasky's statistics showed rolls increased by 107 percent or 800,000 families. In 1971, George Miller, director of the Nevada Department of Welfare, cut 21 percent of the people receiving aid in Nevada for cheating. Poverty lawyers filed lawsuits, political and press advocates sponsored hearings and forums with tales of the sad poor. Celebrities like Sammy Davis Jr. and Jane Fonda got involved in the protests. Two months after George Miller's announcement, a judge ordered all terminated recipients to be put back on the rolls. Olasky said, "The Great Society's War Against Shame was a success."⁵³ Shame may have been diminishing, but the poor were suffering.

Ultimately the War on Poverty was short-lived. As policy analysts looked back, despite achievements such as the passage of Medicare and Medicaid and an overall

⁵² Ibid., 179.

⁵³ Ibid., 183.

reduction in poverty, the realization was that the war was not won. With the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 the dwindling war on poverty was ending as containing inflation and welfare reform became the goals of economic and social policy and the war in Vietnam demanded funding.⁵⁴

So if Olasky believed that churches in America during the 60's were changing their own theology toward poverty to a more structural view and that the change has continued down through to today, would giving more federal funds to churches change this theology? Giving more federal dollars to churches would seem to do just the opposite, solidify the opposing theology as the church looked to a structural source of funding (taxes) instead of a character source of funding (volunteer giving from members). Once again the Faith-based Initiative suggests that churches can change a person's character to get them off of welfare, but does not believe that members of those churches can be changed in their hearts enough to give time and resources to that end.

The 1970's

In 1971, *Time* noted that the Great Society "satisfies no one: under the system it is both unblessed to give and to receive."⁵⁵ But depending on how "poverty" was defined made a difference. If it was defined as "a lack of basic needs," poverty was almost eliminated according some economists in the seventies.⁵⁶ But due to the theological

⁵⁴ Alice O'Conner, in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald W. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998), 207.

⁵⁵ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 183.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

changes from the sixties there was no “suffering with the poor” as charity had become simply check writing (the “compassion of the checkbook” as Olasky called it).⁵⁷ Those seeking assistance were not looking for friendship, love and spiritual help anymore, but rather the general feeling amongst the poor was, “the world owes me a living.”⁵⁸ They were only looking for a check. Olasky described what was missing as “affiliation...the reabsorption in ordinary industrial and social life of those who for some reason have napped the threads that bound them to the other members of the community.”⁵⁹ The community was defined as family ties, church associations and social bonds. An example of welfare severing affiliation was the fact that a single mother could receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children only if she had her own apartment, breaking the bond with other family members.

The church having money to provide social services could help people in this area. Churches offering help do bring a sense of community and connectedness and can offer friendship, love and spiritual help. But here again, if the members are not willing to give of time and resources how much community connectedness is there?

The 1980's

In the 1980's the trend continued. Compassion was employed as a euphemism for “more heavily funded,”⁶⁰ especially in the area of homelessness. Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill favored more spending on the homeless and it was said his compassion for

⁵⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 185.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 102.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 194.

the homeless was the size of his frame, O'Neill being a large man. It was check writing that meant compassion, not personal contact or service to the individual.

During the '80's some religious thinkers bashed the government's indiscriminate giving. Larry Burkett, a popular evangelical writer on economic issues, called government welfare the cause of "permanent dependence and poverty."⁶¹ However, many denominations saw government care of the poor as essential. William Diehl said in order to care for the poor "some overall agency is needed for such a task, and it is obviously the civil government."⁶² Olasky noted, "Sadly, the evangelical orchestra was producing cacophony just as new harmonies were desperately needed."⁶³ The feeling was that government could, should and would cover all the welfare bases. As the decade of the '80's came to a close the word "compassion" was loosely used. In one month in five major newspapers the word was used three hundred times, usually as a synonym for "leniency."⁶⁴

As the '80's came to a close, Olasky found the state of welfare troubling. The rich were simply "writing checks" but not giving of themselves. The poor were demanding what the world owed them. Churches were holding back, believing that government would handle everything and government compassion meant throwing more funds at the problem and being lenient with regards to character flaws.

⁶¹ Ibid., 195.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 196.

Summing up the 20th Century

Welfare in America over the last sixty years encompassed a wide range of government programs. Four major programs are at the core: AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), a program providing cash benefits mainly to single-parent mothers and their children; the federal food stamp program; Medicaid, which provides the poor access to medical care; and public housing and subsidies for low income individuals who rent. Around these four core programs many other programs are arranged such as WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and SSI (Supplemental Security Income).

These programs might be summed up by the statement in 1990 from Christopher Edley, Jr., former issues director for Michael Dukakis, when he said he did not give money to panhandlers because, "I pay taxes for social workers to determine who is truly needy."⁶⁵ The giving was impersonal as professionals were doing most of the giving. In the 1800's the feeling was that officers, teachers and ministers simply facilitated charity not by standing between giver and receiver but rather by bringing giver and receiver together.⁶⁶ In the 20th century, giver and receiver could not be farther apart.

In March of 1990 Olasky put on three used shirts, two dirty sweaters and a stocking cap. He got a plastic bag, took off his wedding ring, got his hands really dirty and walked with slow shuffle doing his best to transform himself into a homeless male on the streets. He tells of his experience:

In two days I was given lots of food, lots of pills of various kinds, and lots of offers of clothing and shelter. I was never asked to do anything, not even remove my tray after eating. But there was one thing I did not get, even though I asked for it many times: a Bible. For example, at Zaccheus' Kitchen, which

⁶⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 31.

provides very good free breakfasts in the basement of the First Congregational Church downtown, a sweet young volunteer kept putting food down in front of me and asking if I wanted more. Finally I asked, mumbling a bit, "Could I have a... Bible?" Puzzled, she tried to figure out what I had said: "Do you want a bagel? a bag?" When I responded, "A Bible," she said, politely, but firmly, "I am sorry, we don't have any Bibles."⁶⁷

Olasky noted that this was neither personal nor religious assistance, which is what he really wanted. He received a secular bowl of soup, not personalized, spiritual help.

What had happened? Olasky summarized his take on the decline of welfare and compassion as follows:

Throughout the nineteenth century, the rock on which compassion stood was undergoing erosion. The chief erosion was theological: the belief that sinful man, left to himself, would return to wilderness, seemed harshly pessimistic. Other erosion toward the end of the century was political and economic, as Social Darwinists and Social Universalists both assailed the idea that personal involvement could make a substantial difference. The erosion for a time did not seem crucial, but the long-term effect was severe enough to make the twentieth century not the Christian century, as celebrants in 1900 predicted, but the century of wilderness returning.

...A changed view of the nature of God and the nature of man led to impatience. The older view saw God as both holy and loving; the new view tended to mention love only. The older anthropology saw man as sinful and likely to want something for nothing, if given the opportunity. The new view saw folks as naturally good and productive, unless they were in a competitive environment that warped finer sensibilities. In the new thinking, change came not through challenge, but through placement in a pleasant environment that would bring out a person's true, benevolent nature.

Such thinking packed a political pistol, for it soon became customary to argue that only the federal government had the potential power to create a socioeconomic environment that would save all, and that those who were truly compassionate should rally behind the creation of new programs. When a major economic crisis emerged in the early 1930's, it seemed only natural but inevitable to rely on governmental programs run by professionals and to emphasize material transfer rather than individual challenge and spiritual concern.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., 209.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 220-222.

Olasky finally came back to his original proposal that “our ideas about poverty always reflect our ideas about the nature of man, which it turn are tied to ideas about the nature of God.”⁶⁹ He then offered a criticism and a challenge. The criticism is that “we like the way a welfare system, corrupt and inefficient though it is, removes the burden of basic material care from our consciences, and protects us from the mean streets that we traverse only by day.”⁷⁰ His challenge is that “government welfare programs need to be fought not because they are too expensive...but because they are inevitably too stingy in what is really important; treating people as people and not animals.”⁷¹ The way to fight the program is for men to ask the question, “[am I] offering not coerced silver, but [my life].”⁷²

Here again, will opening the flood gates of federal funding to churches remedy all these ills that Olasky sees?

Criticisms of the Faith-based Approach

Olasky, though very influential on Bush, is certainly not without critics of his ideas. Many feel his history is incorrect. One critic, Robin Garr, author of "Reinvesting in America" accuses Olasky of glorifying a misinformed past. "Charity wasn't sufficient in Dickens' time, it wasn't sufficient in Hoover's time and it isn't sufficient now," Garr

⁶⁹ Ibid., 230.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 232.

⁷¹ Ibid., 233.

⁷² Ibid.

says.⁷³ University of Pennsylvania historian Michael Katz says that Olasky is wrong in how he portrays religious charity in the past century. Katz says that in the 1890s in towns like Buffalo, N.Y., three-fourths of public assistance to the poor came from government, not private, religious based charities.⁷⁴

Others cite Olasky's lack of rigorous research to back up his claims that religion-based social outreaches are more effective than their non-religious counterparts. They claim that private philanthropic groups, including those linked to churches and sectarian organizations are already heavily dependent on government funding. Nursing homes, child-care facilities and even orphanages may identify themselves with a religious agency or group like Catholic Charities, but they still obtain nearly 75% of their operating costs from the state. Olasky's plan to have these private groups take on a greater role in administering social services has many worried.⁷⁵ Some critics say he is advancing a "cold-hearted abandonment of the poor by advocating slicing thousands of Americans from helpful federal programs."⁷⁶

⁷³ Robin Garr, as quoted in American Atheists A Flashline, "The Power Behind the Nominee: Marvin Olasky, Faith-Based 'Partnerships,' and the Threat To State-Church Separation," (4 August 2000), available at www.americanatheists.org.

⁷⁴ Michael Katz, as quoted in American Atheists A Flashline, "The Power Behind the Nominee: Marvin Olasky, Faith-Based 'Partnerships,' and the Threat To State-Church Separation," (4 August 2000), available at www.americanatheists.org.

⁷⁵ American Atheists, A Flashline, "The Power Behind the Nominee: Marvin Olasky, Faith-Based 'Partnerships,' and the Threat To State-Church Separation," (4 August 2000), available at www.americanatheists.org.

⁷⁶ Bill Minutaglio, "The Godfathers of 'Compassionate Conservatism'; Authors' Works Have Helped Shape Candidate Bush's Core Philosophy," *Dallas Star News*, (16 April 2000), available at www.dallasnews.com.

Other critics have accused his ideas of not being a help to the poor but rather being “a smokescreen for guiltlessly cutting back the welfare state.”⁷⁷ They worry that Olasky really desires, in his extreme religious views, to shrink the state in order to expand Christianity by removing Jefferson’s wall of separation, one brick at a time. Some have said his ideas are:

...serving up a radical vision in which the government's social welfare programs and budgets would be turned over to private, *Christian* organizations, which will practice tough-love on unlucky recipients, a theory that totally overlooks the fact that the social welfare state sprang up precisely because private philanthropy had failed miserably at providing a basic social safety net.⁷⁸

Many have concerns about Olasky’s view of why people are in poverty. Olasky does not blame the system for poverty. He claims the problems are moral and spiritual, within the individual. He believes America should return to the day when charities and volunteers did not treat all in poverty the same. There were those “worthy” of relief (orphans, the aged, the terminally ill, etc.); others were given a work test, often to chop wood, and classified as “needing work rather than relief.” The alcoholic, unscrupulous, or lazy who were unwilling to change were labeled “unworthy, not entitled to relief,” in fact giving money to an alcoholic was considered immoral. Volunteers visited them to exhort, not subsidize. Olasky faults the poor, along with social workers back to Jane Addams. Olasky maintains he did not intend to “dump on” the poor. “There’s no shame in being

⁷⁷ New York Times Magazine, (12 September 1999) as quoted in Michael King, “The Last Puritan: Meet Marvin Olasky, Governor Bush’s Compassionate Conservative Guru,” *The Texas Observer*, The Bush Files, (February 2000).

⁷⁸ Michael King, “The Last Puritan: Meet Marvin Olasky, Governor Bush’s Compassionate Conservative Guru,” *The Texas Observer*, The Bush Files, (February 2000).

poor,"⁷⁹ he insists, acknowledging that health problems, spousal abandonment, and layoffs--things outside a person's control--often lead to poverty. Many believe that other factors besides character are involved in poverty such as employment opportunities and economic barriers. But in spite of his clarifications many still have concerns:

More unhappily, Olasky's presumptive poor are, virtually without exception, the conventional right-wing caricatures of the underclass: shiftless drunks and addicts, derelict fathers and irresponsible teenage mothers, able-bodied men who just don't want to work. The many more millions of working poor — earning minimum wages or less, often with two or more family members trying desperately to make ends meet with little hope of social compassion, conservative or otherwise — are largely invisible in Olasky's universe. In a 1995 interview, contemporary with his books on poverty and welfare, he concluded bluntly, "Today's poor in the United States are the victims and perpetrators of illegitimacy and abandonment, of family non-formation and malformation, alienation and loneliness; but they are not suffering from thirst, hunger or nakedness, except by choice, or insanity, or parental abuse." In Texas, where one fifth of the children live in families with working adults who earn insufficient income for food, such a declaration amounts to willful if not malicious ignorance.⁸⁰

Olasky says that the non-debatable first principle of American charity is "if a man shall not work, he shall not eat" and that the government has violated that first principle. Others agree, only they accuse the system of being the culprit, such as scarcity of jobs as the reason people are in poverty. Where there are no jobs there is poverty.

Though George Bush subscribes to the idea that money in the hands of faith-based groups will "heal" America and bring about an army of compassion that will change lives, in turn removing poverty, others are skeptical of the approach. They argue that to really reduce poverty in America is not a matter of individual character change

⁷⁹ Patricia Kilday Hart, "Conservative. Compassionate?," *Texas Monthly*, (July 2000, Vol. 28 Issue 7), 99.

⁸⁰ Michael King, "The Last Puritan: Meet Marvin Olasky, Governor Bush's Compassionate Conservative Guru," *The Texas Observer*, The Bush Files, (February 2000).

brought about at the hands of religion, but rather basic structural changes in the economy, the job market, race relations and salaries are necessary for change, not churches running around with more money saving the poor from their dire straits and souls from their sins.

William Ryan, in his book “Blaming the Victim,” argued that almost every social problem in America is wrongly viewed based on a dangerous ideology that blames victims for their problems instead of the social structure that causes the problems in the first place. Ryan says blaming the victim is a “brilliant ideology for justifying a perverse form of social action designed to change, not society, as one might expect, but rather society’s victims.”⁸¹ George Bush’s policy for faith-based groups receiving money in order to save the poor seems to be just this kind of perverse social action. Inherent in the policy is the ideology that victims of poverty, drug abuse, and other social ills are to blame for their problems, not the social structure these victims belong to. Ryan might say to George Bush today as he gives money to churches that “the obvious fact that poverty is primarily an absence of money is easily overlooked or set aside.”⁸²

One of the reasons Ryan believes that victim blaming is a dangerous ideology is how it arises. A problem in society is identified, usually by those “outside the boundaries” of the problem. Causes of the problem are then entertained and those who identified the problem cannot comfortably believe that they are the cause of the problem and, therefore, are practically compelled to find deviance in those with the identified problem. Blaming the victim for that deviance becomes the basis for the solutions to

⁸¹ William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*, (New York; Vintage Books, 1976), 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 6.

problems and solutions are based almost exclusively on the failure of the deviant. Ryan puts it this way:

These programs are based on the assumption that individuals “have” social problems as a result of some kind of unusual circumstances—accident, illness, personal defect or handicap, character flaw or maladjustment—that exclude them from using the ordinary mechanisms for maintaining and advancing themselves. For example, the prevalent belief in America is that, under normal circumstances, everyone can obtain sufficient income for the necessities of life. Those who are unable to do so are special deviant cases, persons who for one reason or another are not able to adapt themselves to the generally satisfactory income-producing system. In times gone by these persons were further classified into the worthy poor—the lame, the blind, the young mother whose husband died in an accident, the aged man no longer able to work—and the unworthy poor—the lazy, the unwed mother and her illegitimate children, the malingerer. All were seen, however, as individuals who for good reasons or bad were personal failures, unable to adapt themselves to the system.⁸³

Of course, lost in this thinking are relevant social and structural factors such as unequal distribution of income, lack of jobs, social stratification, political struggle, ethnic and racial conflicts and inequality of power. Many believe, along with Ryan, that Bush would do better to focus his energy and efforts towards changing defects in society as a whole and changing the economic structure, which are the root causes of the problems.

To clarify, Ryan uses an example of children suffering brain damage or death due to ingesting lead paint chips, a horrifying problem to be sure.⁸⁴ A pharmaceutical company out of compassion and concern made a poster declaring; “Lead Paint Can Kill!” with a picture of a sweet, innocent child. Obviously this was a warning for parents to watch their children in order to prevent them from ingesting lead paint. The health department of a major city made a coloring book to warn of the dangers of lead paint. The coloring book labeled mothers who did not keep their infants under constant

⁸³ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

surveillance as neglectful and thoughtless parents who could cause their child to be brain-damaged or die.

These campaigns were no doubt thoughtful attempts to spread the word about the dangers of lead paint but certainly not an accurate portrayal of the problem. Portraying lead poisoning as the result of the actions of “neglectful” mothers is an example of blaming the victim. The real problem is that landlords failed to make the needed repairs to the chipped paint. The city agency responsible for enforcing the code for lead paint did nothing to make the landlord correct this dangerous condition. A more accurate portrayal of the problem is the systematic breaking of the law by landlords and the toleration of the law breaking by the enforcing governmental agency. Yet the blaming of the victim is the focus. Changing the victim’s attitude, values, cultural deficits and character flaws is the focus, rather than changing the surrounding circumstances both social and political.

Individuals to whom the system has been good (those with decent jobs, living in a decent home, in a good neighborhood, with decent schools etc.), who also have charitable impulses are especially apt to blame the victim instead of looking at environment or social structure. According to Ryan, individuals who fit this description are in a dilemma. They are trying to “dance at two weddings,” as Ryan puts it. “They cannot bring themselves to attack the system that has been so good to them, but they want so badly to be helpful to the victims of racism and economic injustice.”⁸⁵ The dilemma is between preserving what they have and at the same time, helping those who would become their competitors if helped, yet they want to help. What is the solution to the dilemma? Blame the victim and make attempts to “help” them “rejecting the possibility of blaming, not the

⁸⁵ Ibid., 28-29.

victims, but themselves. They are all unconsciously passing judgments on themselves and bringing a unanimous verdict of Not Guilty.”⁸⁶

Another critic of “blaming the victim” ideology is Michael B. Katz, who believes that dignity, community and equality are rarely brought up in poverty discourse amongst politicians or intellectuals. Instead poverty discourse focuses on how poor people are different than “regular” people and that they are poor due to some personal problem of which they are responsible. Poverty discourse morally condemns the poor by categorizing the poor (such as deserving and undeserving, moral and immoral, etc.) by focusing on how welfare lessens their motivation to work and by obsession with the minimum social obligation that “others” have for the poor.⁸⁷ Very little if any poverty discourse has focused on the structures and social stigmas that allow some to prosper, but so many to decline.

Katz wonders why the discourse has been about morality and not political economy and inequality in distribution and the basic fact that some people receive a great deal less than others. He answers his question with two basic lines of explanation:

First, the culture of capitalism measures persons, as well as everything else, by their ability to produce wealth and by their success in earning it; it therefore leads naturally to the moral condemnation of those who, for whatever reason, fail to contribute or to prosper. It also mystifies the exploitive relations that allow some to prosper so well at the expense of so many.

Second, the silence about poverty as a product of political economy reflects the language of politics in America. As Ira Katznelson has pointed out, by the late nineteenth century, American working-class politics at the local level swirled around issues of family, neighborhood, and ethnicity. Mobilized by trade unions at work and political machines at home, American workers failed to develop a language of class that included both economics and community. As a

⁸⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁷ Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: from the war on poverty to the war on welfare*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 4.

result, for over a century American political discourse has redefined issues of power and distribution as questions of identity, morality, and patronage. This is what happened to poverty, which slipped easily, unreflectively, into a language of family, race, and culture rather than inequality, power, and exploitation.⁸⁸

Especially in America, where opportunity is thought to be available for anyone with ability who works, poverty became equated with failure. Nothing seemed to soften the mean spirited moral definition of poverty, not empirical evidence (Katz cited various studies, one of which found that employee's behavior reflected situational realities rather than personality)⁸⁹, not the Great Depression and not the misery the poor were experiencing. In spite of this, Katz declared that "honest and perceptive officials have recognized the impurity" of any and all distinctions that classify the poor morally, racially or culturally and give resources based on character and behavior.⁹⁰ Katz believes poverty is a complex product of social and economic factors beyond individual control and the moral categorization of the poor is inappropriate.

Katz suggested that in the 1980's conservatives triumphed because liberals failed to give a fresh defense of the welfare state and failed to relate the welfare state to economic and moral renewal. Conservatives jumped on every academic ideology or theory that provided justification for reducing social benefits which resulted in ambitious cuts in social spending on the poor in order to reduce taxes for the rich, in turn allegedly stimulating the economy and creating jobs for the poor.

One of the ideologies Katz cited, that provided intellectual ammunition for the 1980's conservatives, was exhibited in George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*, written in

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 9.

1981. Gilder exalted capitalism and defended it strongly against its enemies, which included redistributive taxation, the welfare state and feminism.⁹¹ Gilder touted wealth and inequality as “the leaven for raising the living standards of all,”⁹² because they are the natural rewards of success and hard work. Gilder claimed poverty resulted from laziness, pessimism and perverse public policy that demoralized the poor. Gilder said, “The only dependable route from poverty is always work, family and faith.”⁹³ In other words Gilder believed that if the poor would just work harder than the classes above them, stay in monogamous family relationships and believe in God they would be fine, if the Government would cease its perverse public policies that claim the poor are poor because of discrimination, racism, sexism, unemployment, etc. Katz claims Gilder is fast and loose with his sources and his claims are only haphazard anecdotes and that there is “overwhelming evidence,” that “refutes most of his claims about poverty and welfare.”⁹⁴ Katz then emphasizes that poverty is a result of low wages, inflation, unemployment (not enough work for people who want to work), a slow and faulty economy, racism, sexism, etc. In short, poverty is due to faulty social structures and bad economic conditions, not the individual behavior of the poor.

William Julius Wilson is also a staunch critic of the ideology that blames the poor for their condition. He says that those who put blame on the poor must be ignoring or overlooking obvious structural conditions in the economy, the workplace and society.

⁹¹ Ibid., 144.

⁹² Ibid., 145.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 147.

Wilson notes that one reason for a rise in inner-city joblessness is not the result of the poor being unwilling to work, but rather due to swift technological changes in the global economy. Changes in the workplace have been revolutionized by robotics and information highways causing an ever widening gap between skilled and unskilled workers. This makes education and training more important than ever before. As jobs are created for the educated and skilled, jobs for the undereducated and unskilled are eliminated, namely the inner-city poor who would be well suited for manual, assembly line type work. As an example of this technological change, secretaries now have to do more than simply type; they must know how to operate specialized software as well.⁹⁵

Another structural problem Wilson sees is that the United States has not created “comprehensive programs to promote the social rights of American citizens.”⁹⁶ Housing policies for example benefit the middle classes not the poor. The housing made available to the poor is confined to a limited number of public projects, mostly in inner cities, far from employment opportunities and informal job information. Another example of the lack of social rights is the lack of unemployment insurance benefits that prevent the poor from being covered by the same comprehensive medical programs as the working class. Even though there is Medicaid, a health program for poor people, many doctors refuse Medicaid patients because it pays doctors much less than Medicare or private insurers.⁹⁷ Wilson notes that the reason for the lack of poor programs that promote social rights is

⁹⁵ William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: the World of the New Urban Poor*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1996), 151-153.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 155.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 156.

because of the belief system America subscribes too, namely that the disadvantaged are responsible for their own plight. Wilson says:

Civil and political aspects of citizenship in the United States have overshadowed concerns about social aspects of citizenship (a right to employment, economic security, education, and health care) because of a strong belief system that de-emphasizes the social origins and social significance of poverty and welfare.⁹⁸

Wilson also cited several studies and surveys that revealed American beliefs regarding the reasons that some are living in poverty. Statements such as “lack of thrift,” “lack of effort,” “lack of ability,” and “loose morals and drunkenness,” were among the most common statements made as to the reasons for poverty. Structural items on the survey such as “low wages,” “lack of jobs,” and “racial discrimination,” were considered least important of all as to reasons for poverty. The most popular explanation for poverty in the studies and surveys was “lack of effort by the poor themselves.”⁹⁹ Wilson adds that Americans tend to be more concerned about the social obligations of the poor than their social rights as American citizen. The focus is on the moral character of the poor, not the inequities in the social and economic structures of society.

Wilson thinks this belief system is wrong. Wilson says that American researchers have consistently uncovered empirical evidence that undermined, rather than supported, the American belief system. As an example he cites a 1987 General Accounting Office (GAO) study reporting that there was no evidence that welfare discouraged individuals from working or caused the break-up of families, which was a prevailing common belief among citizens and policy makers. Wilson said, “systematic scientific argument is no

⁹⁸ Ibid., 159.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 159-161.

match for the dominant belief system: the views of members of Congress have apparently not been significantly altered by the GOA report.”¹⁰⁰

Katherine Newman, another critic of focusing on the moral behavior of the poor, is concerned about an issue that might capture the true essence of poverty in America, the working poor. She is concerned that policy-makers in America have been so preoccupied with the “ghetto dwellers who don’t work,”¹⁰¹ that they are convinced that no one else is working in the inner cities. These policy makers do not understand that, for example, in Harlem, sixty-nine percent of the families have at least one worker. In America more than five million poor children live in families where at least one parent worked the entire year. There is not a lot of information about “the working poor, people who toil year-round and either fail to pull above the poverty line or struggle to make ends meet just above it.”¹⁰² As a result of ignoring the working poor, the face of American poverty is welfare dependency and joblessness. Newman believes this makes it easy to sell policies that make it harder to get on welfare and easier to push people off of state support.

Newman notes that for highly skilled, well-educated workers these are glory days. They have prospered with higher wages, employment growth and stability more than any other group. For the uneducated, unskilled worker, jobs exist (for example, Newman says that between 1994 and 1997 more than 400,000 jobs were created in retail stores alone) but the jobs are low wage. So, even though more Americans may be working, those in the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 164.

¹⁰¹ Katherine S. Newman, *No Shame in My Game: the Working Poor in the Inner City*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1999), xi.

¹⁰² Ibid.

middle are working for less and those at the bottom are facing a bleak future. Once upon a time the unskilled and under-educated could find high wage jobs in auto factories or steel mills, but Newman says those days are long gone.

Newman summarizes the working poor this way:

Their jobs are often part-time, though we have seen a steady increase in the proportion of the poor who work full time and year-round. For the most part, they do not have access to private health insurance, but they earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. Child-care is a permanent headache for them, and those who do not have family members they can rely upon to help are forced into sub-standard arrangements for their children. Nonetheless, they work.

Perhaps because the nation's working poor are so busy trying to make ends meet, they have attracted very little attention. They do not impinge the national conscience; they do not provoke political outrage as welfare recipients do; they are not represented by organized labor, and public figures (save, perhaps, Jesse Jackson or Hugh Price) do not take the time to dramatize their problems; and they are too tired to take to the streets to demand a larger part of the national pie. As far as most Americans are concerned the working poor are not a social problem.¹⁰³

Newman notes that these people do not need their values reengineered. They work hard, working at jobs nobody else wants because they believe in the dignity of work. Ironically in many cases, they are worse off financially by not being on the welfare rolls. It costs them in child-care, transportation and clothing etc. to remain on the job. It benefits them in that they remain on the "right side" of culture and yet they are still poor. They still live in decaying homes, attend lousy schools, and deal with persistent crime and no health care.

Newman's working poor argument is a convincing scenario that goes against blame the victim mentality. What could a church do with government funds to assist these working poor? Their morals are strong and include hard work, family, dignity and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 13-14.

strength, yet they are poor. It would be hard to find a difference churches with government money could make in the lives of these hard working poor.

Conclusion

In the preceding arguments the purpose in extensively citing Olasky's point of view, as well as some of his critics, is that in spite of being controversial, George W. Bush's administration has subscribed to Olasky's point of view and is pushing policy based on these views. Bush wants to help religion become more massively engaged and to bring back the religious care that, he believes, is missing in American Welfare. It is clear that Olasky is one of the "intellectual godfathers of Mr. Bush's core philosophy,"¹⁰⁴ and that philosophy can be traced back to when Bush was Governor of Texas and was actively soliciting the help of Christian ministries in everything from operating drug and alcohol rehab centers to counseling prison inmates.¹⁰⁵ In Texas, while Bush was governor, faith-based rehabilitation was in style. In a landmark 1995 case, the state Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse allowed the Christian Teen Challenge group to continue operating a rehab center outside of the requirements of traditional programs. "The state's acquiescence in the Teen Challenge case," reported the Houston Chronicle "illustrates an emerging courtship between government and Christian groups that are

¹⁰⁴ Bill Minutaglio, "The Godfathers of 'Compassionate Conservatism'; Authors' Works Have Helped Shape Candidate Bush's Core Philosophy," *Dallas Star News*, (16 April 2000), available at www.dallasnews.com.

¹⁰⁵ American Atheists, A Flashline, "The Power Behind the Nominee: Marvin Olasky, Faith-Based 'Partnerships,' and the Threat To State-Church Separation," (4 August 2000), available at www.americanatheists.org.

trying to tackle social problems." It was noted that Governor Bush "helped smooth the way for Teen Challenge after it came under scrutiny."¹⁰⁶ A Bush spokesman proudly added that the governor "believes that religious faith tends to make people more responsible."¹⁰⁷ Bush was the first of the nation's governors to rush forward in implementing the Charitable Choice clause of the 1996 Welfare Reform law. He ordered state agencies like the Department of Human Services to remind welfare providers that they were covered by the new federal legislation, and no longer had to remove "religious content" such as sacred symbols and Bibles from their programs.

But opposing views to the Bush ideology are relevant and convincing. Many questions surface in the controversial issues of Bush's Faith-based agenda. There are constitutional questions such as separation of church and state. There are political questions as to whether or not the agenda's assumptions are what are best for poverty in America. There are religious questions as well, such as whether or not it will empower religion through funding or merely weaken religion by making faith-based groups reliant on government. And what about the strings attached to government funding; do religions want that risk? Do American Churches and faith-based groups even want or need federal money? (A recent national survey, funded by the Lilly Endowment, of about 1,200 congregations that mirror the religious makeup of the United States found that 40 percent would be willing to take public funds to provide services to the poor to gain the necessary

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

skills to be self-sufficient.)¹⁰⁸ If churches do not want part of the federal pie, how come they feel this way? If they do, why do they? What is the response from the Faith-based community across America to the Faith-based initiative and Charitable Choice?

The constitutional and political questions, though interesting, and of course crucial and relevant, will not be discussed, but are ever present in the background of this discussion. Religious questions will dominate this thesis concerning some key issues surrounding whether or not faith-based groups want federal money and will accept public funding offered by the Bush administration. After examining some of the history and some of the key issues in poverty discourse, one question has pushed its way to the top for this thesis; does the manner in which a religion's doctrine and social stance in viewing reasons for poverty affect whether or not funds are accepted? What can be learned about Bush's policies from this response from the faith community? If a particular faith-based group views reasons for poverty as mainly moral and character issues, would that affect its decision as to whether or not to accept public funding? If a faith-based group viewed poverty as due to mainly structural causes such as inequality, the economy and social barriers, would that affect a religion's decision as to whether or not to accept funding? Would there be any similarities or correlations across the American religious landscape as to views regarding causes of poverty and acceptance of government funding? Would faith-based groups that are more conservative with regards to poverty policy fall in line with actual conservative poverty policy, or will "compassionate conservatism" merely fund faith-based groups that are more liberal? The

¹⁰⁸ Patricia Kilday Hart, "Conservative. Compassionate?," *Texas Monthly*, (July 2000, Vol. 28 Issue 7), 99.

conservative view of the cause of poverty leans toward the poor themselves and conservatives would generally favor cutbacks in welfare assistance. The liberal view is more structural, in favor of more welfare; would Bush merely be financing liberal churches? Then again, churches are in the business of healing souls, and maybe these issues do not matter to them at all, as long as they have funding to run their programs that save lives both physically and spiritually. In short, how are churches in America responding to the Faith-based Initiative and what can be learned from the response about the faith-based policies? Chapter three will look at this question.

CHAPTER 3

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO FAITH-BASED POLICIES

The response to charitable choice and faith-based initiatives has been vast and varied in the faith community of America. Can examining the responses of American churches to the Bush policy uncover anything new about the soundness of the policy? What reasons would a church have for accepting government funding? What reasons would a church have for declining the offer for federal funds?

The reasons faith groups accept or reject government funding are numerous, hinging on theology as well as a churches practical organizational capability for providing social services. Responses vary from full embrace, to cautious acceptance, to a polite but firm no, and even bitterness at faith-based policy proposals. This chapter will explore two things. The first is the general response of the religious community to President Bush's faith-based proposals and the key elements that weave throughout. The second and more detailed question of whether or not the manner in which a religion views the reasons for poverty affects its stance on Charitable Choice and Faith-based Initiatives will be addressed. Six different United States religions will be compared and contrasted in the manner they view poverty policy and issues.

No doubt churches are looking for new ways of caring for the poor. Against the backdrop of dramatic welfare changes in the late 1990's, churches and synagogues, which generally have tended to the needy through traditional methods such as food pantries and soup kitchens, are now shifting toward helping the indigent gain skills to be self sufficient.¹

"It's not enough any longer to take a Band-Aid approach, to give poor people a bag of food or a bag of clothes," said the Rev. Eugene Neville, pastor of Mount Moriah and project director of the Black Church Capacity Program, a Boston program funded by seven foundations designed to help African-American congregations deliver assistance to the needy.²

Individual churches, leaders say, are ill equipped to respond to the many needs of the growing number of poor people. Local congregations lack the expertise or the resources of more traditional religious charities, such as Lutheran Social Services, the Salvation Army, or Catholic Charities, church activists add. "The dilemma for many churches, it seems, is being concerned with caring for people affected by welfare reform, while at the same time not trying to seem to endorse a welfare-to-work mentality that many of us believe is more punitive than helpful," said the Rev. Diane C. Kessler, executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches.³

The Rev. John Heinemeier, pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Churches, said

¹ Diego Ribadeneira, Globe Staff, Boston Globe, (Boston, Mass., 1 December 1998), B-1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

"Churches must be massively engaged in a new way."⁴ But is the Faith-based Initiative the best way?

Some faith-groups see nothing but problems with Faith-based Initiatives. Greg Lebel, acting executive director of The Interfaith Alliance said:

President Bush claims his plan will rally the 'armies of compassion.' But where is the compassion in politicizing the sacred tradition of religion? Where is the compassion when religious organizations are pitted against one another to compete for scarce funding — funding that is already not sufficient to alleviate the current demands on the social service community in this country? I fail to see where the compassion lies.⁵

Others view faith-based initiatives and partnering with government in a positive light such as The United Church of Christ, which declared:

We believe that as the church, the body of the living Christ, we have a role to work diligently as a partner with government to alleviate poverty and to bring justice where there is none, remembering always that we owe our allegiance to God, not to the state.⁶

Still other religious groups give cautious support to the initiative. For example the Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches supports the Faith-based Initiative declaring that all eligible entities under the churches direction would seek federal funding. After giving that support he then strongly declared, "I will not be reluctant to speak out or to mobilize action if this program fails to honor its pledge of "neutrality and nondiscrimination" as religious organizations compete on an equal footing both among themselves and with secular organizations for federal

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Greg Lebel, Press Release from The Interfaith Alliance, (16 August 2001), available at www.interfaithalliance.org.

⁶ The United Church of Christ Office of Justice and Witness Ministries and Office of General Ministries, "Working Principles on Charitable Choice: A United Church of Christ Perspective," (Cleveland, Ohio, June 2001), 2. Available at www.ucc.org.

funding to provide community services.”⁷ The Reverend also insisted that funding must be available to all religions including his own lest the government make a clear and dangerous violation of constitutional rights and protections.⁸

Americans in general support the idea of the government giving money to churches to reduce poverty and provide social services. When the specifics are brought up however, support from Americans goes down. For example, a *Time* magazine article in 2001 cited a poll published by the independent, nonprofit Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. The poll found that 75% of Americans favored Bush’s faith-based initiative in general. However, when specific questions were asked the numbers went down. When asked if Catholics should receive funding, 62% supported it. When mainline Protestant and Jewish faiths were brought up, 60% supported funding of those religions. When funding lesser known, fringe religions was brought up such as Scientology or the Nation of Islam, support dwindled to below 30%.⁹ So in theory, Americans seem to think it is a good idea, but when pressed on the details, support diminished.

Faith-based Initiatives have some faith groups concerned about what taking government funds will do to their religious identity, mission and purpose. The initiative is forcing many groups to come to grips with what their religion is really all about, what its primary role in society is, and to what degree social services should be a part of that

⁷ The Reverend Elder Troy C. Perry, “UFMCC Response to U.S. Faith-based Initiative,” 1 August 2001, available at www.wfn.org.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jessica Reaves, “Americans Conflicted Over Bush’s Faith-based Initiative,” *Time Magazine*, (11 April 2001), available at www.time.com.

identity. Reverend Gerald S. Zandstra identified what he felt religious organizations' central purpose was and what government funding would do to that purpose:

A second concern has to do with the central purpose of religious organizations. The introduction of governmental funding has the potential to cause the church to take its focus off its central role as proclaimer of the Gospel and to become merely another social service organization. There is no doubt that feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and caring for those who cannot care for themselves are significant biblical themes. These things are clearly a part of the ministry of a church. But they are not the essence of what the Christian church is about; the church is not a social service agency. The history of the church demonstrates that a large amount of money is as dangerous to churches as it is to individuals.¹⁰

Another key issue for many religious groups is the separation of church and state.

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State sent out a list of reasons for churches to avoid partnering with the government. Part of the reasoning was as follows:

Bush's plan violates the separation of church and state. Under the First Amendment, American citizens are free to decide on their own whether or not to support religious ministries, and the government must stay out of it. Bush's faith-based plan turns the time-tested constitutional principle of church-state separation on its ear. At its core, Bush's plan throws the massive weight of the federal government behind religious groups and religious conversions to solve social problems. While houses of worship have played an important role in this country since it's founding, these institutions have thrived on voluntary contributions. Forcing taxpayers to subsidize religious institutions they may or not believe in is no different from forcing them to put money in the collection plates of churches, synagogues and mosques. America's founders would be appalled at the Bush initiative.¹¹

Many religious groups looking into partnering with the federal government are concerned about the inevitable regulations that will follow the funds and the bureaucratic red tape that will surely come. One Baptist minister suggested that churches reject the faith-based funding for just this reason.

¹⁰ Gerald S. Zandstra, "Reflections on Bush's Faith-Based Initiative," 15 March 2001, Acton Institute 2002, www.acton.org.

¹¹ Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, "The Bush Faith Based Initiative: Why Its Wrong," Press Release, 20 February 2001, www.au.org.

As an ordained minister and person of faith dedicating my professional life to the defense of religious liberty, I have one piece of advice for church leaders: Say 'no, thank you' to government funds for your religious ministries. You are doing just fine without the heavy hand of government on your back. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said the church is not the master of the state, nor the servant of the state, but the conscience of the state.¹²

Still another concern is that many churches do not have the organizational and professional capacity to work with the government. In order to receive government funds a religious organization would need to be able to research programs and money that are available. After the research a knowledgeable, professional grant would need to be written with time-tables, proposals, organizational bios, staff availability, a clear statement of goals and proposed output along with a detailed budget plan and how that budget money will be accounted for. Many religious organizations simply do not have that kind of professional and organizational ability to even submit a grant proposal.

A faith-based group entering the government playing field would also need available resources to keep religious and non-religious components of their ministry separated. This would require meticulous record keeping, careful accounting, and content specific programs that insured a sermon was not preached at job-training meeting. Many faith-based groups services are so closely mixed that religious and non-religious cannot be separated.

Another interesting fact is that despite the claims of faith-based initiatives and charitable choice, there may, in reality, be very little actual faith-based funding going on. Samantha Smoot the executive director of the Texas Freedom Network explains:

¹² Reverend Wanda Henry, Address given at National Press Club, (30 January 2001), as quoted in Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, "The Bush Faith Based Initiative: Why Its Wrong," Press Release, (20 February 2001), available at www.au.org.

We've been researching Charitable Choice in Texas for about sixteen months now, and the first thing I should tell you is the thing that was most surprising to us in our studies was how little there was, in fact, to study. With all the talk about Charitable Choice and this much-vaunted initiative, we actually could find relatively few Charitable Choice programs. Of the 2300 programs that the State of Texas will tell you are Charitable Choice programs, only about 500 of those are actually funded programs. The rest of them are various kinds of informal partnerships. Of that 500, only about 100 are truly Charitable Choice, in other words, came from the welfare reform act. The others are programs that for one reason or another are counted by the state as Charitable Choice. Even though only about 5% of the State of Texas's Charitable Choice programs are technically Charitable Choice, over 10 million of the 13.5 million dollars in Charitable Choice spending went to those types of programs. That's a little bit misleading as well, because the overwhelming majority of that money went to programs that had already been funded before the passage of the 1996 welfare reform act. Catholic charities, for instance, got a grant for the State of Texas in the amount of over three million dollars, and so again, the vast majority of Charitable Choice in Texas was simply a continuation of funding and partnerships with organizations and programs that had existed for years and decades. Very little new, despite all the hype.¹³

So, perhaps churches are not as interested in all the funding reforms as the government thinks. The big reforms in government may result in very few actual changes. Statistics from the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives¹⁴ however, show that progress is being made in faith-based funding:

- 41% increase in the number of faith-based grants in the Department of Health and Human Services, an increase of 91 million dollars from 2002 to 2003. A 50% increase in first-time faith-based grantees during this period.
- 16% increase in the number of faith-based grants in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, an increase of 53 million dollars from 2002 to 2003. A 40% increase in first-time faith-based grantees during this period. More than half of section 202 Elderly Housing funding went to faith-based organizations.

¹³ Samantha Smoot, "In Good Faith: A Dialogue on Government Funding of Faith Based Social Services," A Conference held on 16 October 2001 at the Columbus School of Law of Catholic University of America, Transcript.

¹⁴ White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, "Select Grants to Faith-Based Organizations at Five Agencies," (2 March 2004), available at www.fbc.gov.

- In January 2003, 2% of the organizations that provide tutoring under the Education Departments “No Child Left Behind” program were faith-based organizations. By December 2003, 9% of these providers were faith-based organizations.
- A review of 14.5 billion dollars in Federal competitive non-formula programs in federal year 2003 at five agencies showed that 1.17 billion dollars went to faith-based organizations.

The full impact and scope of Faith-based Initiatives remains to be seen as Bush begins his second term in office.

Theological Beliefs on the Reasons for Poverty

President Bush has said that, “Government shouldn’t discriminate against faith, government should welcome faith. The power of faith, whether it comes through the Christian church, through Judaism, or through Islam, can change peoples lives for the better: And we must welcome that faith in our society.”¹⁵

The White House is spending thousands of dollars around the United States to “sell” and “train” leaders of Faith-based groups on the proposals. As noted before, conferences are being held around the U.S. with expensive publications, media presentations, and lunch for thousands provided in an effort to “take the mystery out of federal funding”¹⁶ for faith-based organizations.

¹⁵ George W. Bush, (7 August 2002), as quoted in “White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives” conference manual, San Diego, California (18 February 2003).

¹⁶ Ann Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture, in speech at San Diego “White House Conference on Faith-based and Community Initiatives,” (18 February 2003).

George Bush even called his Faith-Based proposals “one of my most important initiatives.”¹⁷ So how are faith-based groups responding to the enthusiasm of the Bush administrations desire to lure them into federally administrated social service funding?

As noted in the previous chapter, Bush believes that poverty problems are more character based than structurally based. He believes that faith is a major key in solving society’s poverty problems. But what is the faith-communities’ belief regarding the reasons for poverty? Do religions view poverty problems as structural and societal or individual and moral in nature? Does the theology of poverty affect a faith-based group’s acceptance or rejection of funding? Could analyzing several faith-based groups theological perspective on poverty and how that theology bears on partnering with government by receiving funds uncover any new ideas about the Faith-based Initiative?

What follows is a brief look at several churches in America, their theology with regards to poverty and their position on receiving government funds to provide social services. The six churches included in this chapter were chosen due to the fact that collectively they represent a good cross section of the Judeo-Christian ethic in America. The combined theological and practical factors in the six churches represented here capture a good portion of those factors in most American mainstream churches. Though America has hundreds of small, independent churches scattered throughout the nation, it is assumed, for purposes here, that institutional factors would prevent them from seeking federal funding even if theological factors would lead them to seek funding. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public affairs is an example of a religious group being left out. They

¹⁷ George W. Bush, “Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with Federal Government,” Office of White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Pamphlet, 2.

are cautious in their view toward Federal funding. Muslims are another religious group being left out. Most Muslims (75%) were in favor of faith-based funding but most Islamic Centers and mosques do not offer community services such as addiction treatment, employment services or domestic violence programs.¹⁸

Catholic Position

The religious group with perhaps the strongest support of Faith-based Initiatives is the Catholic Church and its non-profit arm, Catholic Charities USA. Catholic Charities has 275 years of experience and is recognized as the nation's largest voluntary social service network with more than 1,600 community-based agencies and institutions across America and is also recognized as one of the nation's most efficient charities by Smart Money Magazine.¹⁹ The church's long-time support of government partnering to fund religious social service has roots in Catholic Charities very beginnings.

In 1727 a small group of Ursuline Sisters was sent from France to New Orleans in America to serve the local community there. They set up an orphanage and provided health care to the people. Because it was in the best interest of the community, the French colony in New Orleans offered the Sisters financial support to provide their services. Then in 1804, the United States purchased Louisiana and the Superior of the Ursuline Sisters wrote to President Thomas Jefferson urging him to let them keep the property they had acquired from the local government of the French Colony.

¹⁸ American Muslim Council, Results of Faith-Based Initiative Survey following the American Muslim Council Forum on Faith-Based Initiative at Georgetown University, (27 March 2001), available at www.amc.org.

¹⁹ Catholic Charities Information, "Mission and History: Past," available at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.

President Jefferson responded by a letter dated May 15, 1804 assuring the Sisters that the Constitution of the United States would guarantee them the right to keep their property. Then Jefferson added:

...and that your institution will be permitted to govern itself according to it's [sic] own voluntary rules, without interference from the civil authority, whatever diversity of shade may appear in the religious opinions of our fellow citizens, the charitable objects of your institution cannot be indifferent to any; and it's [sic] furtherance of the wholesome purposes of society ... cannot fail to ensure it the patronage of the government it is under. Be [sic] assured it will meet all the protection which my office can give it.²⁰

This began the public/private partnership of what is today known as Catholic Charities USA. The Catholic Church has long accepted government funding to help run its social services and it applauds President Bush's efforts to "level the playing field" and simplify bureaucratic requirements for faith-based groups to provide social services. The church sees no entanglements that would prevent it from accepting government money as social services are considered to be "direct expressions of the Gospel."²¹ Great good has come from the government funding of Catholic Charities over the years. As an example, a total of 7,017,845 people were helped with social services in the year 2000, regardless of faith, race, age or ethnicity. In that same year 3,929,387 people received food, 592,784 received clothing, 230,224 abuse victims were assisted, and 158,713 people were assisted with housing.²²

²⁰ Quoted by Fred Krammer of Catholic Charities USA, "Faith-Based Initiatives—A Call to Services and Justice," 2 April 2001), available at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.

²¹ Fred Krammer, Catholic Charities USA, "Faith-Based Initiatives—A Call to Services and Justice," (2 April 2001), available at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.

²² Catholic Charities USA, "Catholic Charities USA 2000 Annual Survey: National Statistics," available at www.catholiccharitiesinfo.org.

Though Catholic Charities USA accepts, embraces and actively lobbies in favor of Faith-Based Initiatives (sending letters to Senators, Congressmen and the President urging passage of faith-based legislation), they do offer some warnings and counsel, drawn from experience, for any religious group interested in partnering with Federal Government to be prepared to encounter. They warn those considering entrance into government partnerships to prepare to be attacked by the extremes on both the political left and right. Attacks have been made on the Catholic Church from the left attempting to deny them their religious identity and moral values. One such example is the left trying to mandate that the Church provide for abortion and contraception in employee insurance programs. The Church is currently suing the state of California to block efforts to do just that.²³

Attacks from the extreme right have come in varied forms. Some in Congress have tried to deny the Catholic Church its right to legislative advocacy because it has contracts with the government. Others have tried to prevent it from feeding “undocumented families” even though Catholics teaching “extends a special protection to many who have fled their country for serious political, economic or social reasons.”²⁴

Another attack from the extreme right is the charge that the Catholic Church partners with the government only for the money, not to serve the poor, hungry and homeless. The attack asserts that somehow accepting government funding disqualifies the church from being genuine, heartfelt and religiously motivated in its social services. At

²³ Fred Krammer, Catholic Charities USA, “Faith-Based Initiatives—A Call to Services and Justice,” (2 April 2001), available at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.

²⁴ Ibid.

the forefront of this attack is “City Journals” Brian Anderson, who in 1999 visited two of the 1,400 local Catholic Charity sites and then declared, “Catholic Charities has lost its soul to the government.”²⁵

Responding to these attacks, Catholic Charities suggests that before churches venture too far into Faith-Based Initiatives that they “prepare themselves with appropriate legal, political, theological and public relations resources,” because it is “not for the faint of heart.”²⁶

The Catholic Churches’ position on why people are poor seems to have much to do with its acceptance of money from the government. Catholic Charities applauds those who avoid equating poverty with sinfulness or character flaws and those who avoid exaggerating the success of faith-based programs in supposed contrast to other non-religious programs.²⁷ Catholic Charities asserts that in regards to blaming the poor for their plight:

Even in his own time, Jesus of Nazareth not only rejected such blaming, but he identified himself with the hungry, naked, homeless, sick and imprisoned. Our member agencies' experience is that poverty has many and complex causes, and that effective solutions come in many packages, carried in many hands-including personal and social responsibility, individual and community empowerment, religious and secular social services, and attention to physical, mental, emotional, familial, social, economic, and, at times, spiritual factors. Inviting new players to the table to pilot and test new solutions to complex personal and community problems is a worthwhile cause; but it should be modest in its claims, cautious in its predictions, respectful of other quality efforts and open to creative and flexible responses.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

In summary, the Catholic Church is one of the largest and oldest faith-based social service providers in America. It applauds George Bush's Faith-based Initiative and actively lobbies in favor of government funding, though the church warns that partnering with government is not for the faint of heart. The Churches' view on reasons for poverty is that poverty should not be equated with sinfulness on the part of the poor, but rather a complex mixture of factors, many of them structural in nature. The Catholic Church actively seeks funding from the government and receives millions of dollars for its social service ministries.

Jehovah's Witness Position

In contrast to the massive social service network of the Catholic Church and its funding from government sources is the Jehovah's Witnesses. Their funding comes from purely voluntary means. No collections are taken at meetings, and members are not required to tithe and they receive no money from the government. Clearly marked contribution boxes are provided in all meeting places for voluntary donations, which remain anonymous. In the church there are no paid clergy and the meeting places are modest, so most donations are used for disaster relief, support for missionaries and traveling ministers, construction of houses of worship, and the printing and shipping of Bibles and Christian publications such as "The Watchtower."

Jehovah's Witnesses despise poverty and their doctrine suggests that poverty is structural in nature as a result of government systems that may be well intentioned, yet could never eradicate poverty because mere humans are at the head. The following from "The Watchtower" explains the Jehovah's Witness view that poverty problems are structural in nature and yet cannot be eliminated by government:

Think about the sad plight of those who are really poverty-stricken. Can you imagine the extreme hardship and unhappiness of such people? Some have to compete with gulls and rats, as they comb through refuse dumps looking for food! How long will such poverty afflict mankind? The appeal of Federico Mayor, director-general of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), is appropriate: "Let us abandon that dubious tolerance which allows us to tolerate the intolerable—the poverty, hunger and suffering of millions of human beings.

...What hope do the poor have?

Well-meaning leaders propose more jobs, better wages, improved social programs, and land reform. They may agree with former U.S. president John F. Kennedy: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." Good intentions, though, are not enough to eradicate poverty. For example, will economic growth help the poor in general? Not necessarily. Former Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru stated: "The forces of a capitalist society, if left unchecked, tend to make the rich richer and the poor poorer." However, besides hardship and privation, a sense of worthlessness increases the burden of the poor. Can human leaders help the poor to overcome feelings of helplessness and hopelessness?

Actually, many of the desperately poor have learned to cope with poverty and overcome feelings of low self-respect in the face of great difficulties, such as sky-high inflation and unemployment.²⁹

Jehovah's Witnesses have no extensive social service programs and as a church they look forward to a coming day when the earth is ruled not by man, but by God, and only then will poverty be known no more. Jehovah's Witnesses believe it is the system of government run by humans that should be blamed for poverty. "As long as this wicked system lasts, there will be poor people, no matter what may cause their plight."³⁰ The belief as to the cause of poverty is structural in nature:

Unhappily, many have little interest in helping the poor. According to *The World Book Encyclopedia*, some believe that "people in society compete for survival and . . . superior individuals become powerful and wealthy." Those who believe this theory, called social Darwinism, may view the poor as just lazy people or spendthrifts. Yet, rural laborers, migrant workers, and others, despite being poorly paid, often work very hard to feed their families...Really, "the poor suffer not only from poor nutrition, bad housing, and inadequate medical care,

²⁹ Jehovah's Witness, "When No One Will Be Poor: How Long Will the Poor Have to Wait," (The Watchtower, 1 May 1995).

³⁰ Jehovah's Witness, "When No One Will Be Poor: Soon No One Will Be Poor," (The Watchtower, 1 May 1995).

but also from constant anxiety about their condition," says *The World Book Encyclopedia*. "Unable to get and hold good jobs, they lose all sense of dignity and self-respect."³¹

Jehovah's Witnesses feel that poverty's root cause is a corrupt system but they also believe that poverty may be made worse by unwise habits. A few examples were offered in Jehovah's Witness publications. Milton, because of heavy drinking and smoking, lost a business with 23 employees. He says: "I spent nights on the street, unable to go home, and my family suffered a great deal because of me." João too wasted his salary on vices. "I spent nights away from home. All I earned was not enough for my vices and affairs. The situation became unbearable, and my wife wanted a separation." In addition to his financial and marital problems, there were yet others. He says: "I caused problems with relatives and neighbors, and I especially had problems at work. As a result, I was constantly out of work."³²

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that applying the Bible's counsel and associating with like-minded individuals in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses is the key to fixing the bad habits that make poverty worse. How? First, people learn that if Biblical principles are applied, the bad effects of poverty can be lessened as immorality, drunkenness, gambling, drug abuse and other vices can be very expensive. They can make a rich man poor, and a poor man even poorer. Abandoning these vices and others like them can do much to improve the economic situation of a family. Individuals also discover that if a person lives according to the good news Jesus preached, he need never feel abandoned. God does not promise fancy cars or luxurious houses. Jesus was

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

speaking of the necessities of life, things like food and clothing. (Matthew 6:31) But millions of Jehovah's Witnesses today testify that Jesus' promise is reliable. An individual, even a very poor individual, is not left out entirely if he puts the Kingdom first. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that one who puts God's Kingdom first is not embittered by economic hardship. Yes, a poor man has to work hard. But if he serves God, he has a privileged relationship with his Creator, of whom the Bible says: "He has neither despised nor loathed the affliction of the afflicted one; and he has not concealed his face from him, and when he cried to him for help he heard." (Psalm 22:24) In addition, a poor person who applies Biblical teachings has help in coping with the problems of life. He enjoys warm companionship with fellow Christians and has knowledge of and confidence in Jehovah's revealed will. Things like these "are more to be desired than gold, yes, than much refined gold—Psalm 19:10."³³

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the root cause of poverty is a corrupt, wicked, human system of government and that individual bad habits can worsen the effects of this corrupt system. The bad habits that worsen poverty's hold are remedied by accepting the Bible's teachings and fellowshiping with other Witnesses.

Ultimately, individuals who heed the good news learn that Jehovah God has purposed to solve the problem of poverty once and for all by means of his Kingdom:

The Kingdom is a real government, established in the heavens with Jesus Christ as Ruler. Soon, that Kingdom will replace human governments in the administration of human affairs. (Daniel 2:44) Then, as enthroned King, Jesus "will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."—Psalm 72:13, 14. Looking forward to that time, Micah 4:3, 4 says: "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble; for the very

³³ Ibid.

mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it." Who is spoken of here? Why, all those who submit to God's Kingdom. That Kingdom will solve all the problems that afflict mankind—even the problem of sickness and death. "He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces." (Isaiah 25:8; 33:24) What a different world that will be! And remember, we can believe these promises because they are inspired by God himself. He says: "My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting-places."—Isaiah 32:18. Confidence in God's Kingdom overcomes the lack of self-respect often caused by poverty. A poor Christian knows that he is just as important in God's eyes as is a Christian who is wealthy. God loves both equally, and both have the same hope. Both eagerly look forward to the time when, under God's Kingdom, poverty will be a thing of the past. What a glorious time that will be! At last, no one will be poor!³⁴

It would seem then that Jehovah's Witnesses could never accept money from the government as they feel governments are corrupt and the root cause of poverty in the first place. As this is the root cause of the poverty problem, poverty will never be remedied until Jehovah God comes to earth and sets up his Kingdom. Bad habits worsen the effects of poverty on individuals are remedied through Biblical application and fellowship with believers. The church has no massive social service programs and no acceptance of government funds.

United Methodist Position

The United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries felt a need to research, produce and publish a thirty-one page document titled "Community Ministries and Government Funding: A Response to Questions United Methodists Are Asking about Faith-based Initiatives."³⁵ The publication admitted that "because this is an unfolding

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ United Methodist Church, "Community Ministries and Government Funding: A Response to Questions United Methodists Are Asking about Faith-based Initiatives," A Cooperative Project of: The General Board of Church and Society, The General Board of Global Ministries and the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church, (Summer 2001), available at www.umc-gbcs.org, www.gbgn-umc.org, www.gcfa.org.

story filled with political overtones, legal debates, and theological interpretations,”³⁶ the subject is addressed tentatively. Though tentative, the document defined what Faith-based Initiatives are, what Charitable Choice is, what the denominations view is, and some guidelines for using government funds as well as a legal memo.

The United Methodists cited a study on congregational response to charitable choice in Indiana. The study found very few United Methodist churches that were interested in partnering with the federal government. Three dominant reasons for the low interest were suggested. First, the process of receiving funds is competitive, so churches shy away from the process. Second, congregations usually provide social services in a “piecemeal” manner rather than a systematic way that the government would require. Third, the world of government funding is very foreign to churches with its writing of proposals and the tracking of results and funds.³⁷ These concerns resulted in most of the congregations declining attempts to receive federal funding.

In the United Methodist Church, only the “General Conference” speaks officially in behalf of the church, and that Conference only meets every four years. The Conference has yet to address the issues of Faith-based Initiatives specifically. In the meantime, a few

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

³⁷ Polis Center, “Congregations and Charitable Choice,” (Fall 2000), as quoted in United Methodist Church, “Community Ministries and Government Funding: A Response to Questions United Methodists Are Asking about Faith-based Initiatives,” A Cooperative Project of: The General Board of Church and Society, The General Board of Global Ministries and the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church, (Summer 2001), 6, available at www.umc-gbcs.org, www.gbgm-umc.org, www.gcfa.org.

United Methodist congregations have had success in partnering with the government and others have reported troubled relationships with government funding.

One local congregation in Las Vegas, the University United Methodist Church (right next to UNLV on Maryland Parkway) was awarded \$ 20,075 by the Department of Labor. The Secretary of Labor, Elaine L. Chao, announced the awarding of grants specifically designed to link faith-based and grassroots community organizations to the nation's One-Stop Career System. \$17.5 million was awarded to 12 states and 29 organizations around the country. The grant the University United Methodist Church was awarded was to link federal programs with their local One-Stop office.³⁸

The United Methodist Church's social principles state that they "do not hold poor people morally responsible for their economic state,"³⁹ because of technology and exploitative economic practices in America. The UMC views the cause of poverty as structural. Theologically, the church declares it is permissible to accept government funding, but as a matter of practicality most do not because of all the bureaucratic hoops to jump through. John Hughes, director of Metro United Methodist Urban Ministries of San Diego, said that his organization has learned to "speak church" and to "speak social service" and worries that some churches do not have both vocabularies.⁴⁰

³⁸ U. S. Department of Labor, News Release, (1 July 2002), available at www.dol.gov.

³⁹ United Methodist Church, "Community Ministries and Government Funding: A Response to Questions United Methodists Are Asking about Faith-based Initiatives," A Cooperative Project of: The General Board of Church and Society, The General Board of Global Ministries and the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church, (Summer 2001), 10, available at www.umc-gbcs.org, www.gb-gm-umc.org, www.gcfa.org.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

The UMC then, views poverty problems as structural. Their doctrine would allow them to accept money from the federal government and some of their churches do, like the University United Methodist Church in Las Vegas. However, practically, most of the UMC congregations do not accept government funding because they are not organizationally equipped to do so and can't handle the practical aspects of working with the government.

Presbyterian Position

The Presbyterian *Book of Order*, in chapter three, defines the calling of the church to do justice in a rich variety of ways such as “ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,” and “engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger and injustice.”⁴¹ Justice is defined by the church as, “the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves.”⁴² The vision the church has for doing justice, among other things, is to seek “to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,” and “redressing wrongs against individuals...groups...in the church, the nation, and in the world.”⁴³

The Presbyterian Church believes there is positive potential for meeting human need through Charitable Choice partnerships. Since voluntary contributions to a church are discretionary, wild fluctuations occur in the amount of money available for social

⁴¹ Presbyterian Church U.S.A., *Book of Order, G-w.0300-c*, as quoted in “Charitable Choice: Theological Perspective,” (*Faith-based Initiatives and Charitable Choices 2001: Resources for Presbyterians*), 2.

⁴² Presbyterian Church U.S.A., “Charitable Choice: Theological Perspective,” (*Faith-based Initiatives and Charitable Choices 2001: Resources for Presbyterians*), 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

service efforts. Government funding could provide a steadier stream of funding. The church acknowledges that financial resources are essential for creating institutional pathways to human transformation but cautions that such partnerships are loaded with potential for corruption. However, this caution is not a sufficient barrier for churches to refrain from entering into government agreements, as the caution is “prudent but not timid.”⁴⁴ The church cautions that religious congregations must proceed carefully to be “wise as the serpent and diplomatic as the dove.”⁴⁵ Some Presbyterian ministers, like Henry G. Brinton, wonder if faith communities can remain vibrant volunteer organizations once they grow accustomed to federal funding.⁴⁶ Brinton believes that people are most committed to activities that they choose to support with their disposable income and church programs run without funding from the government are enriched because “it challenges church members throughout the community to give of their own time, energy, and money.”⁴⁷ Federal funding could rob programs of the personal investment of the volunteer. Pastor Brinton, and others, is pleased with the faith-friendly environment that President Bush is fostering but he believes that the separation of church and state is a benefit to the church in that it “protects the sacred from the secular—not the other way around.”⁴⁸ Amy Sherman, a director of an urban outreach program in a low-

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁶ Presbyterian Church U.S.A., “It’s Tempting, But My Church Says ‘No Thanks’,” (*Faith-based Initiatives and Charitable Choices 2001: Resources for Presbyterians*), 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1.

income neighborhood says, “She would rather lose funding and cut back programs than to be found untrue to our Lord.”⁴⁹

In spite of the cautions, as a matter of policy, the Presbyterian Church believes that Charitable Choice legislation allows religious communities to expand their ministries of love and forgiveness and social justice. The suggestion for local ministries from the church hierarchy is they should only seek funds from the government “after serious theological and sociological exploration of the question, ‘What does our church want to accomplish in community ministry?’”⁵⁰ There are also concerns about the moral expectations of the community if a program is started with federal funding, and then dropped after the contract period ends, or the church decides to drop it. Members of the community might wonder why the church stopped helping people that they had previously been helping, feeling the church had quit on them.⁵¹

In trying to discover the Presbyterian position on reasons for poverty the following gives some insight, suggesting a structural view of poverty:

We believe that the Christian interpretation of life, and the judgment of God in the affairs of men, require the elimination of racism, idolatrous nationalism, communism and other forms of totalitarian heresy. Therefore neither the Church as the body of Christ, nor Christians as individuals, can be indifferent or neutral toward the evil influences in our world...As Christians, we shall be advocates in the centers of political and economic power, supporting policy changes which will provide food for poor and hungry people at home and abroad, which empower their self-development, and which enable them and us by just and peaceful means to be free from oppressive and unjust systems that fail to meet basic needs.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁰ Presbyterian Church U.S.A., “Before a Congregation Applies for Public Funds,” (*Faith-based Initiatives and Charitable Choices 2001: Resources for Presbyterians*), 1.

⁵¹ Ibid., 4.

Official statements come to the Presbyterian Church from a governing body called the General Assembly. General Assembly statements have looked at how to make economic systems more Christian and more fair. In 1978, the PCUS General Assembly adopted a Declaration of Human Rights which affirmed that human beings are created in the image of God and that every person is of intrinsic worth before God, and declared that human rights derived from God include the right to exist (" . . . no human agency has the right to own, manipulate, brainwash, torture, physically eliminate, experiment with, or deny the existence of any human being"), the right to basic subsistence (" . . . adequate work, food, clothing, and shelter, together with liberty of thought, conscience, and religion . . ."), the right to participation in community, and the right to meaningful existence.⁵³ The Presbyterian Church views poverty mainly in a structural manner. Governments have the responsibility to provide citizens the God given right to basic subsistence. If these rights are not present, the system is at fault.

LDS (Mormon) Position

In LDS scripture it says, "Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread of nor wear the garments of the laborer."⁵⁴ Self-reliance, since the church's early days, has been the principle to guide the church in its social service efforts. A church statement said, "Government funding has never been a factor in our welfare

⁵² Presbyterian Church, General Assembly 1979 Statement, (UPCUSA, 1979), 384.

⁵³ Presbyterian Church, General Assembly 1978 Statement, (UPCUSA, 1978), 186.

⁵⁴ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Doctrine and Covenants 42:42," (Corporation of the President, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981).

efforts. Rather, our work is based on principles of self-reliance, community service and Christian giving from our own members.”⁵⁵

The church has organized itself so that members care for themselves and for others. The most basic unit of the church is a local congregation of between 350 and 500 members called a “ward.” Lay leaders of those congregations, called bishops, assess the situation of needy members and then marshal the available resources of the members to help. Bishop Neil Petersen says, “Bishops are in the best position to know their people and understand their needs. This is not an anonymous welfare check, but a personal level of concern and support that makes the difference between success and failure.”⁵⁶

The assistance given may include food, clothing, financial help, literacy training, employment counseling, marriage and family counseling, or service in the home. Most local congregations have an employment specialist and local areas have Church Service Employment Missionaries to assist in finding employment or improve employment for those seeking help. The church also has local thrift stores, storehouses with available food, and professional social services. The local bishop uses these resources to help those in need.

Funding for the bulk of the work of the LDS Church comes from what the church calls tithing. Church President Gordon B. Hinckley has written that:

Our major source of revenue is the ancient law of the tithe. Our people are expected to pay 10 percent of their income to move forward the work of the Church. The remarkable and wonderful thing is that they do it. Tithing is not so much a matter of dollars as it is a matter of faith. It becomes a privilege and an opportunity, not a burden. Our people believe in the word of God as set forth in

⁵⁵ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Helping the Poor: A Way of Life,” (Intellectual Reserve, 2003), available at www.lds.org/newsroom.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the book of Malachi, that the Lord will open the windows of heaven and pour down blessings that there will not be room enough to receive them (Malachi 3:10). Moving and touching is the testimony of Latter-day Saints throughout the world concerning this, the Lord's law for the financing of His work.⁵⁷

This tithing money is used for things ranging from constructing temples and church buildings, to extensive missionary efforts, to providing operating funds for the church. Tithing is not generally used for assisting those in need but rather for the day-to-day affairs of the church.

Funds used for assisting those in need are funded through “the law of the fast” or what the church calls fast offerings. One Sunday each month church members worldwide are asked to “fast,” by going without food or drink for two consecutive meals and then donating at least the value of these two meals, and more if able, to care for the poor and the needy. These funds are collected by the local bishop and used locally for assistance to the needy. The LDS Church defines the needy as those who are doing all they can to provide for themselves but still cannot meet basic needs of food, shelter and clothing.⁵⁸ For these individuals LDS scripture urges its members to, “remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things is not my disciple.”⁵⁹

To do this each member is taught to become self-reliant and to care for the poor and the needy. A church member is considered self-reliant when he or she uses the things

⁵⁷ Gordon B. Hinckley, as quoted in *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Frequently Asked Questions,”* available at www.lds.org.

⁵⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “*Helping the Poor: A Way of Life*,” (Intellectual Reserve, 2003), available at www.lds.org/newsroom.

⁵⁹ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “*Doctrine and Covenants 52:40*,” (Corporation of the President, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981).

God gives to take care of themselves and their families. This was explained by one of the churches' prophet leaders:

The responsibility for each person's social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or economic well-being rests first upon himself, second upon his family, and third upon the Church if he is a faithful member thereof.

No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family's well-being to someone else. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Lord and with his own labors, he will supply himself and his family with spiritual and temporal necessities of life.⁶⁰

The church teaches that when a person accepts individual responsibility for their own and their family's well-being that individuals are better prepared to endure hard times without becoming dependant on others. If a time does come when needs are unable to be met an individual should first turn to their family members for assistance and, if necessary, turn to the church for help. The church also teaches that the key to self-reliance is spiritual, mental and physical work.

It seems then that the LDS Church takes more of a character approach to the poor and the needy and stays away from the structural arguments. One church leader many years ago said of the churches' welfare program:

The real long term objective of the [churches] Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Spencer W. Kimball, as quoted in *A Leaders Guide to Welfare: Providing the Lord's Way*, (Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1990), 5.

⁶¹ J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Special meeting of stake presidents, (2 October 1936), as quoted in *A Leaders Guide to Welfare: Providing the Lord's Way*, (Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1990), Inside front cover.

The LDS Church has never accepted government funding for any of its efforts, relying on the faith of its members to donate tithes and offerings for their day-to-day needs and social service programs. The church believes that hard work, resource management, living within means, and trusting in the Lord are an individual's responsibility and leads to self-reliance and the ability to serve others.

Jewish Position

The United Jewish Communities (UJC) "is the dominant fundraising arm for North American Jewry, and represents 189 Jewish Federations and 400 independent communities across the continent. It reflects the values and traditions of education, leadership, advocacy and social justice, and continuity of community that define the Jewish people."⁶²

In February of 2002 Stephen H. Hoffman, President and CEO of United Jewish Communities joined with the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and others to write a letter to Senators Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) and Rick Santorum (R-PA) in strong support of Congress's efforts to pass faith-based legislation.⁶³

The UJC supports Bush's recognition of faith-based charities as a vital part of social services in America. They support government tax incentives to increase charitable giving to faith-based groups like the IRA Rollover, which would allow a donor to receive a tax deduction for contributing assets from Individual Retirement Accounts directly to

⁶² United Jewish Community, "United Jewish Communities Statement on Bush Administration's Faith-Based Programs Initiative," (5 February 2001), available at www.ujc.org.

⁶³ Catholic Charities USA, "Letter to Senators Lieberman and Santorum," (22 February 2002), Catholic Charities News and Facts, available at www.catholiccharitiesinfo.org.

charities without requiring the donor to first cash out the IRA and paying taxes on the proceeds.⁶⁴

The UJC also supports the expansion of Social Services Block Grants and government efforts to provide technical assistance and capacity building funding for small community-based not-for-profits and faith-based organizations.⁶⁵

In spite of support for some of the faith-based agenda, UJC has some considerable concerns about Charitable Choice legislation. The UJC feels that Charitable Choice does not protect those clients who do not wish to participate in religious practices of the faith-based group providing the service. The concern is that most clients would not be strong enough to insist upon their right to be coerced into participating in religious practices against their will. The UJC's concern is that many clients, rather than putting themselves in a religiously coercive environment, would simply not seek out the social services they desperately need, putting their health and well being at risk.⁶⁶ They feel that the government should not leave the burden on the client seeking social services to withstand the faith-based group, but that the government should provide, well in advance, a secular program that the individual could choose so that they are not required to step foot in a faith-based program to receive services.

The UJC invited their members to participate in the legislative process by contacting their senators and asking them to ensure two things happen in faith-based

⁶⁴ United Jewish Community, "The Faith-Based Initiative: A Mission to Serve People in Need," (July 2001), available at www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=13582.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

legislation. First that, “faith-based organizations delivering government-funded social services must comply with the same standards and regulations as other not-for-profits.” Second, “that the faith-based organizations do not engage in proselytizing or coercive activity requiring clients to participate in religious programming against their will; and that before the government funds a faith-based social service, a similarly funded, accessible, secular social service must be available in the community.”⁶⁷

As Steve Selig, chairman of UJC's Human Services and Social Policy Pillar has written, "We note, however, that once they receive public funds, religious institutions face a different challenge of public scrutiny regarding non-discrimination in the provision of service and separating out the religious content of their program activity.”⁶⁸

Other Jewish groups -- primarily Orthodox -- want faith-based institutions to play a greater role in providing social services and want to lower the wall that separates church and state, as long as minority religions are protected. The Orthodox Union said the Faith-based Initiative would help amend inequities that have affected faith-based groups.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ United Jewish Community, “United Jewish Communities Statement on Bush Administration's Faith-Based Programs Initiative,” (5 February 2001), available at www.ujc.org.

⁶⁹ Sharon Samber, “Bush Supports New Faith-Based Bill; Jewish Groups Give it Mixed Grade,” Washington, (10 February 2002), [JTA], available at www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=30967.

Bush Administration Position

The Bush administration, through its Faith-based Initiative, wants money in the hands of faith-based groups, or at least to make federal money more easily accessible to faith-based groups. The ideology behind this policy is clear as Bush himself said:

I'm a strong proponent of faith-based groups in America, because they're reclaiming America one block at a time. They're helping save one life at a time. They understand the power of changing a person's heart is a way to freedom and independence and to better behavior: Our government should not fear faith-based programs in America, we ought to welcome them.⁷⁰

The Administration wants to fund faith-based groups, believing that these groups will change individuals' hearts and their behavior, leading to freedom and independence. The structure does not need to be changed, simply get money in the hands of faith-based groups and watch the power of compassion change lives.

Summary

There are many factors that flow into the decision faith-based groups make as to whether or not to accept government funds. Some, like the Catholic Church have theology and resources to accept and manage government funds, and they do to the extent of millions of dollars. Others have a theology that lends to accepting government funding, but accept it on a smaller scale due to organizational and practical matters, such as Methodist and Presbyterian. Still others, like the LDS faith, have the organizational and practical capability to accept funds, but their theology prevents them from doing so. And then others, like Jehovah's Witnesses have doctrine that would lend itself to accepting funds (structural causes of poverty from a corrupt system), but have another,

⁷⁰ George W. Bush, (29 July 2002), as quoted in the "White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives" conference manual, San Diego, California (18 February 2003), Section 2 page 3.

more overriding doctrine that prevents it from accepting funds (only Jehovah God coming to earth and setting up his Kingdom can eliminate poverty), even though it may have the organizational and practical ability to do so.

It is interesting to note that in chapter 2, those pushing for Faith-based Initiatives (Olasky, Bush and others) had an individualistic, character-based theology as to the cause of poverty. The belief seemed to be that because poverty was a result of character flaws that faith-based groups would be best equipped to serve the poor and help heal their souls along with giving them a bowl of soup. Through healing souls, poverty would be reduced. Leveling the playing field so churches would have access to government funds would move this work forward in great strides.

But this chapter shows that the denominations most likely to accept government funding are those with a structuralist view of poverty. This is an interesting paradox. What, if anything, can come from this observation with regards to policy issues surrounding faith-based initiatives? The final chapter will look at policy implications and recommendations based on this paradox.

CHAPTER 4

ETHICS OF POVERTY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY: THE STATE, THE CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Looking at Faith-based policies and the responses from various churches leads to a question regarding responsibility for the poor in America. Does the responsibility rest completely on the individual? Should government take care of the poor or should private individuals or groups have the responsibility for their care? These questions have bearing on faith-based policies.

The ethical principles of equality and justice are inherent in the Faith-based Initiative. President Bush's policy insists that faith-based charities should be able to compete on an equal footing with secular groups for public dollars to provide social services that contribute to society being more just and fair. As discussed in previous chapters, the Bush administration believes churches have the great ability to foster change in individuals to lead them out of poverty and on to becoming productive citizens. The policy assumes that money in the hands of those churches would be a good thing as equality and social justice are at stake.

Many groups, such as the ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (AU), believe that "Bush's faith-based plan turns the time-tested

constitutional principle of church-state separation on its ear.”¹ These groups believe government has no business viewing and treating faith-based groups as equal with secular-based groups because the doctrine of separation of church and state demands the government view and treat faith-based groups differently than all other groups. The Constitution, they say, requires government to stay out of the religious affairs of the nation. For these thinkers, the ethics of poverty is not about whether the poor and needy should receive assistance, they definitely should; the ethics of poverty is more about who should assist and how that assistance should be given. Both government and faith-based groups have an interest in assisting the poor and needy of America. But there is tension between how this assistance should take place and whether or not there should be partnering between the state and the church.

The question arises as to who has the ethical responsibility to intervene in the plight of the poor and the needy, bringing them to a more equal basis with the rest of society and in so doing making society more just? Both government and religion feel that responsibility, but which is ultimately ethically responsible? Since both feel responsible, is not partnering a good way to go about it?

Structuralists would probably say government has the greater responsibility for intervening because of the belief that people are poor due to social injustice. As an example, the fact that many children are poor supports this because they are not poor due to fault of their own. Individualists, on the other hand, would probably say that each individual is responsible for his own well being, and because of this, the church is more

¹ Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, AU Press Release, (20 February 2001), available at www.au.org.

responsible to intervene. The church is in the business of healing souls and changing individual character, giving hope and a new life. Because individualists believe people are poor due to their own irresponsibility or sins, the church would seem to be more accountable for assisting them in becoming responsible citizens, repenting of their sins and changing their behavior.

There is no doubt that much of government action is involved in changing individual behavior. The government certainly does not deal exclusively with structural matters. The judicial system's penal code certainly makes attempts to affect individual behavior for the better. Jail time, community service and fines are all means to punish errant behavior and bring about change. Legislation makes strides to alter and change human behavior for the better. Laws formulated against drug abuse, drunk driving, child abuse, fraud, embezzlement, stealing, etc., are all designed to encourage good behavior by individuals in society. Public education is also involved in human behavior. Educating children in regards to citizenship, appropriate behavior, work ethic and socialization are all matters of individual character and behavior. So the government is involved and obviously interested in the individual behavior traits of its citizens at many different levels. It would be absurd to turn over all the judicial, legislative, and education functions of government to churches simply because individual behavior is a major part of the equation. So what, if anything, makes poverty issues different than other human behavior endeavors of the government?

Before answering, it should be noted that it is also absurd to assume that religion is only interested in individual matters of character, ignoring structural factors. Religions exist within the structure of government policies and, as a result, sometimes speak out or

get involved with government policies. An example of this is the current debate in America on policies affecting same-sex marriage. Many religions feel to speak out on the attempted structural change to marriage to include same-sex couples. Abortion, stem-cell research, racial issues and tax-breaks for non-profits are other issues that churches might get involved with on a structural level.

Poverty issues appear to be unique from most other government programs. The main difference is that government policies are not being formulated to give money to churches to make laws or adjudicate them (an exception could be school voucher policies). Neither the government, nor the church wants that. There is not a policy to give money to churches for intervening in other matters involving personal behavior. But is assisting the poor and needy different than these? The reason seems to be that both government and religion have some vested interest in helping the needy. Faith-based groups feel responsible to help the poor, but they do not feel spiritual pressure to make laws, or enforce laws, even if individual behavior is at the heart of these specific government actions. One church's canonized scripture reads:

We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.

We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.

We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same; and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people if a republic, or the will of the sovereign.²

² The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Doctrine and Covenants 134:1-3," (Corporation of the President, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981).

Most churches do not feel called upon to set up a penal system or to write tax codes either. It is probable that most religious organizations would believe that they do not have the right to “try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world’s goods, or to put them in jeopardy of life or limb, or to inflict any physical punishment upon them.”³ Faith-based groups are certainly involved in being the moral voice for society, and by raising that voice they influence government to make moral laws and enforce them appropriately, but they do not make and enforce those laws themselves. They do however, by virtue of scripture, feel duty bound to help the poor and the needy.

A reasonable conclusion then, with regards to poverty policy, could be that if people are poor due to structural factors such as the economy, race and gender inequality, availability of jobs, unemployment, etc., that the church should stay out of it, because the church is not responsible for those factors in society and does not have the means to fix them. Tax money could be spent, with no ethical dilemma, to change structural factors in society to allow more equality and justice. Religious based groups could speak out against structural inequalities in the system, such as inequities in gender or race, in an effort to change them, but beyond that, their scope is limited. If issues are not inherently moral in nature, the church should stay out of it and remain politically neutral. Structural problems can and should be handled with tax money.

On the other side of the issue, if poverty is due to individual character flaws such as laziness, sin, or lack of ambition, then the government should stay out of it because the government has no responsibility or ability to change these things in individuals.

Government can tax and write a check but it cannot heal the bad habits and weaknesses

³ Ibid., 134:10.

that individualists say lead to poverty. Is George Bush a pastor or the U.S. President? Individualists might say it would weaken religious efforts if churches accept tax money. Churches should rely on strong, self-reliant individuals to voluntarily give of their time and means to perform the work of soul saving. This would be spiritual giving for a spiritual problem. Individualist problems can and should be handled with voluntary offerings, not by government funding.

Some interpretation of human nature usually forms the basis of any public policy, and the effectiveness of the policy in practice depends upon the validity of that interpretation or assumption. Obviously, an interpretation of human nature in regards to poverty is forming George Bush's faith-based agenda. As previously discussed in chapter two, his policy is based on an individualist standpoint in that poverty policy should welcome faith-based groups that focus on individuals' sins and weaknesses. The underlying assumption of the policy is that churches with access to more government money would benefit society, healing many social ills, one person at a time. It sounds good, if the assumptions are correct.

Stephen Charles Mott, Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, has the following view of human nature:

Political philosophy...must be based on realism about human nature in the light of the universality of sin. Alongside the created wonder in human life exists a persistent and pernicious tendency toward evil.

Powerful forces prey upon the weak, and human selfishness resists the full costs of the community's obligations. Individual egoism is heightened in group conflict, and sin is disguised and justified as victims are blamed for their own plight.⁴

⁴ Stephen Charles Mott, "Foundations of the Welfare Responsibility of the Government," in *Welfare in America: Christian Perspectives on a Policy in Crisis*, Stanley W. Carelton-Thies and James W. Skillen Editors, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996), 191.

With this view of human nature Mott goes on to describe his beliefs that affect public poverty policy. Mott claims that due to the pernicious tendency toward evil by humans, an exploitive power is exercised wherein greed, dishonesty, use of power and other sins allow genuine human needs to go unmet. (This is interesting because he views sin as the cause of poverty, but universal sin across all members of society, not individual sin on the part of those who are poor and needy.) Because of universal human sinfulness, human rights (defined by Mott as food, shelter, clothing, medical care, rest and social services),⁵ can never be fulfilled by voluntary actions alone. In other words, due to the universality of sin, churches, charities, and individuals will not and cannot meet the needs of the poor in society. Humans are not capable of enough voluntary giving to make that happen. They are too greedy to give, too dishonest to assist others, and lust for power prevents them from helping the poor. As Mott puts it, “a voluntary charity in this corrupt world is an uncertain thing.”⁶ Mott concludes that there should be a sure thing, something for the poor to rely on that ensures a just distribution of resources. To accomplish this, another kind of power is required to thwart the exploitive power caused by human sin.

Mott suggests that this power, this sure thing, to ensure social justice, is the intervening power of the government. Because of the universality of sin, and the lack of voluntary giving, the government is the best entity responsible for and capable of, assisting the poor and needy. The government has the power to intervene between the exploitive power of sinners and the plight of the poor (the poor are not the sinners in his perspective). Mott believes that the government advances justice by changing the balance

⁵ Ibid., 200.

⁶ Ibid., 194.

of power among groups in society. The power to do this comes through the power to tax. Taxing power serves to de-concentrate power through the redistribution of income. Mott suggests that, “the ideal government distributes in proportion to the necessary needs of life so that there is no excess for luxury, nor lack.”⁷ To do this the state must use the system of taxation to redistribute wealth in order to provide directly for the needs of the poor. The government covers our sins and provides for the poor. It is the one sure thing. As a result, voluntary efforts in behalf of the poor may supplement government action but could never replace it.

Mott believes that society can only be just if it protects the good life of each person by providing equal protection to all and removing any barrier to equal opportunity. Mott thinks that the poor have been perennially the victims of injustice and the government must step in because societies’ voluntary charities (churches would be put into this category) do not have the capability to extend justice. Mott sees universal individual sin as the problem, in that it causes structural inequalities that can only be remedied by the government. But Mott leaves us in our sins with no hope of changing, which is not encouraging at all. It is as if Mott sees societies’ problems rooted in sin, but the church cannot motivate the people to repent and give of themselves, so the government must intervene. He has faith in government taxation, but not in voluntary offerings.

Mott believes these principles are firmly rooted in Biblical teaching and suggests that Christian theology requires government care of the poor. He cites the protestant reformation as the time when relief for the poor transitioned from the church to more

⁷ Ibid., 196.

secular involvement. Theology fueled the transition, though at the time there was no separation of church and state as we know it today. Martin Luther taught the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith. A Christian could not “earn” a spot in heaven by works; it only would come by God’s grace through faith. Luther viewed the churches’ activities in assisting the poor as an expression of seeking salvation through merit. (Merit being a belief that good works instead of faith brings salvation. Luther believed salvation could not be earned through good works, but is rather a divine gift. Assisting the poor was considered to be seeking salvation by good works.) The transition of care for the poor to secular government was actually a way to purify the church of its merit seeking assistance of the poor. Luther gave authority to the state in socioeconomic matters that the church had previously held and he enthusiastically supported maintenance of the poor to be funded by taxation.⁸ So if understand correctly, Mott believes the government must be responsible for helping the poor and needy because if clergy or church members helped, it would be merit seeking, apparently a bigger sin than ignoring the poor. Maybe that is the reason no one will voluntarily assist the poor, it would be merit seeking and that just cannot be. So the church relies on government to remain clean and pure and holy? Is something amiss? Is this type of attitude and belief behind the Faith-based Initiatives? Does George W. Bush, ironically, believe that the church is the answer to social ills, but that the government is the salvation of the church?

Mott also cited John Calvin’s view of the state as a humanizing force that, because of sin, is a “means of preservation, now indeed indispensable.”⁹ Once again, if

⁸ Ibid., 206.

understood, Mott says the church is reliant on the government for assistance to the poor and the needy. Mott believes that the protestant reformation gave strong theological affirmation, and even some working models, of the state's responsibility to provide for the poor.

Ezra Taft Benson, former Secretary of Agriculture for eight years under Dwight D. Eisenhower, and former Apostle and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the late '80's and early '90's, had an opposing view of government intervention in the lives of the poor and the needy. Benson rejects the idea that government has responsibility to care for the poor, especially from a theological standpoint. Benson even suggests that government taking over care of the poor could cause spiritual decay in society. He rejects the idea that individuals won't voluntarily care for the poor. Benson says:

Even among free nations we see the encroachment of government upon the lives of citizenry by excessive taxation and regulation, all done under the guise that the people would not willfully or charitably distribute their wealth, so the government must take it from them. We further observe promises by the state of security, whereby men are taken care of from the womb to the tomb rather than earning this security by the "sweat of their brow;" deception in high places, with the justification that "the end justifies the means"; atheism; agnosticism; immorality; and dishonesty. The attendant results of such sin and usurpation of power lead to a general distrust of government officials, an insatiably, covetous spirit for more and more material wants, personal debt to satisfy this craving, and the disintegration of the family unit. Yes, we live today amidst the times the Savior spoke of, times when "the love of many wax cold, and iniquity shall abound."¹⁰

Benson argues that the Preamble of the Constitution makes clear that government has no innate powers or privileges to do anything and that its only source of authority is from the people who created it. Because government powers come from the people,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, (Bookcraft, West Valley City, 1988), 697.

Benson believes that the people can only give to government such powers that they have as individuals in the first place. The proper function of government then, is limited to the sphere in which an individual citizen has the right to act. Benson declares that government “cannot claim the power to redistribute money or property, or to force reluctant citizens to perform acts of charity against their will. Government is created by the people and no individual possesses the power to take another’s wealth or to force others to do well, so no government has the right to do such things either.”¹¹ Benson believes that welfare programs and programs that redistribute wealth do not fit into the proper function of government. Taxing for the formation of a police force and jails would be appropriate, as protection is an appropriate government function. An individual person cannot take money from another citizen and give it to a church, individuals do not have that right, and therefore government should not have that right either. Benson would probably have argued that the Faith-based Initiative is a violation of basic rights in that the government is taking money from individuals and giving it to various churches.

Benson believes sound theology leads to the individualist approach:

Some people ask me, as a Church leader, why we seek to change individuals when there are such large problems around us, such as the so-called urban crisis. Decaying cities are simply a delayed reflection of individuals suffering under a decadent attitude.

The laws of God give emphasis to the improvement of the individual as the only real way to bring about improvement in society. Until we focus on basic principles, little progress will be made. So much, therefore, depends on one’s basic desires, attitudes, and self-discipline.¹²

Change, Benson believes, must come from the inside out not from the outside in.

He disagrees with the “host of do-gooders, who constantly criticize our free choice

¹¹ Ibid., 672.

¹² Ibid.

system, ready to solve all human problems with legislation, willing to impose their version of the millennium on you and me, unwilling to rely on the judgment of the individual.”¹³

Benson felt strongly enough about these ideas that in 1969 he likened the welfare state to an out of control airplane. Cutting the engines in flight would not be wise, but he felt that the plane should be flown back by lowering the altitude, gradually reducing the speed and brought in for a smooth landing. He said welfare-state programs could not be cut and dropped, but he did propose an immediate freeze on all welfare-state programs at their current levels making sure no new programs were added. Current programs would be allowed to run their course with absolutely no renewals. Programs with no definite terms would be phased out. He felt the bulk of the phasing out could be done in ten years and the entire project completed in twenty years.¹⁴

Benson, and those who think as he does, would rely on individual offerings to churches to fund their social service vision. Religious based groups could change society by changing individuals, one at a time, from the inside out. Take the slums out of the people and the people will take themselves out of the slums.

It is evident that assigning ethical responsibility for intervening in the plight of the poor is governed by one's belief as to the reasons for poverty. A core issue is whether or not churches are capable, through voluntary offerings, to extend social justice in light of the fact that we the people tend to be too greedy, selfish and uncaring to perform voluntarily. Must the government step in? This answer might determine whether or not

¹³ Ibid., 628.

¹⁴ Ibid., 694.

the Faith-based Initiative is a good idea. The answer to all these questions will be strongly influenced by one's beliefs regarding the reasons for poverty. The final chapter will take these considerations and look at some conclusions and potential policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, TAXING POWER VERSUS OFFERING POWER

Is the Faith-based Initiative good public policy for religion and compassion in America?

As determined in previous chapters, the answer from the religious community to the question is based on two factors. The first was the church's overall theological system. How does the church's doctrine and teachings regarding the poor affect the response? How the faith-based group specifically viewed the cause of poverty, structural or individual influenced the decision. If the church put the cause of poverty on the shoulders of those who are poor due to laziness, drug abuse, out of wedlock marriages, etc., the view was individual responsibility. If a church viewed poverty as simply the result of an imperfect economic/social system that leaves certain people out, the view was structural. The second factor was practical matters. Does the church have the professional staffing, adequate facilities and expertise to effectively seek government funding? Both of these issues had bearing upon whether the church sought government funding.

Going back to that day in February 2003 at the Conference on Faith-based Initiatives in San Diego, everyone there was looking for money to fund a theologically based social service vision. But were these religions looking in the wrong direction by

looking to the government? Why were they not inviting the lay members to provide time, resources and love? This question was asked to those around the table, and was answered with disbelieving head shakes and near gasps of, “Oh no, they (the members) won’t give, so we don’t even try asking them.” Though this is surely not the attitude of all church members, everyone at the table that day was in agreement; don’t ask because they won’t give. Perhaps that attitude is what brought them to the conference seeking government funding. Maybe the churches attending the conference simply did not have resources to meet the needs of the community. Either way, the attitude of “don’t ask, because they won’t give,” was discouraging. If religion, the force in America that leads us to look to a higher power and reach out to our fellowmen, does not have the ability to motivate Americans to give willingly to the needy, who or what does? Recognizing of course that there are non-religious individuals who give to the poor and atheists that give to the poor, but in moving society as a whole, if religion can’t what can? And that is why government funding may be the answer for more and more religions. If the people at the table represented religion in America, it seems ironic that these faith-based groups lack faith. They evidently must not have faith in the power of religion to motivate the lay member. Their faith must be only faith in the government, faith in taxation. It seems to be a faithless faith. Since the belief is that church members won’t give, the answer is to turn to the government. Government has the power, through taxation, to get money from those unwilling church members. But where is the faith that God and theological teachings could motivate members to give? Government is a strange “middle-man” for faith-based groups.

Ironically, George W. Bush believes in the power of religion to change lives, but does not believe that people within those religions are changed enough to give of themselves. It seems odd. No one knows all of Bush's thoughts, but he evidently believes that churches are not receiving enough resources to provide ample social services to meet the growing need in America for the healing of the soul. So those who are trying to save people from a way of life that leads to poverty, ironically, do not believe that those amongst their congregation will sacrifice willingly to help out the cause. It is faithless faith, trying to help change individuals for the better, but at the same time not believing you could even ask church members to give. It seems that many of these church leaders believe those in poverty are poor due to character weakness and that those not in poverty are too greedy, self-centered or uncaring to give. Government and clergy become the heroes, the rest of us are morally weak. Is this really the case?

Faith-based policies are missing the mark for at least two other reasons. If a policy brings a paradoxical result, it seems that the policy is misguided. The first paradox of the Faith-based Initiative is that the policy is individualist in nature, but religions that have a more structuralist view are seeking the funding. The faith-based policy emerged from an individualist approach to poverty as shown in chapter two. Bush believes if churches have more money in hand, they can heal more of the souls of the people who are poor, sending them on to a new life of self-reliance and spirituality. But when the response of the faith-based community was considered in Chapter Three, it showed that it was those churches with mainly structuralist beliefs that are actively involved in seeking the funding. This basic paradox leads to the conclusion that the policy is misguided. It is

interesting to note that the churches that mainly think like Bush are in general not seeking the funding.

The second paradox is the policy's goal to put religion in a more favorable light in the public square and create an army of compassion in the process. However, as suggested above, inherent in the policy is that Americans are not compassionate (which is ironic since Bush's goal is to create an army of compassion). Americans will not give freely and willingly, why else would churches need more money? Bush's policy will actually cause churches to become more dependent on government funds and less dependent on the voluntary offerings of their members, thus limiting their spiritual power. A church that seeks government funding is admitting that it is not a self-reliant church, that its members are not contributing and that it is dependent on government help in order to sustain its programs and help its people. This sets a bad example, as this is exactly what church programs are trying to teach the people they are helping to overcome; dependency. A non-self-reliant church, dependant on government funds, helping an individual become self-reliant and free is a paradox. Dependency stifles spirituality. A church dependent on government, encouraging spirituality by teaching independence and self-reliance is a paradox. Though sincere in its desires, the policy is misguided.

It is assumed that the goal of the church is to improve the spirituality of its members by offering programs that lead to self-reliance; self-reliance being that a person is striving to use God-given abilities to provide for themselves so as not to be dependent on others for existence. Self-reliance is tied very closely to freedom and spirituality. Self-reliance is not the end of spirituality, but the means to spirituality. An individual could be

totally independent in basic temporal matters such as food and clothing and yet lack all other desirable attributes such as kindness, giving and compassion. Perhaps we have seen this in recent corporate collapses, self-reliant people who are corrupt morally. Self-reliance is not the end goal of giving assistance to the needy. Self-reliance does however lead to freedom. Once self-reliant, one has the freedom to make choices. In order to be spiritual, one must use that freedom to make the choice to help others. One church leader described it this way:

Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.

There is an interdependence between those who have and those who have not. The process of giving exalts the poor and humbles the rich. In the process, both are sanctified. The poor, released from the bondage and limitations of poverty, are enabled as free men to rise to their full potential, both temporally and spiritually. The rich, by imparting of their surplus, participate in the eternal principle of giving. Once a person has been made whole or self-reliant, he reaches out to aid others, and the cycle repeats itself.

We are all self-reliant in some areas and dependent in others. Therefore, each of us should strive to help others in areas where we have strengths. At the same time, pride should not prevent us from graciously accepting the helping hand of another when we have a real need. To do so denies another person the opportunity to participate in a sanctifying experience.¹

Church policies should lead to church self-reliance; if that is what is being asked of those they serve, it should be required of the church. If a church accepts government money, is that suggesting that its members are not giving enough voluntarily so as to meet the needs of the poor? By accepting government funding they are denying their members the sanctifying experience of giving willingly. They are denying the very thing they are attempting to provide. By giving money and making tremendous efforts to make

¹ Marion G. Romney, *The Celestial Nature of Self-reliance*, The Ensign Magazine, November 1982, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

money available to churches, Bush could possibly make a welfare state (dependent churches) of some churches in America. That may be an extreme statement, but that it is at the least, the direction it would go. George Bush is taking the spiritual element away, the very element he wants to cultivate, by allowing voluntary giving from self-reliant Americans to be stifled. The excuse for not giving will be that the government and professional clergy are taking care of the poor. The lay member can therefore be at peace because the poor are being cared for. Individuals would not be offering anything because tax dollars are making a difference. How can an army of compassion be built this way? The difference between having welfare taken from us by taxation and voluntarily contributing it by choice is the difference between spirituality and slavery. The Bible has a parable that might be appropriate, the parable of the Good Samaritan:

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.²

The government must allow its people the choice to pass by. In the parable there was no legislature on the side of the road taking money from passers-by, giving the

² Luke 10:30-37, King James Version of Bible.

money to clergy in order to help the man. In fact, in the parable, clergy even passed by. We must have a choice. Clergy should teach true principles of giving and caring for the poor and then invite their people to give. Clergy must also let members choose to give by offering what they have or to pass by on the other side.

The issue is between taxing power and voluntary offering power. Which power will lead to an army of compassion and strengthened religious commitment in America? Taxing won't accomplish this for there is no sanctifying power in taxation, even if tax money is given to a church to assist the poor. The Bush plan of giving tax money to churches to help them perform their social services will negatively affect compassion.

A lifeguard analogy, borrowed from John Arthur,³ helps draw some conclusions. Arthur uses an example of a drowning child in the water at the beach. On the beach there is a lifeguard and an individual who came to the beach that day to sun and relax. Both see the drowning child. Now suppose neither the lifeguard nor the visitor to the beach make any attempts to save the child. We would all probably point to the lifeguard with condemnation and let the beach visitor off the hook:

Here there is a clear sense in which the drowning victim may claim a right to have another do his utmost to save him. An agreement was reached whereby the lifeguard *accepted* the responsibility for the victim's welfare. The guard, in a sense, took on the goals of the swimmers as his own. To fail to aid is a special sort of injustice that the passer-by does not do.⁴

It may be safe to assume that the lifeguard would go out and assist the drowning child. Most, if not all, lifeguards would do so. Why? As Arthur noted above, it is because

³ John Arthur, in *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach*, Larry May and Shari Collins Sharratt Editors, (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1994), 163.

⁴ Ibid.

they made an “agreement...whereby [they] accepted the responsibility for the victim’s welfare.” If we take this analogy and relate it to helping the poor and the needy, the poor and needy are the drowning child. Who are the lifeguards and who are the “passers-by?” Some argue that the government is the lifeguard we have paid to take care of the poor so we can relax our conscience, too sun on the beach if you will. Some argue that the lifeguard is unnecessary and that the individual should have learned how to swim (provide for himself so he is not poor) before going in the water. Some may argue that the lifeguard is the clergy of the various faith-based groups who set up programs to help the poor. The key to an army of compassion being formed is in helping individuals within faith-based groups, the lay member not professional clergy, to make an agreement (a covenant in faith-based language) whereby the lay member accepts the responsibility for the welfare of others. This of course would not abdicate the individual in poverty of personal responsibility.

On the beach it is appropriate and necessary to pay a professional lifeguard to accept the responsibility to watch the waters in order to save anyone drowning. The professional lifeguard on watch enables beach goers to relax and enjoy the day. In assisting the poor and the needy this can’t work if an army of compassion is to be formed. Taxing as a way of funding faith-based group’s assistance to the poor and the needy leaves the lay member (non-government employee and non-professional clergy) out of the loop. Money is given to clergy or professionals but this leaves out everyone else. Like the beach goers who can relax because a “paid lifeguard” is on duty, the lay member relaxes because someone else (the government and the clergy or paid professionals) are taking care of everything. Taxing and giving that money to churches may help, but won’t

build and activate an army of compassion. Being taxed is too impersonal, too easy, and too mechanical. We need more. Bush's policy seems to leave out the lay member, leave out the army. Ironically he believes that being poor is an individualistic problem and yet he doesn't believe that the lay members will help of their own free will so government funds need to be given to clergy and professionals to do the job.

Faith-based groups should refuse government funds and instead make attempts to enlist everyone as a "lifeguard" to the poor and the needy. Instead of the Faith-based Initiative giving federal funds to religious based programs, churches should reject direct federal funding (at the same time welcoming any benefits that help them keep what money they do raise themselves such as "non-profit tax-exempt status") and teach their congregations the principle of free will offerings. Short-term crucial needs (food, shelter, and clothing) would be filled with voluntary offerings. Long-term skills needed to help the needy to be self-reliant would require not only a generous offering of money but also offerings of time and talent as well. This is really the only way to do it in order to build an army of compassion: taking care of short term needs with funds given willingly, by free will offering not by tax, then teaching skills for long term well being. This is the way to form a real army of compassion that will make a difference. The lay members, our neighbors and friends giving a generous free will offering to take care of immediate short term needs and then with personal time and talent, teaching the needy skills to help them become self-reliant. When a person achieves self-reliance he is then in a position to join the army of compassion and begin to contribute offerings and give of their time and talent to assist others in joining the army.

These persons are “willing to bear one another’s burdens that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁵

The contrast is between taxing power and voluntary giving power. Bush would do well to leave churches alone and trust that the American people, when taught well by theology, will have a change of heart and actually offer something voluntarily. Spirituality will increase in America as the rich will be humbled and the poor exalted. Then people will be offering not coerced silver, but their life.

A prediction was offered in the opening chapter that churches which had the same theological underpinnings that the Bush policy evolved from would be in favor of faith-based funding for their churches social service programs. Churches that disagreed with the Bush interpretation of human poverty would not want to accept federal funding for their social service programs.

This prediction was shown to be in error as churches with behaviorist views toward poverty in America tend not to accept funding while churches with more structuralist views were more likely to accept funding, assuming the institutional factors prevented them from seeking funds.

Faith-based policies, though well intended, are paradoxical and on the policies own assumptions, are inconsistent. Faith-based groups would do well to reject funding from the government and look to the lay members resources, talents and time. An army of compassion, as Bush desires, would then be able to begin formation.

⁵ Mosiah 18:8-9, *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Thomas Clark Wilson

Home Address:

5740 Jackie Drive
Las Vegas, Nevada 89156

Degrees:

Bachelor of Science, Family Studies/Family Relations, 1991
Weber State University

Thesis Title: The Faith Community Response to the Bush Administrations Faith-based Initiative

Thesis Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Dr. Ted Jelen, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Jerry Simich, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Kenneth Fernandez, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Vernon Mattson, Ph. D.