Historical Perspectives on Religion, Government and Social Welfare in America

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There is a widespread misimpression that the separation of church and state applied so vigorously to the realm of public education in recent decades also holds sway in the realm of social services. The situation is complex and varied, but it is fair to say that funding arrangements rooted in nineteenth century collaborations between government and a wide variety of religiously-linked organizations are still very common and find broad acceptance among courts, legislators, religious leaders and clients. In fields like care of dependent children, the elderly, and the disabled, in the provision of rehabilitation services for those with drug addictions, in job training, and in the operation of group homes for the retarded or mentally ill, these partnerships provide a large portion of the services offered in our society.

As those who look soon find out, very large organizations like the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities USA, Lutheran Services in America, and Jewish Family Services are and have long been among the leading government contractors in the provision of social services in many parts of the nation.

But it is also true that there is a recent and strong trend to expand partnerships between government and faith-based organizations, and to give more scope to the expression of specific religious traditions in these programs. The charitable choice provision included in the welfare reform act of 1996 is certainly an excellent example of this trend.

Those interested in tracking the relations between governments and faith-based groups must come to terms with the immense variety of attitudes, arrangements, and historical trajectories at play, as well as with substantial geographical variations. The nation is now in the midst of one of its fairly frequent waves of experimentation and reform in the approach and structure of welfare programs. Each of these waves has had mixed results, leaving some elements in place, introducing some new forms, and all failing to resolve many presenting problems.

This essay provides readers with a survey of the unavoidably complex evolution of the policy debate over the role of religious groups in social service

provision. It begins with discussion of two major conceptual issues that have dogged the relationship between government and religious service providers. The first is the elusive problem of defining what a "sectarian" organization is; and the second is the unavoidable necessity of coming to terms with the immense variety of religious groups and the even greater complexity of organizational and theological ideas that shape and restrict the ways in which religious groups act in the public realm.

The essay then moves to consider the most significant historical influence on the interaction of religion and public life in the United States: liberal Protestantism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberal Protestants had a disproportionate impact on the ethos that has shaped both the most common forms of religiously tied social welfare organizations and on the emerging structure of the welfare state. The paper then addresses the ways in which two other major groups, African-American Protestants and Roman Catholics, took advantage of changes in federal social welfare policy in the mid-twentieth century. It closes with a review of the impact of recent trends, including the devolution of responsibility for social welfare from the federal government to state and local governments, deregulation, and the turn toward relying more on faith-based organizations to provide social services.

Grasping the Public Role of Religion in Modern America

The problem of defining the boundaries of religious institutions that act in the public realm is not new. In his magisterial 1894 study of American charities, Amos Warner wrote of the difficulty of fully grasping the public role of religious organizations. "That there is no generally recognized definition of the word 'sectarian' is noteworthy," he lamented. "There are few institutions that will admit its applicability to themselves, and there are few to which it is not applied by some one. Many institutions having no trace of sectarianism in charter, constitution, or by-laws are yet administered in the interests of a sect. A willingness to admit beneficiaries of all denominations is frequently less an evidence of non-sectarianism than of a tendency to make proselytes (1894, 407-408)." In his research, Warner found a clear cut distinction between public and private charities," he continued,

> but none between sectarian and non-sectarian charities, is one that those who oppose public aid to sectarian schools would do well to recognize. Protestants are willing to tease legislators for public money on behalf of a hospital orphan asylum in which they are interested, urging that it is "doing good," and that it is preventing crime and pauperism, and so saving money to the tax payers. They do not see or will not acknowledge that the same could be said of a parochial school, and that the claim which they set up that their own institutions is "non-sectarian" is equivocal and unfair, and one which in practice the courts have never been able to make definite (409).

Surprisingly little has changed since Warner wrote. Despite the supposedly secular character of modern institutional life, faith-based organizations comprise the largest part of the charitable tax-exempt universe in numbers of organizations, volume of individual donations, and commitment of volunteer time. As responsibility for social services devolves from the federal level, they are playing an increasingly central role in providing human services, on the community level. And, according to recent studies, they are the single most important arena for imparting the values and competencies associated with effective civic participation and, as such, are essential to the welfare of the non-profit or "Third Sector" and the vitality of civil society (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1996). Nonetheless, the difficulties of understanding their role in public life remains as elusive as it was a century ago—and for many of the same reasons.

Despite their importance to human services provision, civic life, and the nonprofit sector, neither secular nor religious researchers have specifically addressed the ways in which faith-based organizations differ from their secular counterparts in organizational structure, mission, and process, the impact of the significantly different funding and regulatory environments in which they operate, or—perhaps most importantly—the extraordinary complexity within and diversity among religious entities.[1]

Structural Complexity and Diversity

Assessing the role of religious and religiously tied organizations in the nonprofit sector and the broader institutional universe requires that the organizational units being measured be in some significant sense comparable. Because of their structural and processual complexity, churches and religiously tied entities pose significant obstacles to researchers seeking to measure their impact as part of the universe of secular organizations. Some of these obstacles stem from the scarcity of quantifiable data: although treated as charitable tax-exempt organizations under federal and state laws, churches are not required to register as nonprofit entities or to file annual reports with government agencies. But the major obstacles are epistemological and hinge on the multiple meanings of the terms "church," "religious," and "religiously-tied organization."

The first range of definitional difficulties involves the structural diversity and complexity of religious institutions, which include a wide range of formal and informal entities. Formal religious organizations include:

- a variety of types of *free-standing congregations*, some of them membership entities organized corporately, others sole proprietorships — ranging from the *corporation sole* of Anglicanism to the store-front quasi-commercial

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1 Most efforts to measure the place of religious organizations in the nonprofit sector (Hodgkinson, Weitzman & Kirsch, 1988a, 1993; Cnaan, 1996) have used the congregation as the unit of analysis. This is problematic for a number of reasons, the most important being the variable significance of congregations in franchiseform denominations, in which social services are often provided through non-parochial entities.

enterprises of urban neighborhoods;

- an extraordinary variety of *federated or franchiseform organizations*, ranging from the "monarchical model" of Roman Catholicism and the "constitutional monarchy" of Episcopalianism and other episcopally-ordered Protestantisms, through such loosely-coupled denominational bodies as the Southern Baptist Convention.[2]
- *parachurch organizations* like the Promise Keepers, and Habitat for Humanity, which combine devotional and service provision activities which may or may not substitute for membership in an established community of worship;
- *interdenominational* and *ecumenical bodies* operating on local, regional, or national levels, which coordinate the activities of communities or worship and service;
- *secular corporations* established by clergy or members of religious orders — and by lay members of faith communities — are among the most common, diverse, and difficult to classify forms of faith-based organizations. Such organizations range from traditional voluntary/donative nonprofits through quasi-public agencies like community development corporations.

Different religious groups display different organizational preferences. Some, like the Roman Catholics, favor hierarchical franchise-form structures in which authority is concentrated in a single person. Others, like the Quakers, Baptists, and Pentecostals, favor congregational polities in which decision making is left to the membership. Still others, like the Presbyterians, favor large-scale denominational structures, but permit relatively democratic forms of decision making. But even these familiar ecclesiastical forms are rife with complexity and ambiguity: the seemingly "monarchical" Roman Catholic Church actually contains a variety of parallel structures: the hierarchical diocesan hierarchy and the religious orders, which stand outside the dioceses and are directly accountable to the Vatican (Dignan, 1933; Maida & Cafardi, 1984; Ellis, 1987; Dolan, 1987, 1992). Within these structures are a variety of collegial decision making bodies, some, like the College of Cardinals and periodical convenings like councils and synods, of ancient lineage—others, like the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, of recent invention. Similarly, though the Protestant Episcopal Church is nominally based on a national structure presided over by bishops and a National Convention of Delegates, the authority of this supposed hierarchy is undercut by the fact that the National Convention—a mixed group of clergy and laity—has no authority over its own bishops.

The mechanisms by which faith communities provide charitable, cultural, educational, health, and human services add additional layers of complexity. To begin with, the kinds of services likely to be provided, as well as the popula-

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2 Efforts to engage the use of franchiseform organizations in the nonprofit sector have been minimal. On this see Young (1989), Oster (1992), and Hunter (1993).

tions likely to be served, differ significantly from group to group. Theologically conservative "gathered" congregations are unlikely to support programs intended to reach those who have not already professed belief and adhered to the behavioral restrictions required for membership in these groups. Thus, for example, programs serving substance abusers or AIDS victims are rarely operated by conservative Protestants or ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups. Theologically liberal congregations and denominations and Roman Catholics, on the other hand, tend to direct their service provision efforts towards broader client populations, making them available on the basis of need rather than membership.

Theological orientation also influences the formal relationships between service provision mechanisms and devotional activities. Some groups, like the megachurches, provide services within the congregational structure—as a part of congregational life. Others prefer either to "hive off" secular corporations or encourage members to give money and time to non-religious enterprises. But even these preferences conceal domains of complexity and diversity. For example, while the Catholic Church provides some kinds of services through congregationally-based volunteer groups, like the Catholic Youth Organization, others, like some of the parochial schools, are secular corporations—many of which operate under a dual system of governance, under the authority of lay and religious boards of directors. Service providing entities also operate as part of the diocesan apparatus—others are operated by religious orders.

> But the entities operating within the formal domains of the ecclesiastical polity hardly exhaust the organizational possibilities. Many religious service providers are secular corporations with no formal ties to the church — but which are headed by clergy or members of religious orders and may have boards composed of co-religionists, like Boys Town (Oursler & Oursler, 1959), the famous orphanage established in the 1920s by Father Robert Flanagan or Covenant House, the youth services complex established in the 1960s by Father Bruce Ritter (Sennott, 1992).

"Religiously-tied" service provider entities of this kind seldom have financial ties to the church—though they may draw on the financial resources of Catholic donors (both Fr. Flanagan and Fr. Ritter were pioneers of direct mail fundraising).

Catholic grant makers, like the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, play another variation on the theme of the religiously-tied nonprofit. Founded in 1945 under the will of General Motors founder John J. Raskob to support Catholic charities, members of the foundation's board had to be Raskob descendants *and* communicants in the church (Robinson, 1996). (At the same time, Raskob, the most prominent Catholic layman of the 1930s, excluded members of the clergy and religious orders from his board). The Catholic fra-

ternal organization, the Knights of Columbus, founded in 1894 and now boasting more than $4 billion in assets, is similarly firm in its commitment to Catholic causes (including grant support to Catholic service providers) but, like the Raskob Foundation, is lay-governed and has no formal ties to the Church (Kauffman, 1982).[3]

Another example of the complex relationships between faith communities and service provision can be seen in some of the Episcopal social and educational missions. At the turn of the century, Episcopal social gospellers, desiring to serve the needy in the cities, recognized that they would have little impact if they operated their settlement houses, schools, and other enterprises if they sought to proselytize (since whatever forms of material and cultural deprivation the urban poor may have suffered, lack of strong religious traditions was not one of them). Accordingly, they developed a model of non-proselytizing missionary activity, usually operating through secular corporations staffed by religiously committed individuals. Desiring to maintain ties to the religious groups that supported them and from whom they drew their staffs, while at the same time supporting practices of participatory governance needed to give credibility to their claims of non-proselytization, Anglicans developed a complex system of interlocking multiple boards which both gave clients a voice *and* ensured continuing religious control.[4]

The greatest complexity is found among liberal Protestants and groups that encourage social service through individual members rather than affiliated secular corporations. Early in the nineteenth century, a number of influential Congregationalist theologians withdrew their churches from direct participation in public life and devoted their social energies— via their members— to organizations with no explicit religious ties (Hall, 1994). To say that these organizations were non-religious, however, would be stretching the point in many cases. For example, most of the work of "reconstructing" the defeated South after the Civil War was done by individuals of intense religiosity, often recruited and funded by church bodies—but the vehicles

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3 For an interesting example of a Jewish counterpart to Raskob which similarly embodies a mission concerned with family unity, the perpetuation of a faith tradition, and grantmaking informed by religious sensibilities, see Deborah S. Gardner, *Looking to the Future*, *Honoring the Past: The Nathan Cummings Foundation* (1997).

4 The linkage between religious doctrine and belief, organizational preferences, and patterns of institutional development are revealed with particular clarity in the evolution of deinstitutionalization, privatization, and the creation of community-based care over the past quarter century. The liberal Protestants, for whom the establishment of the secular welfare state supported and guided by a complex of nonsectarian nonprofit advocacy and service organizations had been literally an article of faith, played a relatively small role in creating and new welfare regime because their doctrinal commitment to perfectionism had limited their organizational vision to serving the curable—leaving care of the hopelessly disabled to government (Katz, 1986). Thus, when New York turned to use established liberal Protestant and Jewish social welfare agencies for help in placing the deinstitutionalized profoundly retarded and mentally-ill, it was greeted with little interest.

they organized for teaching, healing, and providing technical assistance were explicitly "undenominational"/nonsectarian and sought to serve the public at large.[5] (Nonetheless, these emissaries of northern civilization were called the "Gideonites" by skeptical white southerners.) Even today, the boards of the major secular nonprofits are overwhelmingly composed of members of liberal Protestant congregations, suggesting the possibility that many "secular" entities may in fact be distinctive expressions of liberal Protestant social engagement.[6]

Liberal Judaism displays its own distinctive variant of this model of social engagement. Because the Judaisms are non-denominational—or, at best, very loosely-coupled as denominations—"Jewish" hospitals, schools, and charities are, in fact, secular corporations whose religious character derives from the composition of their boards, their financial dependence on Jewish donors, and their commitment to serving the Jewish community (Elazar, Sarna & Monson, 1992).

Such forms of secular/nonsectarian social provision differ from those of theologically conservative groups—Christian and Jewish—in important ways and resemble them in others. Because of their congregational polities, for example, Southern Baptists and Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not sponsor social service activities as denominationally or congregationally, instead generally

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5 In contrast, Catholics, Orthodox Jews, Protestant fundamentalists, and other "high tension" congregations, proved not only especially receptive to the new system, but played key roles in winning political acceptance for it. Their doctrines had always stressed service to their own faith communities and had rejected the liberal Protestants' model of "undenominational" service. Other aspects of their active participation in the implementation of the new regime also had deep doctrinal roots. They had always defined charity as a spiritual act involving personal relationships between those who gave and those who received (which is why, in the nineteenth century, they had resisted the development of voluntary associations and, during and after the Civil War, the bureaucratic professionalism of the Sanitary Commission and Reconstruction)—a charitable mode especially suited to the thankless tasks of caring for clients, like the profoundly retarded, who could never be expected to be cured or educated. They had always favored "need-based" charitableness based on the suffering of the poor, dependent, and disabled, rather than the calculating economistic "worthiness-based" activities of the Charity Organization Societies and "scientific philanthropy." Though these anti-institutional doctrinal convictions and organizational preferences had isolated them from the institutional mainstream for more than a century (an isolation reflected in their absence from the governing boards of core community institutions), they peculiarly equipped them to be leaders in the emergence of the New Federalist polity (Gaylin, Glaser, & Rothman, 1979; Olasky, 1992).

6 In investigating religious affiliations of hospital trustees in major metropolitan areas, David Swartz found an astonishing imbalance in the composition of the boards of non-denominational institutions (Swartz, 1994). Of 154 trustees of secular hospitals, Swartz found that 75 (49%) were identifiable as members of Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, Unitarian, or Lutheran churches, 5 (3%) were Catholic, and 12 (8%) were Jewish. Only 6 trustees (4%) were Baptists, Methodists, and members of other Protestant groups. Looking at a broader sample of 675 trustees, Swartz found that Baptists, Methodists, and Catholics were overwhelmingly more likely to sit on the boards of hospitals with denominational ties and that the boards of these institutions were unlikely to include trustees who were not members of their faith communities: of the 10 Baptists serving as hospital trustees, all served on the boards of Baptist hospitals; of the 27 Methodists, 22 served on the boards of Methodist hospitals; of the 93 Catholics, 83 served on the boards of Catholic hospitals (34). "It is noteworthy," Swartz writes, "that only the older more established Protestant denominations have significant board representation…Baptists who make up a broad and diverse base of Protestant representation in the United States are hardly more

working through secular corporations established by members of their respective faiths. Such groups, however, are notable for the intensity of their commitment to serving their own faith communities and to imbuing the services they provide with explicitly religious messages (Iannacone, 1989).[7] However, the theologically conservative megachurches do virtually all of their service provision in-house (Trueheart, 1996).

African-American religious groups pose their own unique analytical challenges. An important recent study of civic participation which focuses on the sources of civic competency (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1996), singles out African-American congregations as by far the most effective transmitters of civic values and skills. Other studies note their extraordinary activism as service providers (Stanfield, 1993; Williams, Griffith & Young, 1993; Chang, Williams, Griffith & Young, 1994; Hall-Russell, 1996). Studies of urban organizational population trends (Hall, 1996), however, show that the proliferation of Black inner city congregations has not produced a related growth in the population of nonprofits and voluntary associations. This suggests that African-Americans, many of them members of theologically conservative non-denominational bodies with traditional anti-institutional inclinations, may favor forms of civic participation that use non-organizational vehicles for mobilizing resources.

Varying Models of Public Engagement

Religious groups differ significantly in their preferred modes of public engagement. On the whole, American religious bodies have eschewed direct involvement in electoral politics, preferring instead to influence the public's

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represented than the small Unitarian faith tradition. Only one trustee [in a population of 1660] is identified from…rapidly growing religious movements such as the Assemblies of God" (14-15). Swartz also found that Jews served as trustees far above their representation in the general population, comprising nearly a fifth of the entire sample of 675 trustees. W. Lloyd Warner (Warner & Lunt, 1941) found similarly disproportionate involvement of liberal Protestants in the associational life of "Yankee City" (Newburyport, Massachusetts). The study found Catholics to be associationally active— but primarily through organizations tied closely to the formal structures of the church.

7 As a recent article on Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox communities suggests (Berger, 1997), the organizational orientation of these groups defies easy categorization. In some instances, large populations of these sects have moved to rural areas and, by force of numbers and high levels of political participation, taken over local civic institutions and turned them to religious purposes. This became a subject of controversy in a federal court suit between the board of education of the Hasidic New York village, Kiryas Joel, and regional school administrators (Board of Education of Kiryas Joel v. Board of Education of Morn-Wood bury Central School District, 1994) which resulted in an important decision on church-state relations by the U.S. Supreme Court. In the wake of the Kiryas Joel decision, some ultra-Orthodox groups have eschewed the use of public institutions and depended entirely on voluntary, privately-supported bodies to deliver educational and other services and, at the same time, denied the jurisdiction of civil authorities (such as zoning and building enforcement bodies) over their activities. This complete rejection of the conventional concept of the role of religion in a pluralistic civil society— rejection of the notion that religious organizations exist in society rather than being coextensive with it—poses analytical problems of particular interest in light of the broad movement to create various forms of private government in the United States (Saurian, 1992; Hall, 1993; McKenzie, 1994).

moral and perceptual agendas. As De Tocqueville put it, religion in America is *less powerful* because of its avoidance of strivings for political power, but its influence was *more lasting* because it confined its activism to domains where its authority was uncontested (De Tocqueville, 1835, II: 323).

To say this is not to suggest that organized religion has limited the range of instrumentalities of public influence that it has been willing to use. Nor should it be taken to suggest that its influence has been anything less than profound. Ultimately, legitimacy of policy regimes rests less on electoral vicissitudes than on deeply held beliefs about the men, women, and their place in the universe—the central concerns of religion. The importance of the major religious groups in shaping these beliefs cannot be underestimated. The perfectionist ethos that underlay the great reform movements of the nineteenth century and the progressive/liberal movements that produced the twentieth century welfare state came directly from the social teachings of antebellum liberal Protestantism. Although the fatalist and Manichean strands in American political life have been less visible, at least until recently, their influence has been neither less enduring nor less grounded in the beliefs and practices of particular religious groups.

Whether we seek to understand the complexity and diversity of faith-based service provision, variations in organizational structure and process, impacts on civic engagement, or intergroup preferences in modes of public engagement, we ultimately must be attentive both to the important differences between religious and secular entities, the importance of theology, doctrine, and practice, and the ways in which formalized tenets of belief are translated into collective behavior. Unlike secular organizations, for which maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness are likely to be primary sources of legitimacy, in faith-based organizations, form and function, decision making, and the arenas in which decisions are made—are inevitably filtered through theological lenses in which optimization of spiritual, rather than material, outcomes are likely to be paramount considerations.

We are only beginning to map out the variety of structures characteristic of faith communities or taken on the more challenging task of tracing the ways in which different theological orientations and ecclesiastical polities are linked to forms of service provision. Accomplishing this task is clearly necessary to any effort to systematically evaluate the contributions of religious and religiously tied organizations to the provision of charitable, cultural, educational, health, and human services.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to understanding the public role of religion in America has been our attachment to using the firm (or, in the case of religion, the congregation) as the basic unit for study. This perspective overlooks the extent to which all forms of religious entities are uniquely embedded in more encompassing ecclesiastical polity structures on the one hand and networks of community relationships on the other.

The Importance of Connection

Any genuinely useful analytical framework applied to religion must go beyond the conventional analysis of the firm. Using organizations and firms as units of analysis exaggerate entities' autonomy and ignore their *connectedness*—the extent to which they are components of larger systems (Milofsky, 1987). Religion in general and Christianity in particular are concerned with connectedness, both in its attention to the formation of communities of believers and in the connection of believers to God and to other people in their social, economic, and political relations. This suggests that the appropriate unit of analysis in examining religious institutions is not the organization (congregation, parish, denomination) but the *marke* or *organizational field* — the aggregate of "key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services. The virtue of this unit of analysis is that it directs our attention not simply to competing firms…or to networks or organizations that actually interact…but to the totality of relevant actors" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

This perspective offers the additional advantage of focusing attention on the cognitive dimensions of organizational life—the values and beliefs that constitute the core of religious life. Organizational fields involve not only interactional behavior and the configuration of interorganizational structures, but also the development of mutual awareness among participants in sets of organizations committed to common enterprises—awareness that profoundly shapes organizational structure and process.

So, What Is a Religious Organization?

Additional challenges are posed by the difficulty of defining "religious organizations" especially when their fields of primary activity involve the provision of services which are not intrinsically religious in character but which may, or may not be, an extension of a religious ministry (Jeavons, 1994). This difficulty is increased when, as in the contemporary context, activities defined as religious have expanded beyond traditional "pulpit ministries" to include a wide range of professional callings, including organization management and public administration. In many denominations, lay ministries are assuming increasing importance, and when the religious activities of faith communities are being carried out not only in traditional church settings, but through secular corporations (Wuthnow, 1986; Jeavons, 1993; Bender, 1995).

Churches, religious institutions, and faith communities have to varying extents always been engaged in service provision but, for a variety of reasons, the scale, scope, and character of service commitments have changed in recent decades. Some of these reasons are internal, as when Vatican II redirected many Catholic religious from contemplative and sacerdotal to social service activities; at the same time, declining membership in inner-city congregations has led many Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations to redefine their religious missions in terms of service provision. Some of these reasons are

external, as when, in the 1980s, conservative Protestants were mobilized as political activists and service providers, primarily in response to government efforts to regulate the activities of church-sponsored secular corporations.[8]

An important 1993 paper by Thomas Jeavons discusses and attempts to schematize the definitional dilemmas involving "religious organizations." What "defines an organization as 'religious,'" Jeavons writes, "is not self-evident in many cases." In searching for defining characteristics, Jeavons points out that the universe of organizations is not a bi-modal world, entities are exclusively one thing or another, strictly secular or strictly religious. Defining characteristics "help us see where a particular organization seems to belong in a spectrum that runs from those that are profoundly, perhaps even purely, religious to those that are very clearly, even absolutely, secular in nature and function"(8-9).

Jeavons goes on to single out four possible ways to identify organizations as religious: 1) that their primary purposes and activities are sacerdotal; 2) that they identify themselves as religious through their commitment to fields of work "typically and appropriately associated with religious endeavors"; 3) that their participants, resources, products or services, and decision-making processes are religious in nature; 4) that they participate in formal or informal networks of organizations in which religion plays a major part.

Churches and other organizations in which religious identity or commitment are a formal prerequisite for participation or employment pose fewer definitional dilemmas. But many organizations—social service and health agencies, for example—may eschew sacerdotal functions and self-identification and yet, by virtue of their financial support and volunteer base, products and services, and decision-making processes be defined as religious organizations. Jeavons points out that such organizations, because they serve as foci for shared religious and identity and commitment may encourage volunteers and donors to self-select on the basis of belief, even if belief is not a formal prerequisite for participation. In addition, religiosity is likely to determine the field of service in which a faith-based agency becomes engaged.

Finally, religiosity is likely to profoundly impact the configurations of "connectedness" between organizational actors, between agencies and their environments, and between "key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services"

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8 According to Godfrey Hodgson, the political mobilization of the religious right began in the late 1970s, when the IRS sought to deny tax-exemption to independent Christian schools (on grounds that they were racially segregated) and to fundamentalist colleges (because of religious and gender discrimination). These rulings shattered the Christian community's notion that Christians could isolate themselves inside their own institutions and teach what they pleased. The realization that they could not do so linked up with the long-held conservative view that government is too powerful and intrusive, and this linkage is what made evangelicals active (Hodgson, 177). Since the late 1970s, the Christian right has made an enormous commitment both to establishing nonprofit entities, but to using them for explicitly political purposes (e.g., the Christian Coalition).

that, taken together, act as powerful forces in shaping the ways in which societies define and carry out collective tasks.

Civil society is not an empty space: its nature and extent are determined by the human networks and collective activities of any given population at any given time. As the work of Robert Putnam has persuasively demonstrated, the configuration of civil society varies both within nations (as in the differences between northern and southern Italy) and over time within the same nation (as in the rise and decline of associational activity in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century) (1994; Putnam & Gamm, 1999).

The following examples are intended to explore: 1) the correlative relations between religious bodies and forms of collective action; 2) the role of religion in the production of civic skills and values; 3) the association between particular religious beliefs and forms of civic engagement. They are intended to be suggestive, not definitive—and they are offered in the hope of encouraging the exploration of the public role of religion using perspectives that grant as much credence to the influence of religious belief and practice as to the power of economic, social, and political factors.

Religion and Civil Society

W. Lloyd Warner's fine-grained study of "Yankee City" (Newburyport, Massachusetts), conducted in the 1930s, found significant connections between congregations and their members' patterns of associational participation (Warner & Lunt, 1941). Not only did religion appear to be a more powerful factor than economic or political loyalties in shaping the overall associational architecture of the community (324), but also the intensity of associational involvement. Warner took particular note of the differences between liberal Protestant congregations (Congregationalist, Unitarian, and Episcopalian), conservative Protestants (Baptists and Methodists), and the Roman Catholics.

The liberal Protestants were notable not only for the extensiveness of their associational ties, but also for their willingness to sponsor secular or ecumenical groups like the YMCA, Boy Scouts, and Campfire—organizations which served the whole community rather than their own members (328). "The Yankee City Second Church," Warner wrote,

> has surrounded itself with some twenty associations whose behavior consists largely of secular activities that cannot be included in the sacred programs to which the church restricts its behavior…One of these associations is the Second Men's Church Club. This group has virtually no connection with the sacred ritual of the Church but helps to integrate the Church with the larger society; and through the participation of its members in the club's activities, the Church is directly related to the larger community itself. At meetings of the Men's Club, a speaker, chosen from the

> community regardless of his religious affiliation, talks on some
> topic of current interest, and a discussion by members and their
> invited guests follows. At occasional meetings the members of the
> Second Church Ladies Aid Society prepare and serve supper to the
> Men's Club and take part in the recreational program that follows.
> The activities of such associations are almost unlimited in their
> variation" (302-3).

"The Second Church of Yankee City," he continued, "dominated a Boy Scout troop that drew a large proportion of its members from other churches and religions. The church membership was predominantly Yankee, but the Boy Scout troop was commonly known as the 'League of Nations' because of the great number and variety of ethnics among its members" (317).

Yankee City's liberal Protestant congregations tended, like the Second Church, to give rise to "primary associations around which satellite associations are clustered" (310). These primary associations, in turn, give rise to and "ultimately control[led] the behavior and policies of the secondary associations" to which they were linked (311).

In contrast, Yankee City's more conservative Protestant congregations (Methodists and Baptists) displayed in proportion to the size of their memberships the fewest formal (interorganizational) and informal (membership) ties to other associations in the community. On the formal level, they were not sponsors of youth and athletic groups or ecumenical bodies like the YMCA or the Interdenominational Council. On the membership level, their members were the least likely of all of Yankee City's residents to be members of voluntary associations.

Roman Catholics, Yankee City's second largest faith community, were associationally active—but primarily with and through organizations connected to the Catholic Church. Thus, for example, Warner found the Immaculate Conception Church was the parent structure to the Catholic Boys' Club directly connected with it; the latter had a once-removed satellite of the Immaculate Conception Church which was the C.B.C. Basketball League. This last organization was composed of six associations which were its satellites and were indirect satellites of the Immaculate Conception Church (321). In contrast, the liberal Protestant churches, through their ties to the YMCA had 238 satellite connections to a wide variety of associations including the Scouts, athletic associations, hobby groups, and fraternal and sororal organizations (322).

Overall, in examining the ties between religious faith and associations, Warner found that Protestants alone (by which he meant liberal Protestants) accounted for over a third of the city's 357 associations, while Catholics were tied to only 33 (11%). Protestant groups, moreover, were far more likely to include Catholics and Jews as members than the other way around (174 or nearly 40% of the city's associations—most of them connected to liberal Protestant congregations—had Catholic and Jewish members) (346).

Associations of this type included the Yankee City Women's Club, the Yankee City Country Club, the Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Boy Scout troops (348).

Aware that these findings might be artifacts of the liberal Protestants' historic domination of community life in Yankee City or of the tendency of the well-to-do to be liberal Protestants and associationally active, Warner examined the patterns of associational involvement by members of different socioeconomic groups in these congregations. The fact that their lower middle class members displayed nearly identical patterns of congregational and associational participation as their upper-upper adherents suggested that belief rather than class was the major factor shaping civic activism.

Because Warner was primarily interested in affiliational and correlational phenomena rather than causation, he gave little attention to specifically theological and doctrinal factors and the ways in which they may have influenced some religious groups to be more intensively engaged in community life than others. Had he been, he might have noted not only how deeply rooted in theology, religious practice, and history was the associational architecture which led liberal Protestants to express their beliefs through secular or nonsectarian voluntary associations, but also the reaffirmation and elaboration of those practices by the "social gospel" programs embraced by the liberal Protestants of that era.

The Legacy of Liberal Protantism

Historical studies have shown extraordinary linkages between religious and organizational demography: regions settled by liberal Protestants showed a distinct preference for private corporations as vehicles of collective action (Hall, 1982; Bowen, Nygren, Turner, & Duffy, 1994; Wright, 1994). This was no accident: the use of voluntary associations was championed by Congregationalist evangelists like Lyman Beecher as means of social, political, and moral reform—and secular associations became the chief instrumentality for liberal Protestant influence in the United States, even in areas where they were in the minority (Smith, 1957; Foster, 1965; Hall, 1995). This preference for collective action through voluntary associations was doctrinally-grounded in New Divinity Edwardsian Calvinism and its successor, the "New Haven Theology" of Nathaniel W. Taylor, Leonard Bacon, and Beecher—in the secular domains of politics, society, and economic life (Hall, 1994).

This theological innovation, with its stress of voluntary associations as moral instruments, was controversial. Baptists and Methodists—whose anti-institutionalism had for many years led them to oppose such things as a settled and educated clergy—attacked the liberals' advocacy of voluntary associations with fierce vehemence. Francis Wayland, president of Brown University, a leading political economist, and the most prominent Baptist intellectual in the United States, wrote a widely circulated polemic against associations in 1838 (Wayland, 1838). William Ellery Channing, the leader of Boston Unitarianism

also wrote an influential attack on voluntary associations—though he later recanted his views and become one of the nation's leading proponents of voluntarism (Channing, 1829).

Although religious conservatives eventually accommodated the associational impulse, the institutions they founded tended to serve their own faith communities rather than the general public. This became a major point of contention during the Civil War, when the conservatives' United States Christian Commission and the liberals' United States Sanitary Commission, struggled to dominate military relief activities. The failure of Reconstruction, particularly the Freedmen's Bureau's effort to rebuild southern social and economic institutions, was in large part due to conflict between liberal and conservative religious groups over whether these activities should serve sectarian or non-sectarian purposes.

The social gospel, which came to be embraced by both liberals and conservatives, embodied these differences in theology and organizational preference. Conservatives viewed charity as an instrument of conversion and generally provided services through congregations and other religious entities. Liberals preferred to work through non-sectarian organizations or collaborative entities like the charity organization societies—which, while not unconcerned with moral issues, primarily sought efficiency and effectiveness in providing social and economic services. The kinds of social and ethnic inclusiveness Warner would find by the 1930s in the Second Church's "League of Nations" scout troop and in the readiness of the church's members to form and join inclusive religiously heterogeneous civic groups like the service clubs was very much a product of the liberal religious sensibility. As Jane Addams put it in describing the "subjective necessity for settlement houses," adherents of the liberal version of the social gospel sought to "socialize" democracy by making the spiritual and material benefits of middle class life available to all.[9]

As Conrad Cherry points out in his recent study of the evolution of American theological education, the social gospel was preeminently a middle class creed which called "for social reform while professing the inherent worth

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9 C. Luther Fry's article, "Changes in Religious Organizations," in *Recent Social Trends* (Report, 1933, 1009-1060) provides a striking account of the impact of the social gospel on the religious establishment. "At the beginning of the century," he wrote, "interest in the social implications of the Gospel was limited to a small group of social reformers and theological students" (1014). Within a decade, Episcopalians, Methodists, Northern Baptists, and Presbyterians had joined to formulate a "Social Creed of the Protestant Churches," which was adopted by the ecumenical body to which they all belonged, the Federal Council of Churches.

Fry failed to mention that the first impulse towards articulating the purposes of social ministry had originated with the efforts of Unitarians William Ellery Channing and Joseph Tuckerman to create a "ministry-lat-large" for Boston's poor in the 1820s (Channing, 1835/1900; McColgan). Institutionalizing training for these ministries in the curricula of theological schools had originated among the Congregationalists, when the Hartford Seminary appointed Graham Taylor as Professor of Practical Theology (Street, 1958, 21). Taylor later went on to join the faculty of the Chicago Theological Seminary and to found Chicago Commons, one of the pioneer social settlements. Conrad Cherry provides an excellent description of the influence of the social gospel on American theological education in *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (1995, 185-212).

and rights of the individual, affirming the fundamental integrity of American democratic capitalism, and holding to the conviction that upward social and economic mobility is the birthright of every American" (Cherry, 1995, 188). The social gospellers, he continues, had boundless confidence in the power of education to "lead people to choose the larger good over private interests" and to "train reformers who would lead other to correct the gross inequalities of class" (188).

Such impulses, informed by a new "Christian sociology" resulting from the cross-fertilization of new formulations of social ethics and the emergent profession of social work, moved liberal Protestant churches and their clergy into positions of community leadership as partners in constructing the coalitions of government, business, and voluntary entities that progressive business statesmen like Herbert Hoover viewed as the building blocks of the "associative state" alternative to socialism (Hoover, 1922). Unlike the Catholics and some of the more conservative Protestant denominations, the liberals generally invested their energies in nonsectarian secular community institutions—hospitals, schools, and welfare agencies—rather than organizations that primarily served or sought to enlarge their own faith communities.

The dichotomy of liberal Protestantisms committed to inclusive nonsectarian civic institutions and the preference of Roman Catholic and conservative Protestant groups for more exclusive forms of civic participation has endured, despite dramatic changes in the social, economic, and political fortunes of their respective adherents. Studies of the giving practices of the latter show them far more likely to give to their own congregations and to causes identified with their own faith communities than for broader civic purposes (Hoge, et al., 1996; Iannacone, 1998). A recent investigation of the religious affiliations of nonprofit hospital board membership in major metropolitan areas in the period 1930-1990, found that liberal Protestants were far more likely to sit on the boards of secular institutions than conservatives or Catholics, even in communities (like Atlanta and Los Angeles) where liberal Protestants were distinctly in the minority (Swartz, 1998). On the other hand, boards dominated by liberal Protestants were far more likely to be religiously heterogeneous than those controlled by Catholics or conservative Protestants—which seldom included members of other faiths.[10] This persistent pattern would appear to confirm Warner's observation of half a century earlier, which attributed these differences in civic orientation to faith rather than fortune.

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10 In examining a sample of 154 secular hospital trustees in 1990, the study found that 75 (49%) were identifiable as members of Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, Unitarian, or Lutheran churches, 5 (3%) were Catholic, and 12 (8%) were Jewish. Only 6 trustees (4%) were Baptists, Methodists, and members of other conservative Protestant groups. Looking at a broader sample of 675 trustees, the study found that Baptists, Methodists, and Catholics were overwhelmingly more likely to sit on the boards of hospitals with ties to their own denominations and that these were unlikely to include trustees who were not members of their faith communities: of the 10 Baptists serving as hospital trustees, all served on the boards of Baptist hospitals; of the 27 Methodists, 22 served on the boards of Methodist hospitals; of the 93 Catholics, 83 served on the boards of Catholic hospitals (34).

Provocative insight into the origins of these differences is offered by a recent investigation of civic skills and participation by political scientists Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady (1994). Based on a survey of 15,000 individuals and 2,500 in-depth interviews, this study not only found that religion—more than income or education, workplace or school—accounted for such non-political civic skills as willingness to attend and plan meetings, to write letters, and to make speeches or presentations, but also that there were significant differences between religious groups in their possession of these skills and motives. Episcopalians, the only liberal Protestant group singled out in the analysis, displayed consistently greater skills both on the job and in church; Baptists, ranked next to last in church skills and last in workplace skills; Catholics, ranked the lowest in church skills and next to last in workplace skills (325-27). The study attributed religion's extraordinary impact to the fact that religious preferences tended to cut across rather than to mimic socio-economic strata. More interestingly, its findings suggested strong linkages between the acquisition of civic skills (and the willingness to use them in community life) and religious groups whose beliefs and practices encouraged broad congregational participation in worship, governance, and fund-raising.

Although suggestive of the linkages between faith and civic orientation, the findings never really engage the extent to which the ability of groups to impart civic skills is rooted in the intrinsically religious domains of theology, doctrine, and practice. Liberal Protestant laity are involved in every aspect of the organizational lives of their churches. They serve as members of bodies which make and implement decisions about everything from such spiritual and devotional issues as the hiring of clergy, admission of members, outreach ministries, music, and vestments, through such concrete organizational matters as membership development, fundraising, and maintenance of physical plant. Members serve in quasi-clerical capacities (as deacons and liturgical assistants), as lectors (who read portions of divine service), as Sunday school teachers, and in administrative capacities. Even in the Episcopal Church, where important formal spiritual responsibilities are conceded to middle judicatories (dioceses) and the national denominational body, the day-to-day business of parishes is almost completely conducted by laity. Although laity have come to play increasingly important roles in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II, decision making on doctrine, personnel, finance, and other central issues still remains almost entirely in the hands of clergy and diocesan bodies.

The allocation of authority between supra-congregational bodies, clergy, and laity is shaped by theology, doctrine, and practice. Though inevitably sensitive to the real world pressures of financial resources and demographics, *who* participates in decision making, *how* decisions are made, and the ways in which decisions are legitimated are necessarily shaped by religious, not secular criteria. Unlike secular nonprofit entities, religious bodies are not free to reshape their missions and methods in response to market pressures. This does not

mean that religious bodies are less amenable to change than secular ones, but, rather, that the mechanisms of change are far more likely to be grounded in values and history. The powerful influence of theology, doctrine, and practice extends beyond the internal concerns and activities of religious bodies to the ways in which they position themselves and their members in public life. The lack of civic skills that Verba and his associates found in certain religious groups do not involve organizational incapacity but, as studies of conservative Protestant congregations suggest, theologically mediated preferences for *different kinds* of capacity.

African-American Religion: An Alternative Model of Civil Religion?

If Verba, Schlozman & Brady were surprised by the strong linkage of religion and civic competence, they were even more amazed by what they found regarding the combined impact of race and religion. Churches attended by African-Americans, regardless of denomination, they found,

> have special potential for stimulating political participation. First, they belong to churches whose internal structure nurtures opportunities to exercise politically relevant skills. This process need not derive from activities that are intrinsically political. Running a rummage sale to benefit the church day care center or editing a church newsletter provides opportunities for the development of skills relevant to politics even though the enterprise in question is expressly non-political. In addition, African-Americans also seem to belong to more *politicized* churches where they are exposed to political stimuli, requests for political participation, and messages form the pulpit about political matters (383-4).

The validity of these observations is confirmed by my own research on religion and associational life in contemporary New Haven, Connecticut. 1996 data on New Haven's tax-exempt organizations offers some provocative insights into this issue. Of the 310 charitable tax-exempt entities in the 06511 zip code area, which includes the predominantly black Newhallville and Dixwell neighborhoods, 48 are identifiably African-American organizations (identified as such either by their names, locations, or histories). Of these, 30 are secular non-political organizations and 18 are congregations or religious organizations. Of the 30 secular non-political organizations, 9 are quasi-governmental entities, organizations (such as tenants' councils) formed either to influence government action or (as in the case of Head Start and community development corporations), created to carry out government policies.

The clustering of public agencies, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations in and around the Dixwell Plaza—an effort by city planners and foundations to create a community center for the city's oldest Black neighborhood—expresses the close relationships between religion, politics, and government. In 1996, the area contained the following public, nonprofit, and religious agencies:

Dixwell Avenue (East side, between Sperry and Admiral Streets:
Elm Haven Houses (public housing)
Isadore Wexler School (public school)
Dixwell Avenue United Church of Christ
Dixwell Community House
Dixwell Children's Creative Art Center (church-run nonprofit)
Dixwell Pre-School & Day Care Center (church-run nonprofit)
Hannah Gray Home (nonprofit eldercare facility)
Dixwell Avenue (West side, Bristol to Charles Street):
United House of Prayer for All People
St. Martin de Porres Roman Catholic Church
East Rock Lodge, Improved Benevolent Order of Elks
Greater New Haven Business & Professionals Association
New Haven Free Library-Stetson Branch
Christ Chapel New Testament Church
Literacy Volunteers of Greater New Haven
New Haven Board of Education/Head Start Center
Dixwell Neighborhood Corporation
Youth Business Enterprises
Community Children & Family Services
Connecticut Outreach Center
Young Ministers' Alliance
Varick African American Methodist Episcopal Church
Varick Family Life Center
VWA Drop-in Center/National AIDS Brigade
Sperry Street, Dixwell to Goffe
St. Martin de Porres Roman Catholic Church
Little Rock Church of Christ's Disciples
Mount Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
Fire House
Goffe Street, Sperry to Broadway
Agape Christian Center
St. Mary's United Free Will Baptist Church

This impressive cluster was not created by accident. It was very much the intention of the city's leaders and the foundations and federal agencies that lavishly funded their activities both to create new public spaces and to forge partnerships between community and municipal agencies. The prominence of churches as anchors for the effort—particularly Dixwell Avenue UCC, whose ultra-modern edifice is part of the integrated complex which includes public housing, a public school, and a nonprofit (but publicly-funded) community center housing an assortment of daycare, arts education, and recreation activities and services—testifies to the essentially political orientation (and effectiveness) of the city's African-American congregations. These findings are consistent with Verba,

Schlozman, and Brady's conclusions about the capacities of African-American churches to generate political skills and stimulate political participation.

As notable as the close organizational and locational relationships between governmental and religious agencies in New Haven's black community is the extraordinarily small number of identifiably African-American nonprofit organizations relative to their representation in the city's human population. Although blacks comprise 48.1% of the population in the 06511 zip code area, barely 16% of the nonprofits in the area are identifiably black community organizations, suggesting that associations are *not* a major vehicle of collective action for the city's African-Americans. Moreover, they suggest that New Haven's African-Americans, overwhelmingly members of doctrinally-conservative congregations, have been impressively responsive to their churches' teachings and have, in consequence, directed their voluntary energies into political and congregational domains—while generally avoiding spheres of non-political voluntarism. This might explain why the impressive growth in the number of African-American congregations over the past half-century has not been matched by a comparable proliferation of community-based voluntary organizations.

The influence of religious rather than racial factors on the organizational profile of New Haven contemporary black community is suggested by its striking contrast with the associational life of the city's black population before the second World War. Comprising only 4% of New Haven's population in 1940, the city's black community sustained 11 religious congregations (including 2 Baptist, 2 Methodist, 1 Congregational, 1 Episcopal, and 5 non-denominational bodies) and an impressive range of secular associations, including 6 Masonic and 2 Odd Fellows, and 1 Elks lodges, 2 independent social clubs, and 1 political association, and an old folks home (the Hannah Gray Home)—amounting to 4% of the city's population of non-proprietary entities.[11] According to Robert Austin Warner, the pre-war churches anchored networks of secular associations in a manner identical to that found by the Yankee City researchers. The Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church (one of the oldest black churches in the United States) not only contained men's and women's clubs, but sponsored Boy Scout and Camp Fire troops, a junior rifle corps, two drum corps, a dramatic association, a "Community Service Circle," a "Nurses and Mother's Baby Conference," and a loan library. In the mid-1920s, the congregation took the lead in organizing a social settlement, Dixwell Community House, that became a major target for philanthropic support from the white elite (Warner, 1940, 281-82).

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11 My tabulation of black organizations, based on listings in the 1940 city directory, may underrepresent the actual population of black clubs and associations—for Robert Austin Warner's *New Haven's Negroes* (1940) lists a number of entities that the Price, Lee & Company enumerators seem to have missed. The Price, Lee city directories, because they were published in New Haven, were unusually accurate in listing white organizations.

By contrast, in 1996, while blacks comprised 36% of the city's population and black congregations comprised nearly a third of New Haven's congregations, identifiably black organizations comprised less than 5% of the city's population of secular nonprofits (Hall, 1999a). Given the rich associational life of earlier decades, the difference was not race or even economic resources [as Bailey wrote of the black population in the Nineteenth Ward in 1913, virtually all lived below "the safe line of economic independence" (13)], but preferences for forms of collective action that were closely correlated with religious affiliation.

Between 1940 and 1996, New Haven's black population not only grew impressively in size, it changed dramatically in composition. The pre-war black population was mostly native stock, largely descendants of an Afro-Caribs who had lived in the city since the early eighteenth century, supplemented by free blacks who had settled in the city after the Civil War (Bailey, 1913; Warner, 1940).[12] During and after the war, New Haven experienced a massive migration of southern blacks, primarily from the states of North and South Carolina, attracted by opportunities in the city's booming arms industry. The religious preferences of these migrants mirrored the religious demography of their home states: they were overwhelmingly Baptists or Methodists, although the congregations which they established in New Haven were unlikely to be affiliated with any of the national denominational bodies of these faith families—and this preference for membership in non-denominational congregations would grow over time until, by the 1990s, fully a third of New Haven's congregations would be free-standing faith communities.

The American South generally—and the Carolinas in particular—have been less than friendly to collective action through voluntary and nonprofit associations, preferring instead to provide services, when they were provided at all, through government agencies. In the 1780s, South Carolina statesman Aedanus Burke led opposition to the Society of the Cincinnati—one of the nation's first national voluntary associations (Burke, 1784). In the 1790s, their legislatures annulled the Elizabethan Statute of Charitable Uses and supported Virginian Thomas Jefferson's efforts to limit the powers of charitable corporations (Zollman, 1924, 49). This legacy of hostility to civil privatism endured into the present: the East South Central states (including the Carolinas) had the fewest nonprofits per capita in the United States and among the lowest levels of charitable giving (Hodgkinson, et al., 1992; Wolpert, 1993, 46-49; Bowen, et al., 1994, 26-27). It appears that black migrants to New Haven carried with them as part of the same cultural legacy that led them to establish theologically-conservative congregations, a preference for civic

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12 William Bailey's study of Negroes in New Haven's Ninth Ward found that 40% were born in northern states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), with the rest born in the South, primarily in the Carolinas (23%) and Virginia (19%) (Bailey, 1913, 7).

engagement through politics and government over civic engagement through voluntary associations and nonprofit organizations.

This preference is not, it appears, peculiar to New Haven's African-Americans. Sociologist John Stanfield, in writing on traditions of civic responsibility in the black community, suggests that understanding them requires that we

> revise our thinking about civic responsibility. Sociological studies of civic responsibility in particular and of philanthropy in general explore the ways in which such processes, such as socialization and social change, and structures, such as institutions and communities, influence human propensities to engage in civil stewardship. Conventional philanthropic studies with sociological foci tend to be grounded in structural-functional notions of social organization (institutions, communities, task organizations, social movements, societies), social processes (socialization), and stratification (class, gender, race). This grounding has encouraged a monocultural perspective in sociological philanthropic studies…[which] interprets American society as a mode of social organization with one value system, a system in which conflict is dysfunctional. Social and cultural diversity in monocultural social systems is presented either as a temporary antecedent to total assimilation or as pathological (Stanfield, 1993, 140).

Giving and volunteering, Stanfield points out, have different cultural meanings in different settings (on this, see also Hall-Russell, 1996). If so, the high levels of civic competency found by Verba and his associates in studying African-Americans suggest that associational activity may not be the best measure of community vitality. Finally, it is worth noting the extraordinary number of African-American congregations that have applied for and received charitable tax-exempt status. Given the fact that churches are not normally required to register for tax-exemption—and very few do—one is naturally inclined to ask why these entities should voluntarily assume the onerous burdens of record-keeping and public reporting that exempt status entails.

The answer appears to lie in the increasing importance of churches in general—and African-American churches in particular—in human services provision. Successful pursuit of government contracts, as well as successful grant seeking and fund raising from private agencies and donors, requires organizational and procedural formalities—particularly registration as a charitable tax-exempt entity and reasonably sophisticated financial information systems—in order to satisfy the monitoring, financial accountability, and oversight of funding agencies. Interestingly, these churches incorporated and registered as tax-exempts during the late 1960s and early 1970, when the federal government and private foundations were making major investments in grassroots/community-based organizations under the banner of the Great Society.

Curiously, when asked about their role in social service provision in the late 1980s, most congregations not only reported a remarkable range of programs and services including education, substance abuse, child abuse, parenting, domestic violence, job training/unemployment, adoption/foster care, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, youth programs, elderly programs, long-term illnesses, AIDS, food and clothing distribution, counseling, spiritual outreach, day care, recreation, social and political activism, finances, and various volunteer programs—but claimed that their programs were entirely financed by church funds, with no external forms of support (Chang, Williams, Griffith & Young, 1994, 93). However, researchers found that rather than actually maintaining these extensive programs, congregations and clergy were more likely to serve as points of access and referral for public and private agencies offering health, human services, and other forms of assistance.

In the wake of welfare reform, however, this networking role appears to be in the process of being replaced by a greater role in direct service provision. As indicated, older more established black congregations—Dixwell UCC and Varick AME—had been actively involved in large-scale public-private partnerships since the 1960s. Since the mid-1990s, non-denominational congregations appear to be playing increasingly important roles, both as service providers under government contract and as brokers of public and private community and economic development funds. With the legal obstacles to direct government subsidy of faith-based activity largely removed, this role seems likely to grow steadily—along with the increasing importance of black elected officials in the city's political life.

Towards New Paradigms After 1970: Deinstitutionalization, Devolution, and Faith-Based Service Provision

The civil privatism of Yankee City and the public sector activism of black New Haven represent what might be considered "traditional" paradigms of the role of religion in public life that, very likely, could be found almost anywhere in the United States before 1970. While granting organized religion an important role as a source of civic skills and values, the role of religion in the provision of essential cultural, educational, health care, and human services is assumed to be limited. Religious bodies *might* provide services to their own members and to the general public, but, because of legal constraints on direct government support of religious institutions stemming from the courts' interpretations of the Establishment Clause, these were likely to be adjuncts to services provided by secular nonprofit and government agencies.

Since the 1970s, new configurations of faith-based civic engagement and service provision have begun to emerge, driven by convergent changes in religious doctrine and practice, in public policy, and in political alignment. While these have assumed greater visibility since the "Republican Revolution" of 1994 and the sweeping programs of welfare reform adopted by Congress and state legislatures which have removed many of the barriers to public subsidies

to religious bodies and faith-based service providers, the basic elements of devolution and privatization began to develop decades earlier.

Although the efforts of Dorothea Dix and other nineteenth century reformers to create public institutions for the mentally disabled were considered triumphs of humanitarianism, by the mid-twentieth century these institutions were increasingly likely to be venues for abuse and neglect. As early as the 1950s, families of inmates and advocates for the retarded had litigated to improve conditions, but found the courts generally unwilling to intervene in these areas. That changed in the late 1960s, when ideas developed in civil rights litigation began to influence the way judges viewed the treatment of the disabled. Beginning with a successful suit against the state of Alabama in 1969, a wave of litigation swept through the states challenging not only conditions in the hospitals and training schools for mentally disabled, but also the very idea of institutionalization itself.

In 1975, after rejecting as inadequate the efforts of state agencies to improve the conditions under which the mentally disabled were housed, the courts ordered the State of New York to remove inmates from institutions and to "normalize" them through treatment and care in appropriate community settings. The state initially assumed that traditional voluntary agencies, particularly the large faith-based charities with whom they had for decades dealt in contracting for such services as foster care, would be willing to take up the task. But they found much greater enthusiasm among less traditional groups, particularly among minority social services organizations spawned by the War on Poverty (many of which were religiously-tied), among members of Catholic religious orders newly empowered by Vatican II, and among the state's growing Orthodox Jewish communities (Rothman & Rothman, 1984, 45-64). By the mid-1980s, the lion's share of group home care for the mentally disabled would be provided by such groups—which received virtually all of their financial support from grants and contracts with federal, state, and local government agencies (Gronbjerg, 1993). By the 1990s, many of these service providers would expand as large franchiseform agencies operating facilities throughout the country.

The Catholic Contrast

The involvement of Catholics individually and institutionally in this process illustrates both the complexity of emerging interorganizational relationships in contracting regimes and the influence of theological and ecclesial factors in shaping the faith-based service provision. As noted, although the established Catholic charities historically resisted involvement in the effort to create alternatives institutional care for the mentally disabled, clergy and religious sympathetic to the Second Vatican Council's reforms saw the challenge as an unparalleled opportunity to renew their missions and to embrace "the Christ of a poor and hungry people" by taking their faith into the world through lives of service in non-religious settings (Rothman & Rothman, 1984,

161). Enthusiasm for the possibilities for combining faith and careers was not restricted to the clergy or members of religious orders. As word of New York State's efforts to create a system of alternative, community-based treatment and care spread, young professionals working in special education, particularly Catholics, applied for positions. Perhaps in an earlier day, some of those who had been raised in blue-collar families and attended parochial schools might have joined a religious order. Although such a choice seemed out of the question in the 1970s, a career linked to doing good was not. They all had read Dorothy Day, admired her sense of social justice and shared her political sympathies…Day inspired a significant Catholic-left movement, which to those in retardation meant organizing alternatives to institutions (Rothman & Rothman, 1984, 175).

> The church's renewal of its social mission and its efforts to direct the commitment of the clergy, members of religious orders, and communicants into the world, dovetailed in the United States with changes in government policy toward the disadvantaged. The introduction of federal health insurance for the poor substituted an entitlement for charity and insisted upon a professionalization of benevolence. Medicaid policies governing hospital reimbursement required that staff possess diplomas (dedication was not enough), and accordingly, Catholic hospitals have to send their sister nurses and sister social workers to graduate schools. Then, just when Vatican II was urging members of the orders to pursue justice in the secular world, Medicaid was compelling them to be trained in the secular world, a combination that broke down the insularity of the convent (Rothman & Rothman, 1984, 161-62).

Shifts in doctrine and religious practice, in other words, converged with shifts in public policy favoring devolution of service delivery to states and localities, privatization of formerly public services, and trends in organized charity promoting entrepreneurialism and managerial professionalization.

Taken together, the church's doctrinal and administrative reforms, shifts in the policies of public and private institutions, and the increasing desire of young people to link careerism and idealism, amounted to a redefinition of the idea of ministry, which came to expand far beyond its traditional sacramental, ecclesiastical, and administrative confines. On the one hand, clergy and religious were increasingly likely to be doing their religious work in lay roles—teaching, operating group homes, working with the poor and dependent. On the other hand, committed laity were coming to view their own work in these settings as a form of ministry and as an important part of their effort to achieve "spiritual citizenship" within the church.

The extent to which these changed blurred conventional understandings of the organizational dimensions of religious life and the religiosity of organizations is suggested by the activities of priests like John Sabatos, who played a

key role in designing and implementing the political strategies which made the Catholics major operators of group homes in New York State. Sabatos, who had done extensive community organizing as a parish priest, was hired by the state and put in charge of community placement of deinstitutionalized retarded clients in the borough of Brooklyn. Although he had left the parochial priesthood, the Rothmans note, Sabatos had not left the church:

> he continued to do as a layman pretty much what he had done as a priest—that is, practice social work with the handicapped, now at the Brooklyn Developmental Center. His personal ties to the church hierarchy remained close, a fact of critical consequence when he took over the community placement program. Sabatos knew [Brooklyn] block by block, ethnic group by ethnic group, clergyman by clergyman, politician by politician .... And all this knowledge came into play in locating group home sites. Between 1976 and 1981, Sabatos oversaw the opening of fifty residences. He worked especially effectively with the Catholic Church, a ready ally. The Brooklyn diocese has a deeper commitment to retarded persons than other dioceses; it also had available a large number of empty convents suitablefor housing the retarded, and a network of bishops, priests, and agency directorsready to gather community support (Rothman & Rothman, 1984, 192).

Significantly, when efforts to locate a group home were opposed, Sabatos's defense was grounded not in secular terms, but religious ones that specifically framed social service delivery as a religious activity. "To bring those that are less fortunate under the [Church's] auspices…is the work of the Church," Sabatos would argue. "Rather than leaving a building vacant, to do it in this manner is only to intensify the presence of the Church and its theological commitment to the works of charity to all, regardless of their station in life. So we do not view that causing the area to go down the drain, but rather as a reaffirmation of the mission of the Catholic Church" (193).

Was Sabatos acting in a secular capacity? Were the group homes he created secular or faith-based entities? In a formal sense, they were secular—much as Sabatos himself was acting in a lay capacity. But as his own understanding of his activities suggest, he viewed himself—and the church—as extending, not abandoning their faith commitments.

New York led the nation in creating community-based care and treatment for the dependent and disabled. Its system of nonprofit group homes—many of them faith-based—supported by variable mixes of federal, state, and local funding, in many cases combined with traditional sources of private revenues (foundation grants and individual and corporate donations), would become a paradigm for the reorganization of social services throughout the country (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Gronbjerg, 1993; Hall, 1995). Because it anticipated developments elsewhere, the New York model also provides precedents for the kinds

of dilemmas—in law, policy, and religion—likely to crop up as the system is emulated in other states.

The long-running litigation involving the ultra-Orthodox village of Kiryas Joel is a good example of the kind of definitional conundrum we are likely to see. As noted, ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups came to play a major role in the rise of New York's group home industry. Typically organized by devout women who shared an ardent opposition to abortion (and often had large families of their own) and were distressed at the prospect of Jewish children, retarded or not, living in Christian group homes, these entities leased residences in their own neighborhoods and took in Jewish children from Willowbrook and other state institutions. State officials conceded the necessity of contracting with religious groups because they knew that, if sectarian groups were not allowed first to care for their own, state institutions would never be emptied (Rothman & Rothman, 1984, 171).

Such concessions to necessity inevitably produced unintended consequences: when the ultra-Orthodox Satmar Hasidim, rejecting conventional notions of pluralism, petitioned the New York legislature to create the Village of Kiryas Joel within Monroe Township and to draw its boundaries to ensure that its inhabitants were exclusively members of their sect. Although the Satmar retained the usual mechanisms of municipal government, they educated their children in private religious schools for which they sought no public support. However, when their school district asked the township to provide special education services for its disabled children, citing "the panic, fear and trauma [the children] suffered in leaving their own community and being with people whose ways were so different," the town declined to do so—and the village sued, claiming religious discrimination.

As the justices noted when the dispute finally reached the United States Supreme Court in 1994, the case did not involve the usual question of government support for a private religious body such as a congregation or a parochial school, but, rather, funding for a municipal entity that would have been eligible had it not been for the special circumstances of Kiryas Joel's establishment. Observing that the New York legislature had authorized incorporation of the village with full knowledge that its boundaries were drawn for the purpose of creating a religious enclave, the court criticized the legislature for having "delegated civic authority on the basis of religious belief" rather than on the neutral principles which normally guided districting practices in the state (Board of Education v. Grumet, et al., 1994). Although Justice Kennedy confidently stated in his concurring opinion that "there is more than a fine line between the voluntary association that leads to a political community comprised of people who share a common religious faith, and the forced separation that occurs when the government draws explicit political boundaries on the basis of peoples' faith," in fact the case raised the possibility of future cases that the court might find less easy to decide. In this instance, the court could rule against the

Hasidim on the basis of the peculiar circumstances under which the village's boundaries had been drawn. But what if a similar case arose involving municipal institutions established under the usual "neutral principles," but which had come under the control of a religious group by virtue of their numerical predominance? In such an instance, the line between municipal and religious body would be far more difficult to draw—much as the boundaries between religious and secular corporations was becoming blurred by the growth of contracting regimes.

In addition to blurring the boundaries between church and state, the involvement of faith-based groups at the forefront of community-based service provision may impair religion's traditional role as a producer of civic values. From the beginning, litigation has been one of the primary techniques used by group home advocates to advance their cause. Initially used against state institutions to establish the right of the disabled to treatment and care, for the past decade it has increasingly focused on silencing individuals and citizens' groups (NIMBYS) who opposed the establishment of group homes. The litigation technique most favored by group home advocates is the SLAPP suit (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation), a strategy pioneered by developers to fight suits brought by environmentalists (Sills, 1993).[13] In 1989, Congress greatly enhanced the ability of group home advocates to pursue SLAPP suits through a set of amendments to the Fair Housing Act that enabled individuals or groups to bring discrimination complaints to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for investigation (Rich, 1991). If found valid, the complaints were forwarded to the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice for further action. Because HUD decided to interpret the anti-discrimination provisions of the Fair Housing Act as superseding the free speech and citizen petition provisions of the First Amendment, any individual or group opposing or criticizing a proposed group home—even in private conversation—risked being enmeshed in litigation that, subsidized by the limitless resources of the federal government, could drag on for years (Freedman, 1994; Hall, 1996; Hall, 1999b). Municipalities became liable to such suits if individuals attending public meetings made comments that could be construed as discriminatory. Group home advocates also became expert in manipulating press reports to depict opponents of group homes as bigots or worse.

Churches and clergy tended to take positions in these cases, invariably sid-

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13 A SLAPP suit is defined as "a civil complaint or counterclaim (for monetary damages and/or injunction),…filed against non-governmental individuals and/or groups,…because of their communications to a government body, official, or the electorate…on an issue of some public interest or concern." Although the acronym was initially used only with reference to private individuals, it has since been extended to describe similar frivolous suits against public officals. It is important to stress that not every suit filed by a developer against a citizen or a public official is a SLAPP suit. A SLAPP suit is a meritless action filed by a plaintiff whose primary goal is not to win the case but rather to silence or intimidate citizens or public officials who have participated in proceedings regarding public policy or public decision making.

ing with group home developers. In a Connecticut case of the period, for example, the rector of an Episcopal congregation with close ties to the operators of a group home, charged in the *New York Times* that neighborhoods opposed the home because they didn't want to see "a bunch of dark-skinned children running around" (Yarrow, 1992). He rallied his congregation to build a fence around the group home to "protect the children" from allegedly hostile residents (most of them senior Yale faculty, many of whom had distinguished themselves as supporters of the civil rights movement and who could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be regarded as hostile to the rights of the disabled). The effect of the 3 year litigation was summarized by one neighborhood resident:

> It financially ruined the neighborhood association and terrified residents. HUD investigators pressured neighbors to turn informer. Residents were afraid to join the association or to speak out at public meetings. The government even tried to deprive us of legal representation by threatening to call our attorney as a witness…. We couldn't take minutes at meetings of our board because these could be seized and used as evidence…. We tried to settle the case, but the terms of the consent decree drafted by the government were intolerable. They would have required residents to undergo an enforced course of political re-education and proposed unconstitutional restraints on our right to speak, write, and associate (Mahony, 1995).

Religious involvement with this kind of activism, which arrays quasi-governmental often faith-based nonprofit service providers against traditional voluntary associations, necessarily raises questions about the kinds of strains that doing government's business may place on their faith commitments.

Welfare Reform: Déjà Vu All Over Again?

The initiatives of the 1980s and 90s are only the most recent of a succession of efforts by Americans to "reform" welfare. In the early nineteenth century, newly disestablished Protestant churches sought to regain public influence by advocating for a variety of dependent and disabled groups—the urban poor, the deaf and dumb, the blind, and the mentally ill. The second wave came after the Civil War, when "liberal" Protestants, enthused about the possiblities of "scientific philanthropy," sought to reconstruct approaches to poor relief using the new instrumentalities of bureaucracy, expertise, and social engineering. Battling the use of poor relief as a mechanism of political patronage and locked in battle with the "sentimental philanthropy" of the Catholics (sentimental because it was based on a desire to relieve suffering, not a desire to reform society), the charities reformers rationalized a system of mixed public/private provision managed by university-trained social workers and public administrators.

The issues of contracting, privatization, and service provision by faith-based—or as they called them, sectarian—agencies was a central feature of the late nineteenth century welfare reform debate. Then as now lines

between secular and religious organizations were indistinct. While religious bodies became increasingly active in providing social, health, and educational services after the middle of the nineteenth century, these services were seldom (except in the case of the Roman Catholics) provided through religious corporations. Rather, religious groups created secular corporations which—depending on their polities and politics—operated with varying degrees of closeness to sponsoring religious bodies.

The roots of this practice of separating devotional and social ministry activities within religious communities were both doctrinal and pragmatic. In the first half of the nineteenth century, as noted, disestablishment had led the forebears of today's mainline Protestants to redefine the role of religion in public life. Rather than acting politically as institutions, they focused their energies on imparting civic values and skills to the faithful, empowering them to be moral actors as citizens, employers, and consumers.

The preference for secular corporations as vehicles for faith-based service provision also had a distinctly pragmatic motivation: secular status made these institutions eligible for government support—which, depending on the state, could be considerable. A 1910 federal census of "benevolent institutions" showed that between 8 and 66% of private agencies in 45 of 48 states accepted government appropriations. Social welfare expert Amos Warner took note of this situation in his 1894 study, *American Charities*. "There is a clear-cut distinction between public and private charities," Warner observed, "but none between sectarian and non-sectarian charities."

Arguments for and against contracting with faith-based agencies were strikingly similar to those offered today. "First and foremost in the minds of 'practical' people is the matter of economy," Warner noted—and in states like New York, Maryland, California, Pennsylvania, and Kansas, where more than half of the private benevolent institutions accepted government support, legislators evidently believed that contracting out was cheaper than establishing public agencies. Proponents also argued that

> private institutions, especially those for dependent and delinquent children, have a better effect upon the inmates than can public institutions. For one thing, dogmatic religious instruction can be given. For another, the spirit of self-sacrifice that pervades a private institution has a good effect upon the inmates, and is contrasted with the cold and officialized administration of the public institutions. Connected with this, as also with the matter of economy, is the fact that boards of trustees and of lady managers and visitors give freely of their time and energy and sympathy in aid of private undertakings (343).

As a charities reformer, Warner worried about government support of private agencies. He warned that contracting would inevitably advantage sectari-

an providers, especially the Catholics. "In almost every branch of philanthropic work," he wrote,

> Roman Catholic institutions can underbid competitors because…of
> the great organizations of teachers and nurses and administrators
> whose gratuitous services they can command; and if the State is to
> sublet its relief on the contract system, it is hard to see why those
> who can bid low should not get the contracts (342).

He worried that private institutions, which kept "their inmates busy at remunerative employment" competed unfairly with for-profit businesses. He suggested that the projected economies of contracting might be fleeting when private agencies were

> willing to make a very low bid, to make great temporary sacrifices,
> in order to get the subsidy system introduced—in order to establish
> connections between itself and the public treasury. "At first," said a
> United States senator, speaking of the charities of the District of
> Columbia, "they thrust in only the nose of the camel." (343)

Warner cast doubt on arguments that contracting would free service provision from "the blight of partisan politics and the spoils system." While granting the "miserable political jobbery connected with so many almshouses and insane asylums and other public charitable institutions" (343), he pointed out that contracting was not less prone to political manipulation.

There was no definitive outcome to the turn of the century welfare reform debate because, ultimately, human services provision remained a state and local responsibility—except in the case of selected groups like veterans—until the Great Depression. In states like New York, where the practice of contracting with religious groups was well-developed, the practice continued. While religious providers remained important, the major change in the system involved a distinct secularization of decision making. The charity organization societies that had spearheaded welfare reform had been top-heavy with Protestant clergy. By the 1920s, community chests and council of social agencies, organized and led by leading businesssmen, had displaced the clergy from leadership in social welfare. The field of social work, which had begun as a form of social ministry, became increasingly secular in emphasis as the new disciplines of sociology and social psychology displaced social ethics and "practical philanthropy" as intellectual foundations.

The increased federal role after 1932, while it increased the resources available to states and localities and supplemented their efforts with federal programs like the CCC and the WPA, did not fundamentaly alter the decentralized character of the system or significantly decrease the role of religious groups in service provision. Major changes only became evident with the dramatic expansion of federal social welfare responsibilities after the Second World War. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the new American welfare state was not based on large centralized bureaucracies. Service provision remained

overwhelmingly in the hands of states, localities, and private sector actors. What did change was an enormous enhancement of the federal role in setting social welfare policy and in making resources available to states, localities, and private agencies for their implementation.

The impact of these changes in policy and practice are evident in the fact that the number of civilian federal employees has grown only slightly, from 2.4 to 2.8 million since 1946, while the number of state and local government employees has grown from 3.5 to 14.7 million (US Department of Commerce, 1975, 1985, 2001). At the same time, the number of private nonprofit organizations—including religious bodies—grew enormously: In 1946, nonprofit organizations registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) numbered 80,250—17,450 of which were charitable entities. By 1996, a total of 1,188,510 nonprofits of all types were registered with the IRS—573,265 (48%) of them charitables. Over the fifty-year period, the total number of nonprofits increased fifteenfold—and the number of charitables thirty-three fold (Hall and Burke, in press)![14]

While religious bodies and faith-based organizations have remained important components of the welfare system, their role changed. Before the Second World War, because the social gospel was embraced across the religious spectrum, faith-based groups of every kind were far more likely to be engaged in social service programs, with or without public subsidy, than they would be in the decades following the war. In the 1950s and 60s, the decline of the social gospel, combined with the surburbanization of mainline Protestantism, left the task of service provision to primarily Catholic and African-American Protestant inner city churches.[15] These congregations and

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14 Federal civilian employment actually peaked in 1992 at 3.1 million—after twelve years of Republican control of the White House. Even so, this is a modest increase compared to the growth of state and local payrolls in the same period.

15 The "portability" of congregations varied according to theology and polity. Gathered Protestant and Jewish congregations followed their members. Catholic congregations, embedded in a parish system that was essential geographical in nature, could not move. On this, see Gerald Gamm's work in Chapter Three.

The decline of the social gospel is a complicated story. As early as the 1930s, it came under attack from formally sympathetic theologians like Reihold Niebuhr for its lack of political realism in the face of the rise of the totalitarianisms (this was really an attack on left-leaning colleagues who failed to see Stalin for what he was). Niebuhr's critique anticipated harsher and more explicitly political attacks on religious liberals in the McCarthy era.

The Yale Divinity School was, until the early 1950s, both a national center for socially-concerned religious scholarship and for training for social ministries. For half a century, its faculty had not only produced important social scholarship (like Liston Pope's classic 1940 community study *Millhands and Preachers*), but had been actively involved in such cutting-edge multi-disciplinary social sciences enterprises as the Institute of Human Relations. A measure of the extent of the collaboration between social science and religion at Yale until the early fifties is the fact that a third of the Divinity School's library consisted of materials relating to social welfare. (For an excellent account of the rise and fall of the social ministry curriculum at Yale, see Margaret Sawyer, "From Practical Philanthropy to Social Ethics: Jerome Davis, Liston Pope, and the Evolution of the Social Gospel at the Yale Divnity School" (2000). Pressure from conservative Yale alumni and well-publicized polemics like William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* (1952) Liston Pope's resignation from the deanship, a purge of the Divinity School's

secular corporations they controlled would be prime beneficiaries of initiatives launched under Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

It is difficult to determine whether or to what extent these urban congregations suffered loss of autonomy because of their participation in anti-poverty programs because both Catholic and African-American religious bodies and their clergy have had long histories of political engagement. Mainline congregations, inexperienced in dealing with government agencies, seem more likely to encounter problems—which may be one reason why, in most places, they appear to be so reluctant to explore the possibilities offered by charitable choice (Goodstein, 2000).[16]

Conclusion: Dilemmas of Church and State

As the boundaries between religion, secular nonprofits, government, and—in instances where service provision is fee-driven—commerce become more blurred, it becomes increasingly urgent to forge well grounded understandings of the role of faith and faith-based entities and activities in public life.

Achieving this is important not only for religion, but for the public. The extraordinary constitutional and legal privileges accorded religion in the United States have been predicated on its willingness to distance itself institutionally from direct engagement in politics and business—by its willingness, as De Tocqueville observed, to trade temporal *power* for enduring public *influence* (II: 323).

Much of the debate over church-state issues since the 1940s has emphasized the hazard that religion poses for democracy. However, as government funding of faith-based service provision becomes an article of political faith, the focus of the debate is shifting to the threat that government poses to religion. History suggests that there is good reason for the latter concern.

On the occasions when religion has broken this constraint and engaged directly in the political fray, the consequences have usually been unfortunate: zealous sectarian support of religious establishments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of the sabbatarian, nativist, and abolitionist movements of ante bellum decades, of Prohibition and anti-Catholicism in the early twentieth century, and the anti-war and civil rights fervor of liberal clergy in the past half century, undoubtedly damaged both the groups that spearheaded these crusades and the public credibility of religion itself. In a society where religious adherence is voluntary, efforts to use the coercive power of the state for religious purposes are inevitably problematic because moralized political

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library, and a wholesale reorganization of the curriculum which included the renaming of the Stark Professorship—originally established as a chair of "practical philanthropy" then titled as a chair of "social ethics"—as the Stark Professorship of *Christian Ethics*. (Anecdotal evidence suggests that similar patterns unfolded in other institutions.)

16 A recent study of the implementation of charitable choice in Indiana shows that despite enthusiastic promotion of faith-based service provision by state officials, few churches—other than African-American ones—were willing to participate in government funded programs.

agendas usually constitute too narrow a basis for the kinds of compromise and coalition-building required by stable broad-based electoral majorities.

The experience of secular nonprofits in their growing involvement with government highlights some more pragmatic dilemmas. As long as nonprofits remained primarily dependent on donations, earned revenues, and grants from foundations and corporations, their financial management systems and public reporting procedures remained rudimentary. Fulfilling government agency reporting requirements necessitated a revolution in nonprofit management, producing a pronounced shift in power from boards and volunteers to cadres of paid professionally-trained staff. This shift was reinforced by the entrepreneurialism of the professional managers who, as careerists (rather than institutional loyalists) were constantly seeking to increase revenues, enlarge programs, and demonstrate success in conventional corporate terms—always with an eye on their next job. These processes fueled a displacement of organizational missions that has transformed secular nonprofits into enterprises that are almost indistinguishable from for-profit businesses. (As the president of a large university recently put it, when asked whether his institution had any kind of corporate social responsibility towards the impoverished city in which it was located, "Our sole corporate responsibility is to fulfill our charter purpose—and to deploy our assets, including our real estate, in a manner to insure maximum financial return in order to carry out its charter purpose.")

Religious bodies are, generally speaking, peculiarly unprofessional in their management. Clergy seldom receive any formal training in administrative matters. Few congregations can rarely afford to hire professional managers—and generally depend, in administering their finances, on lay volunteers with business or accounting backgrounds. In congregations that have launched service ministries on any scale—if the Episcopal day school experience is any guide— have suffered damaging tensions as clergy, parish, and day school staff have tried to negotiate the differences in their missions (on this, see Lemler, 1993; National Association of Episcopal Schools, 1996). (As Catholics began to depend on laity rather than members of religious orders to staff their schools and hospitals, similar tensions developed between religious missions and education and health care industry norms).

Finally, religious bodies need to consider the risks associated with dependence on the vagaries of government funding. Programs and policies in vogue now may not be in favor down the line—after an institution has invested resources in physical plant and staff. Secular nonprofits experienced this problem as federal social spending began to decline in the 1980s. Religious bodies, which are far more constrained in their ability to raise alternative revenues, can't ignore the threat that this poses to their solvency. Indeed, many urban churches that invested heavily in physical plant for programs in the social gospel era found themselves heavily burdened once ecclesial fashions had shifted and their congregations had begun to decline in numbers and wealth.

In sum, the opportunities for greater service and public influence offered to religious bodies by charitable choice need to be weighed against the very real theological and organizational dilemmas. It is one thing to provide human services voluntarily as an extension of a religious ministry; it is quite another to provide them under contract to a government agency. Working within a ministry, a religious group is accountable only to God; working under contract inevitably subjects faith communities to oversight and monitoring that may compromise not only their beliefs, but their constitutional freedoms. More seriously, as social service and the search for the revenues needed to provide them become more central to the work of religious bodies, they run the danger of displacing their faith commitments in favor of more pragmatic concerns.

Dependence on faith-based service providers also poses dilemmas for democratic government. Traditionally, objections to church-state entanglement have centered on the sectarianizing of politics—a hazard that, given contemporary religious diversity, seems remote. Rather, the transformation of American institutional life—in particular, the emergence of the nonprofit sector—raise a range of new problems relating to oversight and accountability.

Traditional voluntary associations—membership organizations that were supported by donors and staffed by volunteers—were uniquely responsive to their stakeholders. The nonprofit organizations that largely replaced these entities after the Second World War—memberless organizations supported by government and foundation grants and contracts and earned income and staffed by professional managers—are uniquely *un*responsive to their stakeholders. Businesses are accountable to stockholders, customers, and regulatory agencies. Government is accountable to voters. But nonprofits, with no stockholders, with services consumed by clients who do not pay for them, and operating in a funding environment that gives managers extraordinary discretion, are accountable only to inattentive state attorneys general and an understaffed IRS. Because they operate under expectations that they are fulfilling "higher purposes," nonprofits are generally exempt from the kind of public scrutiny to which business and government are subject. (They are, in addition, generally exempt from freedom of information requirements, even when carrying out public tasks under government subsidy). [17]

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17 When New Haven implemented its urban renewal efforts in the 1960s, it chose to channel federal and foundation funds through nonprofit rather than public agencies. This enabled the mayor to avoid bidding, civil service, and public reporting requirements imposed on public agencies. When these practices were challenged in the 1990s, the city argued that it did not have to open financial or other records to the press because the agencies in question were private—even though they were completely subsidized by government, staffed by public officials, and operating out of City Hall. In 1999, Connecticut's open government commission ruled against the city in a landmark decision. The city's response has been to push for amendments to FOI and other statutes that would prevent public access to information about publicly funded projects. On the accountablity problems of contemporary nonprofits, see Harriet Bograd's study of state attorneys general (1994) and Peter Dobkin Hall's critique of legal and regulatory trends (1999c).

Religiosity compounds the non-accountability of nonprofits because religious bodies enjoy a variety of special First Amendment protections from government oversight and regulation. In the early 1990s, a broad coalition of religious groups attempted to codify these protections in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which would have protected churches from government regulation if such regulation impaired their religious practices. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned the statute, but congressional friends of organized religion continue to work on drafting a statute that can afford religous bodies the protection they seek while overcoming the court's constitutional objections to the 1994 enactment. Should they succeed, faith-based service providers may find themselves enjoying almost complete immunity from public or government oversight—a very problematic situation, especially in agencies providing care to clients (like children and the profoundly disabled) who are unable to represent their own interests.

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