CHAPTER 3

Religion and Social Welfare Policy

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Every week more than 300,000 congregations, mosques, temples, and ashrams meet to conduct religious services across the United States. Over 80 percent of the American population report a religious affiliation, over 90 percent report a personal belief in the existence of a supreme being, and more than $179.4 billion was donated to churches and charities in 2003. Not only are the American people the most religious western democracy in the world, the variety of religious expression in this country is unequaled.

There are more Jews practicing their faith in the United States than there are in Israel. There are more Muslim adherents in the United States than there are in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, or the United Arab Emirates. There were almost 1,200 congregations practicing the Bahai faith in 2000, over 1,600 Buddhist worship centers, and over 600 Hindu temples. To one accustomed to the variety of religious expressions and practices that are part of contemporary America, it may be difficult to recognize that this diversity has not always been the case.

While we understand and appreciate the important contributions made by the world’s religions to American social policy, the vast majority of this chapter will focus on Christianity. This is not because we are Christocentric. On the contrary. However, American social welfare history has been more strongly influenced by Christianity than by any other world religion. In order to understand how religion has influenced the development of social welfare policy, it is necessary to understand the major historical trends that have shaped religion in America. As such, this chapter examines the religious roots for the development of the welfare state, and how changes in religious thought and expression have been reflected in social welfare policies.

**Religious Antecedents of Welfare Statism**

The roots of social welfare go deep into the soil of Judeo-Christian tradition. It was the disfavored son Cain who repudiated his responsibility to his brother with the defensive, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Societal structures in ancient Judaism encoded protections for the most powerless (e.g., the poor, the orphan, and the widow). The poor were allowed to glean the remains and corners of the fields at harvest time, and brothers-in-law were commanded to marry their brother’s widow and to raise her children as his own.

Christian traditions build on Jewish foundations. Jesus himself is said to value the “cup of cold water” given in faith, and early gatherings of Christians were reputedly communitarian in that they appear to have shared material provision for daily living in an egalitarian fashion. “No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.” In fact, there are interpreters of religious history that attribute the survival of Jewish and Christian sects during the first and second centuries to this communitarian impulse.

While there are other traditions of compassion that could be related to the development of welfare statism, the dominance of Judeo-Christian compassion and community is without peer as the source in Western societies. The eventual dominance of the Christian tradition in Europe, and the near-identification of church with state government during the medieval period, led to the gradual assumption of government responsibility for social welfare.
given apprenticeships, the able-bodied were given work, and the worthy poor were provided either indoor (institutional) or outdoor (home) relief. Finally, the law ordered local governments to assume responsibility for the needy.9 The English Poor Laws formed the basis for statutes that were enacted in both colonial and postcolonial America.10

Church, State, and Social Welfare in Colonial America

Most settlers in colonial America were poor; however, unlike their European ancestors, they were not destitute.11 The undeveloped resources of the frontier provided opportunities for colonists that were not available in the social milieu of Europe, and, therefore, pauperism was not widespread. According to Robert Morris, fewer than 1 percent of American colonists received help from outside sources.12 The new frontier provided ample opportunity for work, and the ready availability of work allowed for the reinterpretation of European religious perspectives.

European Protestants valued work. Martin Luther viewed work as a responsibility to God. Furthermore, work conferred dignity and was a “calling” by God. In Luther’s view, a person served God by doing the work of his vocation. Therefore, those who are able-bodied and yet unemployed are sinners. John Calvin took Luther’s argument one step further by claiming that work carried out the will of God and, as such, would ultimately help to create God’s kingdom on earth. According to both Luther and Calvin, God-fearing people must work regardless of their wage or type of employment.13

God commanded work, America provided opportunity, and economic success became a sign of divine favor. This Protestant ethic (Roman Catholics were less than 2 percent of the population in 1776) fueled the creation of a work-oriented society and provided a religious foundation for the condemnation of the poor.14 If prosperity was a sign of God’s favor, then poverty was a sign of God’s judgment. When assistance was required, it was provided on a case-by-case basis in town meetings. When the number of cases increased as a result of indentured servants and abandoned children, the English system of overseers was introduced. It was not uncommon for the town council to auction off the poor to neighboring farmers, apprentice out children, place the poor in private homes at public expense, or send them to privately operated almshouses. Settlers believed that children should be part of a family unit, and thus the practice of indenture became widespread; however, by the end of the colonial period, the locus of responsibility for the poor began to shift from the town to the province.15 It was inconceivable until the mid-1800s that there could be any federal responsibility for social welfare.

The Second Great Awakening

The nineteenth century opened (1800–1830) with a period of unusually intense religious fervor termed the Second Great Awakening. At least in part a reaction to the disestablishment of religion codified in the Bill of Rights (eight of the original 13 colonies had an established church on the European pattern) and in part millennial enthusiasm, the religion sparked by the Second Great Awakening contributed to the a general spirit of reform.16 The Puritans’ vision of America as “a city set on a hill” was renewed across the nation. America’s destiny was to be a pure and holy nation.

Church attendance doubled in comparison to the revolutionary era,17 but the organizational structure of most denominations was still quite rudimentary. Those denominations with the most adherents in 1776 were in serious decline, and the more evangelistic denominations were on the rise. In 1776 Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians made up 55.1 percent of religious adherents; by 1850 these denominations represented only 19.1 percent. The Baptists and Methodists, who made up 19 percent of adherents in 1776, had grown to 55 percent by 1850. Catholics, who encompassed less than 2 percent of the population in 1776, in spite of western expansion into Texas and French Catholic lands to the Mississippi River, remained a modest minority of 14 percent in 1850.18

Voluntary associations were formed to promote causes the existing denominational structures could not support. For example, the American Board for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Tract Society (1814), the American Bible Society (1816), and the American Sunday School Union (1824) were organized.19 However, this optimistic religious fervor was not contained solely within the churches and religious endeavors, but was also channeled into moral and social reform.

From his pulpit at Hanover Street Congregational Church in Boston, Lyman Beecher (1775–1863) railed against moral license. Largely due to his efforts, the Connecticut Society for the Reformation
of Morals (1823) and later the American Temperance Union (1836) were formed.\(^\text{20}\) The casual and heavy drinking of alcohol that had been the American custom since the first colonists came under attack. Abstinence from all strong drink became the new moral standard, if not the actual practice, of the average American citizen. It would be more than a century before the temperance movement would culminate in the 18th Amendment prohibiting the manufacturing, transportation, or sale of alcoholic beverages.\(^\text{21}\)

The tone was set for future clashes between church and state by the New England Sabbatarian campaign (1828–1832). Although ultimately unsuccessful, the clergy-led campaign to end mail delivery on Sunday did “recruit moral reformers and give them their political baptism.”\(^\text{22}\) “They raised funds, held rallies, published tracts, signed petitions, and failed. . . .”\(^\text{23}\) This experience was to prove invaluable for abolitionists that followed, and according to James A. Morone, established a new institutional symbiosis between private organizations and the public bureaucracy that was instrumental in melding local and national interests in this geographically dispersed nation.\(^\text{24}\)

Perhaps no reform movement shows more clearly the intricate interweaving of religion and politics more than the abolition movement. While the former editor of a small Baptist temperance journal, William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), thundered against the evils of slavery in his \textit{Public Liberator} and Journal of the Times (in press from 1831–1843), Charles G. Finney (1792–1875) led religious revivals throughout the northern states that led converts to support the abolition movement. Many, if not the majority, of these converts were women who stepped forward with Garrison’s support to take an active role in the leadership of the movement.\(^\text{25}\)

While there was little sympathy for the abolitionists in the southern states, the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening had its influence. The Cane Ridge camp meeting in Kentucky (1801) is often cited as the beginning of the awakening, and its influence was felt in both Tennessee and Ohio.\(^\text{26}\) The Baptists and Methodists were quick to adopt the revival patterns that fueled their rapid growth. For the first time conversion efforts were directed toward the slave population of the south with considerable success. Sydney Ahlstrom notes that “the evangelization of the slaves was prosecuted with increased vigor” as though it was a direct response to northern abolitionists.\(^\text{27}\)

Three products of the Second Great Awakening had a lasting influence on what was to become social welfare policy. First, the religious impulse for reform was channeled into private organizations attempting to affect public change. Second, a cadre of female leaders were mobilized and trained. Third, an African American clergy began to form to lead the African American converts. While the egalitarianism associated with the religious revival had produced tumult, social welfare reform proceeded at a slower pace.

\section*{The Civil War Era}

Those denominations with national constituencies split over the slavery issue prior to the beginning of the Civil War. In 1845 the Methodists and Baptists divided into autonomous northern and southern denominations. The Presbyterians followed in 1857. Those denominations without national membership (e.g., Congregationalists, Unitarians, and Universalists), those whose congregational polity had yet to produce denominational structures (e.g., Jews and Disciples of Christ), and those that were withdrawn or isolated from public life (e.g., Latter Day Saints and Mennonites) did not separate into distinct denominations. Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Catholics did not take a denominational stand on slavery prior to the outbreak of war in 1860. They did not split into distinct national churches until there were two separate nations—the United States and the Confederate States of America.\(^\text{28}\)

During the course of the Civil War (1860–1864), the evangelistic fervor of the Second Great Awakening was rekindled. Soldiers on both sides of the conflict required assistance, and the existing churches and private organizations were generous in meeting these needs. In the North the Christian Commission raised more than $3 million in cash, millions more in supplies and services, and recruited over 5,000 volunteers to assist Northern soldiers. While the work of the Southern churches is less well documented, the religious support was no less fervent. Linus P. Brockett wrote in his 1864 book, \textit{The Philanthropic Results of the War in America}, “neither in ancient nor modern times has there been so vast an outpouring of a nation’s wealth for the care, the comfort, and the physical and moral welfare of those who have fought the nation’s battles or been the sufferers from its condition of war.”\(^\text{29}\) This philanthropic impulse was to continue to influence America’s early social welfare for some time.
For example, Dorothea Dix, a Sunday School teacher, led a campaign to reform the care of the mentally ill. She was successful in lobbying for state actions, but became convinced that federal assistance was needed due to the large expenditures required. In 1854 both houses of Congress passed a bill to assist the mentally ill. It was vetoed by President Franklin Pierce with these words, “If Congress has the power to make provisions for the indigent insane . . . it has the same power for the indigent who are not insane. . . . I cannot find any authority in the Constitution for making the Federal Government the great almoner of public charity throughout the United States.” Federal responsibility for social welfare was to develop slowly and gradually.

However, the Civil War did usher in a new period for relief activities. Families who had lost a breadwinner or who had a breadwinner return from the war permanently disabled could not be blamed for their misfortunes. As a response to this hardship, localities passed laws that raised funds for the sick and needy and, in some instances, for the founding of homes for disabled soldiers. Another concern was the increasing numbers of freed slaves, and freedman relief societies with religious ties were organized in most northern cities during the first year of the war.

Other welfare issues during the Civil War included the disease and filth rampant in army camps and hospitals and the shortage of trained medical personnel. In an effort to remedy this situation, Unitarian minister Henry W. Bellows and a group of citizens (mainly women) organized the U.S. Sanitary Commission in 1861, the first important national public health group. Functioning as a quasi-governmental body, the commission was financed and directed by the private voluntary sector. Working initially in the area of preventive health education, the commission eventually became involved in serving the needs of soldiers.

Another social welfare institution that emerged from the Civil War was the Freedmen’s Bureau. By the close of the war, political leaders realized that the emancipation of millions of slaves would create serious social problems. Former slaves having no occupational training, land, or jobs would require assistance. In 1865, following the earlier example of local freedman’s relief societies, Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. The Freedmen’s Bureau, as it was commonly called, was responsible for directing a program of temporary relief for the duration of the war and one year afterward. After a bitter struggle, Congress extended the Freedmen’s Bureau for an additional six years.

Under General Oliver Howard the bureau performed a variety of services designed to help African Americans make the transition from slavery to freedom. For example, the bureau served as an emergency relief center that distributed 22 million rations to needy Southerners. The bureau also functioned as an African American employment agency, a settlement agency, a health center that employed doctors and operated hospitals, an educational agency that encouraged the funding of African American colleges and provided financial aid, and, finally, as a legal agency that maintained courts in which civil and criminal cases involving African Americans were heard. The Freedmen’s Bureau set an important precedent for federal involvement in a variety of human services. In 1872 the bureau was dissolved by Congress. Northern denominations continued the work, sponsoring thousands of educational missionaries to teach in African American schools, and founding Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Morehouse College and Atlanta University in Georgia, Talladega College in Alabama, Tougaloo University in Mississippi, Hampton Institute in Virginia, and Fisk University in Tennessee.

Following the war and the end of Reconstruction in 1877, only the Catholic and Episcopal churches immediately reunited. Methodists reunited in 1939, Presbyterians in 1983, and the division between northern and southern Baptists continues to this day. Further divisions occurred as each denomination tended to segregate African Americans. The Colored Primitive Baptists (1866), the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church (1869), and the National Baptist Convention (1895) joined the older African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bethel (1816) and African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion (1821) as institutional organizations for African Americans. By 1900 2.7 million out of 8.3 million African Americans would identify with one of these denominations.

The Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Although Catholic immigration increased the size of this denomination until it was the largest in America by 1890, the Protestant hegemony over America was unchallenged. Protestant discrimination led to Catholic sectarianism. Parochial schools, Catholic
versions of professional organizations and semi-professional guilds, even a Catholic alternative to fraternal lodges “created a parallel society within which [Catholics] were protected from Protestant insults as well as from Protestant influences.” As late as 1866, white, American Protestant denominations were capable of forming into a single ecumenical association called the Evangelical Alliance to assert “the claim that Protestantism was the only true religion of the republic.” This alliance was short-lived, but provided the development of a Protestant confidence in large-scale organizations and affirmed an “optimism about realizing God’s kingdom in this world.” Other circumstances—social, philosophical, and theological—in the late nineteenth century would cause this optimism to crumble.

Immigration and industrialization made significant impacts on Protestant optimism. Prior to industrialization, most people lived in small, rural communities with an array of institutions that afforded a high degree of self-sufficiency. Chief among these institutions were the local churches. Survival necessitated a degree of solidarity, or interdependence, and the local churches were an apt institution to fill this need. From 1890 to 1920, 22 million immigrants came to the United States. At the same time, the American people became more urban. Seventy-five percent of foreign immigrants lived in the cities and, during the decade following 1920, 6 million people moved from farms to cities. Community solidarity was no longer the norm, and an urban/rural dichotomy became more apparent in the Protestant denominations.

Philosophically, many people looked to the developing social sciences for guidance in redefining social policy. There, prominent scholars drew lessons from the natural sciences that could be used for purposes of social engineering. Borrowing from biology, some American proponents of the new science of sociology applied the idea of natural selection to social affairs.

Social Darwinism was a bastard outgrowth of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution as described in his 1859 classic, The Origin of Species. Social theorists such as Herbert Spencer and America’s William Graham Sumner reasoned that if Darwin’s laws of evolution determined the origin and development of species, then they might also be applied to understanding the laws of society.

Applying Darwin’s rules to society and then adapting laissez-faire principles of economics to sociology led to a problematic set of assumptions. First, if the “survival of the fittest” (a term coined by Spencer) was a law governing the lower species, then it must also govern the higher species. Because subsidizing the poor allowed them to survive, this circumvented the law of nature, and because the poor reproduced more rapidly than the middle classes, society was thus subsidizing its own demise. Social Darwinists believed essentially that the poor would eventually overrun society and bring down the general level of civilization.

Social Darwinists believed that, although unfortunate, the poor must pay the price demanded by nature and be allowed to die out. According to the Social Darwinists, social welfare thwarts nature’s plan of evolutionary progress toward higher forms of social life. Speaking for many intellectuals, the British theorist Herbert Spencer drew this conclusion:

It seems hard that widows and orphans should be left to struggle for life or death. Nevertheless, when regarded not separately but in connexion with the interests of universal humanity, these harsh fatalities are seen to be full of beneficence the same beneficence which brings to early graves the children of diseased parents, and singles out the intemperate and the debilitated as the victims of an epidemic.

Social Darwinism in the north, and white indifference to the freedman’s condition in the south, set a secular tone for the nation that denied the most basic assumption of Protestant optimism—that America was to be a holy nation, a “city set upon a hill.” The Protestant establishment was not unanimous in its response to these threats and began to separate into what would become mainline and evangelical traditions.

This cleavage among Protestants was to be accelerated by theological conflicts. German higher criticism challenged the infallibility of scripture. Evolution provided a natural alternative to supernatural explanations as did Freudian psychology and Marxian socialism. The success of the scientific method elevated confidence in human reason. Protestants responded in two ways. First, conservative, evangelical theologians reversed to traditional interpretations. Biblical infallibility, miracles, and the existence of the supernatural were reasserted. Conversion and personal piety were emphasized as essential elements of Christian faith. Within this religious framework, poverty was related to improvidence: People were poor because they engaged in drinking, slothfulness, licentious behavior, and gambling.
This evangelical Protestant response to theological challenges was not without opposition. A movement known as the Social Gospel emerged. Composed of theologians concerned with the abuses created by industrialization and the excesses of capitalism, Social Gospelists such as Josiah Strong, Graham Taylor, and others believed that the church should recapture the militant spirit of Christ by taking on the issues of social justice and poverty. The critique posed by the Social Gospelists called for fair play and simple justice for the worker.44

Proponents of the Social Gospel movement maintained that churches wrongfully stressed spirituality rather than morality.45 The condemnation of classical economics, business ethics, and the lawlessness of the plutocracy was centered on a moral rather than a spiritual plane. For the Social Gospelists, social reformation could not occur without a regeneration of character.46 Although the movement contained degrees of radicalism, all Social Gospelists were moved by a sense of social crisis, and all believed in the necessity of a Christian solution.47

At the turn of the twentieth century, an outside observer may have had great difficulty in identifying the distinction between these two Protestant factions. Both were heavily committed to the tradition of religious social relief. Postmillennialism, the belief that Christian preaching will result in a gradually and steadily improving society so that, when Christ returns a second time, God’s kingdom will be established without additional radical change, was the dominant eschatological view.48

The cleavage began to be apparent in 1908 when the more conservative and evangelical denominations declined to join the Federal Council of Churches.49 Walter Rauschenbusch’s 1907 book, Christianity and the Social Crisis, provided a ready statement of the Social Gospel that was later countered by publication of twelve volumes called The Fundamentals (1910–1915) that were distributed without charge to Protestant ministers.50 Postmillennial optimism did not survive the first world war among evangelical Protestants who began to embrace dispensational premillennialism. This new eschatological view, originating with the Englishman John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) and popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible, expected human society to become steadily more ungodly and evil until, in a secret rapture of the true Christians, a seven-year period of tribulation would signal the second return of Christ.51 By 1920 evangelical Protestants had discontinued most social relief work, at least in part, as a means of distinguishing themselves from the more public and liberal theology of the mainline Protestants.52

Religion and social welfare in nineteenth-century America were inextricably linked. Almost all forms of relief emanated from church groups, and all major denominations had some mechanism for providing social welfare, at least until the early twentieth century.53 For example, as early as 1880 there were 500 private, church-related social welfare organizations in New York City alone, with the largest network for social services provided by Protestant churches. Christian charity suffused the Charity Organization Societies (COSs) and Settlement Houses that assumed a major share of the responsibility for urban social welfare during the late nineteenth century.

It was thought that in order to reclaim providence the poor must be taught to live a moral and self-disciplined life. While early religious social workers clung tenaciously to their desire to teach the moral life, they also understood the need to provide material assistance.54 The major emphasis of the early social worker, however, was more often on spiritual guidance than on material aid.

The relief assistance provided by these religious social workers was often linked to harsh criteria. For example, it was not uncommon for social workers to appraise the worth of the family’s possessions and then instruct them to sell off everything in order to qualify for relief. Nor was it uncommon for social workers to deny relief because they felt that the poor family was intemperate and not sufficiently contrite. Although social workers dispensed relief, they were basically opposed to the concept of it. In effect, they believed that distributing relief was imprudent because a reliance on charity would weaken the moral fabric of the poor and provide a disincentive for work.

Urban Needs during Industrialization

Life in late nineteenth-century America was hard. The dream of milk and honey that motivated many immigrants to leave their homelands became, for many, a nightmare. The streets of American cities were not paved with gold; instead, they were over-
crowded, rampant with disease and crime, and economically destitute. Many tenement houses in the larger cities contained neither windows nor indoor plumbing. Tuberculosis was widespread, and among some groups, infant mortality ran as high as 50 percent. Scant medical care existed for the poor; there was no public education; and insanity and prostitution rates among immigrants were high. Industrial and economic prospects were equally bleak. Factory conditions were deplorable: Workers were expected to labor six or seven days a week (often on Sunday), and 18-hour days were not unusual, especially in summer. Factories were poorly lit and unsanitary, easily turned into fire traps, and offered almost no job security. Moreover, homework (taking piecework home, usually for assembly by whole families in one- or two-room tenements) was common. Women were forced to work night shifts and then take care of their homes and children by day. No special protective legislation for women existed until the early 1900s, and child labor was legal.

Charity Organization Societies

First evident in the 1870s, Charity Organization Societies (COSs) had offices in most American cities by 1900. With the exception of meager state-sponsored indoor and outdoor relief, the COS movement was a major provider of care to the destitute. COSs varied in their structures and methods. In general, they coordinated relief giving by operating community-wide registration bureaus, providing direct relief, and “educating” both the upper and lower classes as to their mutual obligations.

The work of the COS was carried out by a committee of volunteers and agency representatives who examined “cases” of needy applicants and decided on a course of action. The agent of the COS was the “friendly visitor,” whose task was to conduct an investigation of the circumstances surrounding the cases and to instruct the poor in ways of better managing their lives. Friendly visitors, drawn from the upper classes, often held a morally superior attitude toward their clientele, and their intervention in the lives of the poor was interpreted by some observers as a form of social control as well as a means of providing assistance. In any case, the charity provided by these organizations was often less than generous. Leaders of the movement drew an important lesson from Social Darwinism and the Protestant work ethic in believing that beneficent charity was counterproductive because it contributed to sloth and dependency. Josephine Shaw Lowell, president of the New York Charity Organization Society, believed that charity should be dispensed “only when starvation was imminent.”

To be sure, it was difficult for friendly visitors to maintain a sense of Christian duty in the midst of immoral behavior. In such instances, when some wretched soul seemed beyond instruction and charity, more radical measures were in order.

Settlement Houses

Begun in the 1880s, the settlement house movement had emerged in most of the big cities over the next two decades. Settlement houses were primarily set

One of the best-known settlement houses, Hull House was established by Jane Addams in 1889.
up in immigrant neighborhoods by wealthy people, college students, unattached women, teachers, doctors, and lawyers, who themselves moved into the slums as residents. Rather than simply engaging in friendly visiting, the upper- and middle-class settlement leaders tried to bridge class differences and to develop a less patronizing form of charity. Rather than coordinating the existing charities like the COS movement, they sought to help the people in the neighborhoods to organize themselves. Because they actually lived in the same neighborhoods as the impoverished immigrants, settlement workers could provide fresh and reliable knowledge about the social and economic conditions of American cities.

Jane Addams established Hull House in 1889. She approached the project and the Chicago ethnic community in which it was based with a sense of Christian Socialism that was derived from a “rather strenuous moral purgation”\(^61\) rather than a sense of noblesse oblige. By 1915, this altruism was shared by enough settlement workers so that more than 300 settlements had been established, and most large American cities boasted at least one or more settlement houses.\(^62\)

While providing individual services to the poor, the larger settlements were essentially reform-oriented. These reforms were achieved not only by organizing the poor to press for change but also by using interest groups formed by elite citizens, as well as by the formation of national alliances. Settlement-pioneered reforms included tuberculosis prevention, the establishment of well-baby clinics, the implementation of housing codes, the construction of outdoor playgrounds, the enactment of child labor and industrial safety legislation, and the promotion of some of the first studies of the urban black in America, such as W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro*.

### The Social Casework Agency

Charity Organization Societies and settlement houses served as models for the delivery of social welfare services in the voluntary sector organizations that emerged during the Progressive Era. Similar in many respects, these organizations evolved to form the social casework agency. Both were of modest size in terms of staff, both were located in the communities of the clientele they served, both served a predominantly poor population, and both relied on contributions from a variety of sources for private donations, the Community Chest, and foundations.\(^63\) Typically, workers in these agencies were female volunteers. COS techniques for investigation were refined, their aim being the identification of a “social diagnosis” as the basis for case intervention.\(^64\) Subsequently, these activities, along with the community-oriented work of the settlement reformers gave birth to the profession of social work.

As predominant service delivery forms, COSs and settlement houses were shaped by two influences: the need for scientifically based techniques, and the socialization of charity. Together, these contributed to the emergence of the social casework agency. COSs and settlement houses had provided meaningful activity for upper- and middle-class women who found it necessary to ground their work in techniques that were derived from science. This necessity had been driven home in 1915 during the National Conference of Charities and Correction, when Abraham Flexner, a renowned authority on professional graduate education, was asked to address the question of whether social work was a profession. Much to the disappointment of the audience, Flexner judged that social work lacked all the requirements of a profession, particularly a scientifically derived knowledge base that was transmittable.\(^65\)

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**Spotlight 3.1**

**Jane Addams and Hull House**

In 1889, Jane Addams established Hull House to serve residents of the Chicago community in which she lived. To learn more about Jane Addams and Hull House, go to [www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/urbanexp](http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/urbanexp). Using historical photos and narrative, this website presents a comprehensive overview of Hull House and its surrounding neighborhoods.
CHAPTER 3 Religion and Social Welfare Policy

The Progressive Movement

A reaction to the heartlessness that characterized a large segment of American society came in the form of the Progressive movement, a social movement that was popular from the early 1900s to World War I. Progressive Era philosophy intended to inject a measure of public credibility and Christian morality into social, political, and economic affairs. As a result, it reflected a unique blend of social reform encompassing anti-big business attitudes, a belief that government should regulate the public good, a strong emphasis on ethics in business and personal life, a commitment to social justice, a concern for the “common man,” and a strong sense of paternalism. Progressives believed that the state had a responsibility for protecting the interests of the public, especially those who were vulnerable. Supported by the nation’s most respected social workers, including Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, and Paul U. Kellogg, the Progressive Party presented a presidential ticket in 1912. The advent of World War I diminished the liberal fervor that had characterized the Progressive Era of the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the wake of the disillusionment that followed the war, the mood of the country became conservative. Progressive ideas were treated skeptically by the 1920s and activists were often accused of being Bolsheviks.

Religion and the Welfare State

On January 16, 1920, the 18th Amendment went into effect and Prohibition became the law throughout the country. This single event, the culmination of religious and moral reforms that had begun more than a century before, signaled the high point of Protestant dominance in the United States, but this was to be short-lived.

The Fundamentalist Controversy and Its Aftermath

The Protestantism of the 1920s held little resemblance to its nineteenth-century predecessor. Those mainline denominations that associated with the Federal Council of Churches were characterized by large denominational bureaucracies, significant interdenominational cooperation, and a new form of religious intellectualism. Theologically, the mainline tended to embrace the findings of the natural sciences and the new social sciences in preference to biblical and historical traditions. Post-war patriotism was bolstered by economic prosperity, leading to the uncritical conclusion that capitalism and the Protestant work ethic had divine favor. Paradoxically, one-third of Americans continued to live in poverty. Although the Social Gospel had waned, it maintained a presence in the larger urban congregations that were most proximate to those living in urban poverty and in the voices of social conscience best personified by Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary in New York.

The cleavage in American Protestantism became the focus of national attention during the so-called Scopes monkey trial. “In the course of a few days in July 1923 two million words of newspaper reportage were telegraphed from Dayton, Tennessee.” John Scopes, a recent college graduate and novice high school teacher, was on trial for teaching the theory of evolution in violation of Tennessee law. Conservative and evangelical Protestants were subjected to national scorn and ridicule as Fundamentalists, exacerbating sectarian tendencies. For the most part, conservative and evangelical Protestant organizations withdrew from public life. The prosperous twenties abruptly ended in late 1929 as stock market values crashed. Within four years over a quarter of Americans were unemployed, Prohibition had been repealed, and Franklin D. Roosevelt was president.

The Great Depression and New Deal

It is difficult to appreciate the significance of the Great Depression from the position of the relatively prosperous twenty-first century; however, it can be safely concluded that religion had a more significant impact on the private lives of Americans than it did on public policy. The economic crisis called for emergency measures and Roosevelt’s New Deal programs were the response. Social and policy changes took place with blinding speed as the federal government became “the great almoner of public charity.” Billions of dollars were spent on relief efforts to provide food, clothing, and shelter. Public works projects were to employ as many as 3.2 million a month by 1938. A minimum wage, a maximum work week, collective bargaining, and the abolishment of child labor were established in 1937. The apogee of the New Deal was the Social Security Act of 1935 which
included a national old-age retirement system; federal grants to states for maternal, child, and disabled welfare services; and a federal-state unemployment system.71

Churchmen could not keep pace, and even the liberal mainline tended to withdraw into a quiescent spirituality. At best the mainline waged an ineffective post hoc critique of the New Deal while the conservative and evangelical groups tended to become more isolated and sectarian. Social workers and others with tenancy experience in a settlement house stepped to the forefront to provide the moral leadership previously provided by religion. Edith Abbott, president of the National Conference of Social Welfare and Dean of the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, participated in the drafting of the Social Security Act. Frances Perkins became the first Secretary of Labor. Harry Hopkins is credited as the primary architect of the New Deal. Both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League included key social workers in their early formation.72

Patterns of Religious Change

The abdication of public moral leadership did not mean that religious change did not occur: In a pattern that has held true since the Congregationalists yielded numerical dominance to the Methodists between 1776 and 1850, mainline denominations tended to decline in membership and sectarian groups tended to grow.73 Dean M. Kelley, an executive with the National Council of Churches (which replaced the Federal Council in 1950), was the first to publicize this historical trend in his book Why Conservative Churches Are Growing. While many aspects of Kelley’s analysis were flawed, for example his claim that the decline in mainline membership was a sudden change due to cultural shifts in the 1960s, his explanation for the trend has survived all challenges: Strong congregations are strict.74 Finke and Stark explain:

High cost [of association with sectarian groups] serve to screen out potential members whose commitment and participation would otherwise be low. The costs act as nonrefundable registration fees which, as in secular markets, measure seriousness of interest in the product. As a result the demanding sects speak of “conversions,” “being born again,” and “submitting their lives to the Lord.” The less demanding churches refer to affiliations that are seldom life-altering events. Of course, it is not impossible for a sect to require too much of potential members, but in general, “the higher the costs of membership, the greater the material and social, as well as religious, benefits of membership.”76 Many, if not all, of the conservative and evangelical denominations benefited by their withdrawal from public life.

A comparison of the Methodist and Baptist traditions is one of the clearest examples of the declining trend associated with the mainline, and the corresponding growth associated with a more sectarian identity. Both groups grew during the first half of the nineteenth century, but the stricter Methodists clearly outshined the Baptists. Between 1776 and 1850, Baptist adherents grew by a respectable 21 percent; Methodists by more than 1,268 percent.77 As the largest religious Protestant denomination in the late nineteenth century, Methodism began to change. Circuit riding lay preachers gave way to seminary trained ministers, the emotion-packed worship style of the camp meeting yielded to a more sedate middle-class conformity, and strict behavioral codes were relaxed.78 By 1926, Baptists outnumbered Methodists.79

This trend continued unabated in virtually every religious group in America throughout the twentieth century. For example the market share for major mainline denominations (United Methodists, Presbyterian, USA, Episcopal, Christian [Disciples], and United Church of Christ) declined by more than 50 percent from 1940 to 1985. During the same time period, the more sectarian conservative and evangelical groups (Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene, and Church of God [Cleveland, Tennessee]) grew by more than 47 percent. Catholics, despite massive Latin American immigration, grew by only 12 percent.80

In the decades prior to World War II (1941–1945), there were specific individuals who made significant contributions that helped change the face of American religious life after the war. On the left, Reinhold Niebuhr, a theologian at Union Seminary in New York, articulated a neoorthodox theology aimed at reforming liberal thought. His work produced a renewed mainline appreciation for the reality of human evil and the need for social change.81 Both Martin Luther King Jr. and president Jimmy Carter were to list Neibuhr as a major influence on their faith and political activism.82
On the right, J. Gresham Machen authored *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), which remains one of the crown jewels of the conservative evangelical defense of biblical inerrancy.\(^8^3\) A controversial figure within his own Presbyterian tradition, he was defrocked in 1936, yet his impassioned defense of traditional Christian orthodoxy influenced many conservative and evangelical leaders.\(^8^4\) Carl F. H. Henry honored Machen in 1956 by naming his new evangelical magazine, *Christianity Today*, after a failed publication founded by Machen.\(^8^5\)

Other theologians of public note included the Protestant Paul Tillich, the Catholic Jacques Maritain, and the Jewish Will Herberg. One historian concluded that “the 1950’s were the last decade in which theologians played a major role in American public life.”\(^8^6\) The careful words and fine distinctions characteristic of theological reflection could not prevail in the new religious arena dominated by radio and television.

### Religion and the New Media

Regular radio broadcasting began in 1920, and from the start the Federal Communications Commission required specific time to be set aside for public service broadcasting. As the sole interdenominational organization available, the mainline churches of the Federal Council of Churches soon developed a near monopoly on this free, religion-based programming. By 1931, only one radio network was willing to sell commercial time to conservative and evangelical Protestants.\(^8^7\) Despite such restrictions, Charles Fuller’s *Old Time Gospel Hour* aired in 1937 and had captured a weekly audience of over 20 million by 1943.\(^8^8\) When the mainline churches were successful in lobbying all broadcast companies to stop selling commercial time to conservative evangelicals in 1944, the conservative evangelicals went directly to local stations to buy airtime, thereby creating radio syndication.\(^8^9\)

Ironically, the mainline monopoly on radio broadcasting served to strengthen conservative and evangelical commitment to the use of new media. Without the largesse of free public service airtime, the conservative evangelicals developed successful self-funded programs. When the Federal Communications Commission rules changed in 1960, it was the conservative evangelicals who were best able to compete for available time slots on both television and radio.\(^9^0\) Conservative evangelicals claimed their own television network that same year as Pat Robertson founded the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) with the purchase of a small UHF television station.\(^9^1\) Today CBN broadcasts internationally in 77 different languages. Another network, Trinity Broadcasting (founded in 1973), currently boasts 5,000 local affiliates, 33 satellites links, and thousands of cable systems carrying their message worldwide.\(^9^2\) By 1990, conservative and evangelical ministers controlled 90 percent of all religious broadcasting in the country.\(^9^3\)

Conservative evangelicals were not the only ones to take advantage of new media. As early as 1926 Father Charles Coughlin of Michigan, a Catholic priest, gained national attention for airing his “America First” isolationist, anti-communist, and ultimately anti-Semitic and anti-Roosevelt message.\(^9^4\) The almost rabid anti-communist stance of the Roman Catholics may have been the primary means by which this once highly sectarian group merged more fully into the American mainstream.\(^9^5\) In the 1950s, Bishop Fulton Sheen’s popular television series, *Life is Worth Living*, provided additional impetus.\(^9^6\) By 1960, not only could a Catholic run for high office, but John F. Kennedy in fact became the first American Catholic president.

Television and radio were to make a significant impact on American religious life. For example, in 1955 only one out of 25 Americans had left their childhood faith for a new religious home. By 1985 one in three had done so.\(^9^7\) Denominational growth was no longer merely a consequence of family size or immigration as Americans changed denominational affiliation as religious consumers. Religious use of the new media accelerated the commercialization of religious life and subordinated the relationship of pastor–pew to that of media–audience.

### Secularization

The 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”\(^9^8\) Despite this sentence, often referred to as the establishment clause, Protestants had enjoyed considerable influence in virtually every public arena, and restrictions were few. Beginning in 1940 with the extension of the establishment clause to state governments in *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, but rapidly accelerating after the end of World War II in 1945, the Supreme Court began to dismantle Protestant privilege. Conservative and evangelical churchmen tended to view this loss of privilege as an attack
on traditional Christian values. For example, public schools and public school teachers were prohibited from promoting religion in 1948; prayer in public schools was declared unconstitutional in 1962 and Bible reading was prohibited in 1963.99 State laws preventing the teaching of evolution were overturned in 1971.100 These cases specifically impacted public school children.99 State laws prohibiting Bible reading were prohibited in 1963.99 State laws banning prayer in public schools and public school teachers were prohibited from promoting religion in 1948; prayer in public schools was declared unconstitutional in 1962 and Bible reading was prohibited in 1963.99 State laws preventing the teaching of evolution were overturned in 1971.100 These cases specifically impacted the Christian view of creationism with the 1969 decision in <i>Dawg v. Board of Education</i> decision undermining the legal foundation for segregation and the 1973 decision in <i>Roe v. Wade</i> banning state limits on abortion were particularly onerous to the conservative groups.101 The first threatened white, Protestant dominance; the second threatened the Christian ideal of the sanctity of human life.

The mainline response to this secularizing trend may be best exemplified by Harvey Cox’s book, <i>The Secular City</i> (1965). As Patrick Allitt describes Cox’s views:

> . . . Christianity had itself been a powerful force for secularization. Ancient religions had had a great pantheon of gods . . . . Judaism and Christianity, however, had swept away the whole lot and left just one remote, omnipotent God presiding over the world. People were then free to manipulate and organize the world without fear that they were stepping on the gods’ toes. And having learned that the world was not crammed with divinities, they had learned to take the logical next step of pushing back further and further their need for any god at all. Secularization and urbanization are the not the enemies of Christianity . . . but its logical end product.102

This radical theology culminated in the ultimate liberal claim: “God is dead.” To conservative and evangelical ears there could be no greater challenge.

### The Reawakening of a Religious Social Conscience and the Great Society

The liberal, moral leadership provided during the New Deal yielded the framework for the modern social welfare state. Income disparities were mitigated and federal responsibility for social welfare was well established. Despite this progress, irreligious liberal thinkers recognized the disadvantages reason held in comparison with the conservatives appeal to traditional faith. None attempted to face this disadvantage with more honesty than John Dewey in <i>A Common Faith</i> (1934) and <i>Liberalism and Social Action</i> (1935). His attempt to dislodge the “impulses of generosity and self-sacrifice, of humility and communal solidarity” from religious roots proved unsuccessful.103 Liberal social action ground to a halt following World War II until it was re-energized by a prophetic religious voice.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus. Female co-workers at the local NAACP office and some local students distributed bus boycott leaflets to Montgomery’s African American clergy that very day. Martin Luther King Jr. was elected president of the hastily organized Montgomery Improvement Association.104 A prophet had been found.

Rejecting liberal, white leadership and, in most cases, counsel, King led a nonviolent activist movement confronting discrimination and segregation that was opposed by white southerners and his own African American denomination. Northern, white liberal churchmen offered weak support.105 Recent scholarship has challenged the typical classification of this movement as mere civil protest:

> Participants often recalled the movement years as a heady, life-transforming era touched with divine significance. . . . Such testimony suggests that it may be misleading to view the civil rights movement as a social and political event that had religious overtones. . . . To take the testimony of intense religious transformation seriously is to consider the civil rights movement as part of the historical tradition of religious revivals. . . .

Lyndon B. Johnson, president following John F. Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, tapped into the religious and moral ideals sparked by King and the sacrifices made in the name of desegregation. He declared a “War on Poverty” in his State of the Union address on January 8, 1964.107 Over 1,000 pieces of legislation were passed as part of Johnson’s Great Society including the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.108 White churchmen continued to lag behind the waves of social change, and social workers were among those who stepped forward to lead. For example the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Wilbur Cohen, played a major role in the passage of the Medicare and Medicaid Acts of 1965, only two of his 65 innovations in social welfare policy.109 Even though the Vietnam War was to prove a fatal distraction, Johnson’s War on Poverty and Great Society had some success. By 1969 the number of Americans living below the poverty line had fallen by more than half.110
The Continuing Decline of Mainline Influence

White religious leadership, in comparison to the courage and conviction of the African American churches, proved to be distracted by internal issues or radical irrelevancy. Roman Catholics were preoccupied with Vatican II (1962–1965). This reform movement, led by Pope John XXIII, ended the last vestiges of isolation and parochialism for American Catholics. Liturgical reforms included enhanced lay participation, the elimination of Latin during mass, and the loosening of behavioral codes. Faithful Catholics were no longer required to avoid meat on Fridays, except during Lent. As American Catholicism lost its sectarian identity, church attendance and seminary enrollments dropped.111

Twenty-nine Protestant and Orthodox denominations had reorganized the mainline into the National Council of Churches in 1950, largely because the cause celebre of the Federal Council, the religious delivery of social services, had become the purview of government after the New Deal. The new focus was on ecumenism. The Consultation on Church Union (COCU) was initiated in 1960. Although COCU was largely ineffective at producing broad denominational merger, some progress was made within major historical traditions. Unitarians and Universalists merged in 1961. The Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren became the United Methodists in 1968. The Civil War breach between Presbyterian groups ended with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1984, and several Lutheran bodies created the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988.112

Despite claims to the contrary, the National Council of Churches never represented a majority of religious adherents in the country, and the embrace of liberation theologies did little to maintain public influence or lay support. Developed in the class struggles and economic disparities of Latin America, “liberation theology employs a Marxist-style class analysis, which divides the culture between oppressors and oppressed. . . . But unlike Marxism, liberation theology turns to the Christian faith for bringing about liberation.”113 The goal is the radical transformation of society. James Cone applied the insights of liberation theology to the African American struggle for civil rights in his Black Theology of Liberation (1970), and Mary Daly did the same for women in her Beyond God the Father (1973).

The New Christian Right

In 1965 Jerry Falwell, senior minister at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, preached that “believing the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ and begin doing anything else—including fighting Communism, or participating in Civil Rights reforms.”118 By 1979 he had changed his mind and founded the Moral Majority, a political action group committed to overturning the secular trends Falwell interpreted as moral deterioration. The Moral Majority was for prayer and the teaching of creationism in public schools, but was opposed to abortion, feminist issues such as the Equal Rights Amendment, homosexual rights, and even peace talks with the Soviet Union.119

Falwell had picked an opportune time to organize the Moral Majority. The two largest conservative evangelical denominations, Southern Baptists and Missouri-Synod Lutherans, had largely remained aloof from the fundamentalist controversy in the 1920s, but each had recently begun internal struggles over the challenges of theological liberalism. Each rejected liberalism in favor of a traditional conservative theology. The Missouri-Synod Lutherans purged its leading seminary of liberal influence in 1976120 while Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler
Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority, a political action group that supports prayer and the teaching of creationism in public schools and opposes abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and gay and lesbian rights.

led a well-coordinated and successful plan to gain control of the Southern Baptist Convention and its seminaries and agencies that began in 1979. Lay support for theological conservatism was easily converted into sympathy for Falwell's political agenda.

The conservative dominance of religious media also furthered Falwell's agenda, as did the growth of megachurches across the country. With care he nurtured relationships with the leading religious personalities of the day. Pat Robertson of The 700 Club, Jim and Tammy Bakker of The PTL Club, and Jimmy Swaggert became colleagues in Falwell's campaign for moral and political reform, and even Catholics and Jews were included in Falwell's embrace. While there have always been a few very large churches, the increase in megachurches is a peculiarly late twentieth-century phenomenon. Utilizing the best business management practices, the allure of charismatic preachers, a smorgasbord of family-oriented recreational services, contemporary professional music, and a traditional but undemanding theology, these large churches which number their members in the thousands have sprung up across the nation since the 1970s. In a country where the average non-Catholic church attendance is 84 persons a week (Catholics average 375 in mass), approximately 50 percent of all church attendance is in the top 10 percent of congregations in size. In part, the lower levels of denominational loyalty noted earlier have been fueled by the existence of these megachurches. Those who prefer this style of worship are less concerned with denominational brand and more concerned with the megachurch style. The leaders of these new congregations also proved ready allies in Falwell's cause.

Was Falwell's Moral Majority a success? If success is measured by the number of column inches and the minutes of television and radio time devoted to the discussion of the Christian Right, the Moral Majority was an unqualified success. As previously stated, the conservative and evangelical perspective dominated religious broadcasting, and in like fashion, the colorful characters leading this movement were quick to provide useful sound bites and controversial opinions. Falwell, who remains active as the senior minister at Thomas Road Baptist Church, has been one of the primary foci of at least 16 books since 1979.

Has the public relations victory of the Christian Right been equally overwhelming at the polls? Beginning with Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 and 1984, and through the election of George H. W. Bush in 1988, and again in George W. Bush's election in 2000 and 2004, the Christian Right has been quick to claim credit for each victory. In fact, advocates of this viewpoint have interpreted Bill Clinton's election in 1992 as the consequence of the financial scandals and sexual improprieties of Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggert, and Oral Roberts in 1987. In part a reaction to these scandals and in part evangelical disillusionment that Pat Robertson did not claim the Republican nomination in 1987, Falwell disbanded the Moral Majority in 1989, and consequently, Clinton's 1992 victory was due to the absence of organized opposition by the Christian Right. Unsurprisingly, others offer alternative interpretations.

While a consensus has yet to develop among religious scholars, preliminary studies seem to indicate that the influence of the Christian Right on social policy and politics is not so simply determined. Analyses of the National Election Studies indicate, that with the exception of conservative and evangelical support in 1976 for the Southern Baptist candidate, Jimmy Carter, there has been no significant change in the voting patterns of white, conser-
CHAPTER 3 Religion and Social Welfare Policy

Progressives initially rejoiced at Clinton’s election the first time in 16 years that a Democrat had captured the presidency. By the end of Clinton’s first term, many of those same liberals were left more cautious or, in some cases, despondent because even the important policy successes of the Clinton administration were tinged with conservatism. For example, he signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), a bill that capped public assistance benefits, ended AFDC, and eliminated recipients’ entitlement to public assistance. Equally important, Section 104 of the PRWORA contained what has been called the Charitable Choice provision:

The purpose of this section is to allow States to contract with religious organizations, or to allow religious organizations to accept certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement . . . on the same basis as any other non-governmental provider without impairing the religious character of such organizations, and with diminishing the religious freedom of beneficiaries of assistance funded under such program. [Section 104(b)].

George W. Bush has been a strong advocate of Charitable Choice. As governor of Texas he aggressive pursued welfare reform through a faith-based initiative as early as 1996. In his second week in office as president, he established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives with units in the Departments of Labor, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Health and Human Services. Executive orders expanded faith-based involvement to the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development in 2002.

Federal funding is available for faith-based organizations (FBOs) through state channels, but the states have been almost unanimous in their tepid response. “For the most part, it appears that state officials have not felt that there is a need to make substantive changes—FBOs are already active players in delivering services . . . and their involvement is not a subject of controversy. . . .” Despite a lack of significant change in state policies and procedures, nearly two-thirds of states have pursued outreach efforts to FBOs and more than half have a faith representative on welfare advisory committees. On the other hand, less than one-third of the states provide technical assistance to FBOs, fewer than one-quarter have modified proposal notification processes, and only two states have provided capacity building or start-up grants.

Federal guidelines make funding potentially available through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Welfare-to-Work, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, the Emergency Shelter Grant program, and the Community Development Block Grant program. Educational funding is more problematic due to a long history of Supreme Court limitations on tax support for private schools.

Michigan, Ohio, and Texas have been most aggressive in facilitating funding for FBOs, but the research to date seems to indicate that most of this funding is directed to older, established nonprofit agencies with religious roots (e.g., Catholic Charities, Catholic Social Services, Jewish Family Services, Lutheran Social Services, Salvation Army, and Young Women's Christian Association). Congregations of all denominational varieties have been reluctant to pursue Charitable Choice funding. Even though more than half of all congregations provide some type of social service, primarily emergency food and shelter, only 3 percent receive public funds. In the mainline it seems reasonable to assume that the sense of congregational participation in social services has been delegated to these volunteer associations for decades; among conservative evangelicals the reluctance may be due to concerns about government intervention.

Marvin Olasky was among the first to advocate for faith-based provision of social services. His rationale was clear: “holistic service delivery that focuses on personal transformation and provides long-term, lasting solutions to poor people’s problems”
are best provided in a faith context.\textsuperscript{137} Besides, churches were awash in well-intentioned volunteers. The problem is that neither of these assumptions are actually correct. The National Congregations Study indicates that congregation-based social services are advanced by the smallest handful of volunteers, and that these services are overwhelming dispensed at arm’s length. “If congregations’ social services are imagined to be more effective than secular social services because they are more holistic, neither quantitative nor qualitative evidence supports the idea.”\textsuperscript{138}

Is the availability of funding likely to change the attitudes of religious organizations to social services? Frankly, it is too soon to tell. The decentralized channels through which the federal monies flow has hindered the collection of reliable information on the recipients; outcome studies have been rare, methodologically flawed, and frequently ambiguous; and there has been a tendency for Charitable Choice to simply expand the degree of competition for access to an ever-decreasing amount of social service funding.\textsuperscript{139} One conclusion does seem obvious. Provision of social services through FBOs will always be limited to some extent; if not by the fluctuating availability of resources, then by the vision of church leaders and the limitations of theological perspectives. Some have already reported a reluctance by those with needs to obtain help through FBOs, and others have reported apparent abuses and financial irregularities by FBOs.\textsuperscript{140} Charitable Choice may remain a permanent part of the federal provision of social services, but it is unlikely that FBOs have the capacity and commitment to sustain comprehensive and long-term services on a level comparable to federal and state bureaucracies.

\textbf{Discussion Questions}

1. Since the establishment of the English Poor Laws, there has been a tendency for social welfare programs to distinguish between the “worthy needy” and those less worthy of assistance. What, if any, are the religious foundations for such a distinction? Is this distinction still evident in American social welfare policies?

2. How has the Protestant work ethic affected American social welfare policy? Is there any recent evidence that suggests that this theological perspective has a continuing influence today? Is it compatible with macro- and micro-level social work practice? Give specific examples to support your answer.

3. What are the causes of the division of American Protestantism into mainline and evangelical camps? Describe the form of social welfare each camp is most likely to promote.

4. The authors present religion as having an important role in the development of professional social work. Does religion continue to have a significant influence on social work policies, values, and/or practice? If you agree, give specific examples. If you disagree, explain how social work now differs from its religious roots with specific policy and practice examples.

5. How would social welfare policy change if the theological movements of the Protestant mainline (the Social Gospel and liberation theology) were the dominant influences?

6. Interpret the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act from a religious perspective. What theological orientations seem to be most evident? Which religious groups are most likely to be pleased with its provisions?

7. The authors are pessimistic that Charitable Choice and faith-based initiatives are likely to solve America’s social welfare problems. Why would they reach this conclusion?

\textbf{Notes}

3. Authors’ conclusion based on comparison of Allied Media Corp. demographic information at www.


10. Ibid., p. 35.


18. Ibid., p. 55.


22. Ibid., p. 189.

23. Ibid., p. 25.


25. Ibid., pp. 159–168.


27. Ibid., p. 659.


32. Trattner, From Poor Law to Welfare State, p. 63.

33. Ibid., p. 87.


37. Finke and Stark, The Churchning of America, p. 139.

38. Thuesen, The Logic of Mainline Churches, p. 35.

39. Ibid., p. 35.


45. Ibid.


57. Ibid.


62. Ibid., p. 92.
69. Ibid., p. 909.
70. President Franklin Pierce quoted in Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, p. 62.
76. Ibid., p. 255.
77. Ibid., p. 55.
78. Ibid., p. 161.
79. Ibid., p. 146.
80. Ibid., p. 248.
89. Ibid., p. 223.
90. Ibid.
94. Ibid., p. 151.


131. Ibid., p. 11.


133. Ibid., p. 13.


138. Ibid., p. 65.
