The Bush Faith-Based Initiative: The Catholic Response

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Prior to the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September, one of the major policy priorities of President George W. Bush was the government funding of faith-based initiatives. He recognized the social and charitable efforts of religious organizations as a "major part of the American welfare system," and a way to supplement government's responsibility to the poor and under-served in society.

The original formulation of the president's faith-based policy was based on the unique ideas of several political strategists and academics, as well as the principles later advanced by others in the charitable choice provision of the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWRA) amendments. These ideas were espoused in the legislative efforts of then Senator John Ashcroft (R-Mo.), his aide Annie Billings White, and church-state expert Carl H. Esbeck at the University of Pennsylvania; Stanley Carlson-Thies, a political scientist from the University of Toronto; and Stephen Goldsmith, former mayor of Indianapolis.

2. These individuals included Marvin Olasky, a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of The Tragedy of American Compassion (Washington, D.C.: Regenergy Publishing, Inc., 1995). Others were Karl Rove and Don Willett, two of Bush's political strategists; John DiIulio, a political scientist from the University of Pennsylvania; Stanley Carlson-Thies, a political scientist from the University of Toronto; and Stephen Goldsmith, former mayor of Indianapolis.
3. These principles were espoused in the legislative efforts of then Senator John Ashcroft (R-Mo.), his aide Annie Billings White, and church-state expert Carl H. Esbeck at the Uni-
tion Act of 1996. It also came to include supplemental executive plans to ensure the continued and expanded public funding of social and charitable services in the United States by religious organizations.

The charitable choice provision, passed by a Republican House and Senate was "entirely ignored by Federal administrators" during the Clinton administration, according to members of the Bush White House staff. Consequently, it became a matter that required and would receive major attention by the new administration. Title I of the provision dealt with public assistance and called on government to provide the "most effective and efficient manner" of assistance to individuals and families in need. It prohibited discrimination solely on the basis of religion in the funding of organizations that provide social and charitable services. It allowed religious organizations to apply for public monies, to administer them, and to distribute government aid without the entanglement that religious groups feared would impair their spiritual characters or missions. The law also recognized the right of individuals and families in need to choose to receive social and/or charitable services from religious organizations rather than government or secular agencies.

In return, religious organizations were prohibited from using government funds to aid or endorse any religion. All public monies had to be used for social welfare purposes. The legislation was crafted so as to allow religious organizations to retain their autonomy, that is, to be free from government interference in the performance of their social/charitable missions. And, with regard to employment, religious organizations were allowed to require their workers to adhere to the religious practices of their organizations, but forbidden to discriminate in hiring on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, visual impairment, disabilities, or age. They would retain their tax-exempt status, and would be required to obey all the aforementioned regulations with regard to grants, contracts, and other indirect forms of disbursement, such as vouchers and certificates.

Title II of the charitable choice provision encouraged "Individual Development Accounts." These allowed families and individuals with limited means to accumulate assets. They could be used for personal development, such as first time home buying, education, and business investments. The government would match such savings up to a certain point in order to stabilize families and build communities.

Neglected by federal administrators, as mentioned previously, charitable choice became a focus of the platform of Republican candidate

4. Ibid.

versity of Missouri, who was heavily involved in the development of charitable choice legislation.
George W. Bush in the 2000 presidential campaign. He promoted it as part of his ideology known as “compassionate conservatism,” and immediately after his election, sought to turn his commitment to both compassion and conservatism into a viable public policy. To do this, Bush advocated a broader and stronger public acceptance of charitable choice and other faith-based initiatives. Indeed, he soon began to endorse a public policy designed to develop a closer working relationship between the government and religious institutions, as well as a partnership to “ensure greater cooperation between the government and the private sector.”

In December, even before his inauguration, President-elect Bush met with about thirty ministers and other religious leaders to discuss ways to expand the roles of religious and charitable organizations in federal welfare programs. He attempted to begin a dialogue with them, i.e., a conversation on “how best to help faith-based programs change people’s lives,” and on “how best government can encourage . . . faith-based programs . . . [to] perform their commonplace miracles of renewal.” However, his motives were immediately suspect, with some in the media claiming that Bush was simply attempting to reach out to African-Americans through their clergy, since so few blacks had voted for him. Rev. Jesse Jackson, one of several prominent black leaders who had not been invited to the meeting, contended that “I know the subplot: This is an attempt to play one group against the other.”

Undaunted by the early criticism of the media toward his faith-based initiative, the fledgling president issued two significant executive orders within weeks of taking office. The first created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and the second set up similar offices in the Departments of Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education. Under the leadership of John DiIulio, a Democrat and political scien-

7. Invitees included the Reverend Eugene Rivers of the Azusa Christian Community in Boston, Rev. Jim Wallis of Call to Renewal, and Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Houston, who was also the president of National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Others included Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, executive director of the Interfaith Alliance, Rev. Floyd Flake, former congressman and pastor of the Allen AME Church in Queens, New York, Rev. Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute, and several local, senior ministers from churches in Texas.
10. Ibid.
tist from the University of Pennsylvania, the new chief executive made it clear that a Bush/DiIulio vision of public support for faith-based charitable and social efforts would become a priority at the highest levels of the federal government.

In reality, Bush's actions signaled more than a re-prioritizing of public concerns and more than the establishment of a new governmental infrastructure for the funding and delivery of charitable and social services in the United States. Indeed, his actions reflected a strategic change in presidential thinking about the relationship between church and state—from a traditional view based on separation to a new perspective characterized by collaboration. The new relationship might be defined by what students of the law would call a "zone of accommodation," or what approving politicians would call government action for the "common good," or what some political scientists would call a type of "prophetic politics." 11

The president's commitment to his faith-based initiative was based on five policy assumptions. First, he claimed that although compassion is the work of the government, it is also a public issue that must be part of everyone's concern and business. Second, he maintained that it is possible for the government to encourage faith-based programs without changing the essential mission of the agencies involved. Third, the president contended that although government may encourage different ways to change and save lives, charities and community groups will never replace its obligation to serve those in need. Fourth, he claimed that government is able to treat faith-based groups equal to secular ones in their pursuit of charitable funds. And finally he held that faith-based and community groups will always have a place in the Bush White House to discuss welfare matters without fear of having policy solutions imposed on them. 12

Opponents from both the left and the right, however, increasingly criticized the president's actions on a variety of grounds. Ralph Neas, president of People for the American Way, claimed that Bush's new faith-based plan had constitutional difficulties and that it put "church and state on a direct collision course." 13 Even some Bush supporters such as the Rev. Pat Robertson of Regent University and the "700 Club," and Marvin Olasky, author of the book that influenced Bush, The Tragedy of American Compassion, verbalized their fears. They argued that by accepting government financing, religious programs

12. Ibid.
would invite government meddling into their mission and message.\textsuperscript{14} Other members of the Christian Right argued that the president’s proposals could provide tax dollars to Hare Krishna and Scientology social agencies. Jewish organizations were concerned that the Nation of Islam, an anti-Semitic organization, would receive government funds. The Southern Baptist Convention’s North American Mission Board urged its ministries to “proceed with caution.”\textsuperscript{15} Dr. James Dobson, spokesman for the evangelical organization, Focus on the Family, was cool to the notion. Fourteen liberal and moderate Baptist leaders issued a statement urging rejection of the initiative, and about 350 leaders with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs interrogated the new head of the White House Office on Faith-Based Initiatives, John DiIulio, at a meeting in Washington.\textsuperscript{16} Some congressional critics complained that the plan amounted to government funding of discrimination. Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Texas) said that he did not “want Bob Jones University to be able to take federal dollars for an alcohol treatment program and put out a sign that says no Catholics or Jews need apply here for a federally funded job.”\textsuperscript{17} His words seemed to portend such fears. Indeed, it came as no surprise to many policy opponents that the Salvation Army, a few months later, sought an exemption from local laws that would require it to hire homosexuals.\textsuperscript{18}

Nevertheless, in March 2001, the president’s faith-based initiative received legislative form through the introduction of H.R. 7, known as the “Community Solutions Act of 2001.”\textsuperscript{19} J. C. Watts (R-Oklahoma) and Tony Hall (D-Ohio) introduced the bill with forty-four co-sponsors. It detailed and enlarged on several federal tax incentives for charitable giving and individual development accounts. First, Section 101 allowed taxpayers who do not itemize any of their deductions on their income tax form to: (a) be able to take the standard deduction for charitable contributions; and (b) to be able to itemize and deduct their charitable contributions as well. Second, Section 102 permitted withdrawals of funds from traditional and Roth IRA’s for charitable distributions, while permitting them also to be exempt from inclusion in the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} “Charities are Denied Bias Law Exemption,” The New York Times, 11 July 2001, A1. The article, without a by-line, also reports that after “a flurry of meetings and telephone calls,” Bush senior aides claimed that they were unaware of the charity’s request.
\textsuperscript{19} Introduced on 29 March 2001. It is explained in detail in: Joint Committee on Taxation, Description of Present Law and Certain Proposals Relating to Charitable Giving and Individual Development Accounts (JCX-55-01), 13 June 2001.
calculation of their taxable gross income. Third, Section 103 sanctioned an augmented deduction for charitable contributions of food inventory to the poor. Fourth, the bill allowed the establishment of Individual Development Accounts for eligible individuals, permitting them to receive a matching contribution of up to $500 per year from a qualified entity, such as a bank, a foundation, or the federal, state or local government. The monies could be used for higher education, first time home buying, business capitalization, rollover, and death benefit payouts.

While the bill passed with significant support in the House, its introduction in the Senate faltered and eventually died. Senators Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) had reported optimistically in the spring of 2001 that they were “moving full steam ahead in drafting legislation,” but a variety of problems began to emerge during the Senate hearings that gave Senator Lieberman second thoughts on the faith-based initiative.

First, the Salvation Army request to the White House to support a hiring exemption with regard to homosexuals, according to Lieberman, put “a cloud over the president’s intention to expand a faith-based initiative.” Indeed, he thought it “might terminally wound [the bill] in congress,” especially because it was also a “kind of an end run” around the lawmakers. Second, Democrats in both the House and the Senate were split on the bill. Some legislative constituencies such as the Congressional Black Caucus, and vocal congressmen like Representative Barney Frank (D-Mass.) attacked the bill on its discriminatory possibilities. The American Association of University Women also brought pressure to bear on the legislators. Certain religious groups continued to oppose it as well, particularly the United Methodists and the Baptist Joint Committee. Taking all this into consideration, Lieberman decided to decline to co-sponsor the charitable choice section of the legislation, claiming that it was unconstitutional. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) also made it clear that he would not even place the bill on his agenda in its form during the last session of Congress.

20. This would apply to those who earned an adjusted gross income of $20,000 as individual tax filers, $40,000 for joint filers, and $25,000 for head of household filers.
21. “How Representatives Voted on Religion-Based Initiative,” The New York Times, 19 July 2001, A16. It passed with a voice vote of 233 to 198. Voting yes were 15 Democrats, 217 Republicans and 1 Independent. Voting no were 193 Democrats, 4 Republicans and 1 Independent. Several members did not vote, and at the time, there was one vacancy in the House.
24. Ibid.
Finally, the senator from Connecticut maintained that the White House was not dealing with the legal problem, and that without a response on the matter, Lieberman contended that he would not move it forward. Instead, he asked the Government Accounting Office, the research arm of Congress, to study the possible effect of these programs on the First Amendment. Effectively stunting the movement of the bill, then, Senator Lieberman left the matter in limbo, with Senator Santorum having to admit that "this is a hot button issue" and that the entire matter would probably have to be revisited later. In July, Lieberman met with the president and decided that he would prefer to write his own version of a faith-based bill to be considered later.

In August, John Dilulio also resigned as head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Claiming that he was keeping his pledge to leave after six months in office, and taking care of his health and family responsibilities, his departure, nonetheless, came at a time when the White House faced a major political battle: trying to save the president's "signature social issue." Reportedly, Dilulio had difficulty coping with criticism from both the left and the right as well as dealing with senior White House aides who "increasingly cut him out of strategy sessions about how to win passage of the initiatives."

To summarize, after a promising beginning, the White House Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives had a rocky first year. The office was "hindered by classic organization problems: shifting priorities, lack of autonomy for the director, the absence of internal White House coordination, and inflated expectations." In its haste to establish this new entity, the Bush administration encountered unanticipated criticism from civil libertarians and even from leaders of Religious Right groups. These criticisms prompted the Senate to delay action on the bill despite early passage by the House of Representatives. Finally, the events of 11 September 2001 effectively placed President Bush's faith-based initiative on the back burner. The war on terrorism in Afghanistan clearly took precedence over domestic policy proposals.

However, in his State of the Union Address in early 2002, President Bush signaled renewed interest in this initiative. In February, he ap-

27. Ibid.
pointed James Towey, former Secretary of Health and Rehabilitative Services for the State of Florida, an advocate for the aging, and the man who worked as legal counsel for Mother Teresa’s ministry for twelve years, as the new director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The president also announced an agreement with Senators Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Santorum (R-Pa.) on a revised bill to provide federal money to religious charities and other non-profit organizations. The new bill, the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment Act, proposes new tax breaks to encourage charitable giving and includes extra money for a social services grant program. But the bill eliminates the most contentious element of Bush’s original proposal, the “charitable choice” provision allowing religious groups to favor members of their own faith in hiring. The bill thus represents a significant compromise on what had been a central proposal of Bush’s “compassionate conservative” presidential campaign.

The new bill was introduced in the Senate in February 2002. If passed, it must then be reconciled with the House measure passed in July 2001. However, despite President Bush’s endorsement of the Senate proposal, conference negotiations between the Senate and the House remain difficult because the House measure contains the original charitable choice provisions that would permit hiring discrimination and would subsidize religion. Because of this difficulty, Senator Santorum suggested that House Republicans postpone discussion of the controversial “charitable choice” proposals until Congress renews the 1996 welfare reform law later in the 2002 legislative session.

In addition to deleting the charitable choice provisions in the Senate measure, the context and purpose of the White House’s original faith-based initiative have changed. The Senate proposal is declared to be an emergency measure in response to the events of 11 September and the recession. Senator Lieberman has described it as an effort to meet human needs resulting from those events. Since government cannot meet all those needs, the bill empowers a whole range of charitable organizations, including faith-based groups, to provide social services. Moreover, the White House has recast its faith-based initiative to emphasize volunteer service. The new director of the White House office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives, James Towey, is under the

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direction of John Bridgeland, who was named by President Bush to head the volunteer initiative in the White House.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus, the president's original faith-based initiative has changed significantly. It has morphed from an emphasis upon charitable choice and federal funding of religious groups into a tax-deduction bill promoting charitable giving to religious and other non-profit groups in the wake of the 11 September attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE: THE BISHOPS AND THE HIERARCHY

During the entire national debate about President Bush's faith-based initiative, he received support from one significant religious constituency: the American Catholic bishops. Presiding over 60 million adherents, the largest religious minority in the United States, the members of the Catholic Church's hierarchy are the ones who formulate and implement public policy, setting priorities for other church agencies, such as Catholic Charities, the Catholic Education Association, and the Catholic Hospital Association.

The term "Catholic" as it is used here, therefore, specifically applies to that part of the institutional church that is directly involved in the administration, funding, and provision of charitable and social programs, rather than being accountable to those individuals in the pew who support or oppose them. This is because the Catholic Church is a hierarchical, canonical organization, managed by a visible, authoritative leadership; and operated by specific agencies accountable to them. In contrast, the attitudes of its laity are diverse, its membership fluid, and their opinions difficult to measure at any given time. Just as important, if church adherents opposed the faith-based initiative of President Bush, it would be hard for them to oppose either the policy of the church leadership or the actions of its charitable agencies. Thus, the term "Catholic" really defines the responses of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB),\textsuperscript{34} which sets public policy for the Catholic Church in America. In this case, it also necessarily includes the actions of the church's main social and charitable providers, particularly, Catholic Charities USA.

Why then have the bishops, practically alone, supported the president when so many other religious, political, and charitable groups have criticized the president's faith-based initiative? John Carr, director of the Department of Social Development and World Peace for the

\textsuperscript{33} Milbank, "Charity Bill Compromise Is Reached," A1.
\textsuperscript{34} Recently, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, a canonical organization, and the United States Catholic Conference, its administrative arm, have become one agency, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
USCCB, tried to explain it simply by saying: "We think it has the right purpose . . . the right tone. . . ." Moreover, Carr stated that he is "impressed with the leaders of this effort."35 But in reality, the answer is far more complex.

It lies partly in the traditional Catholic understanding of the purpose of church-state relations. The Catholic understanding of church and state has always been predicated on the need to assure the freedom of the church to carry out its sacred mission, that is, to teach, preach, and sanctify its adherents. And, by extension, the Catholic hierarchy's response to charitable choice, the Community Solutions Act (H. R. 7), and most aspects of the Bush faith-based initiative could, therefore, have been expected to be positive. This is because the charitable enactments and the president's policies, in the bishops' minds, have the potential to serve as opportunities to advance the church's broader mission to the poor, the sick, the homeless, and the marginalized in society.

In 1995, in anticipation of the national debate about welfare reform, the bishops issued a statement entitled "Moral Principles and Policy Priorities for Welfare Reform" in which they outlined the church's criteria for such change. Any such legislation, to them, would have to include ways to protect human life and dignity, to strengthen family life, to encourage and provide rewards for work, to preserve a safety net for the vulnerable, to build public/private partnerships to overcome poverty, and to invest in human dignity.36 In 1996, as the debate about welfare reform intensified, the USCCB and Catholic Charities used these principles to criticize the general thrust and specific provisions of the bill vigorously. They lobbied against various provisions of the legislation: abolishing the entitlement, family caps, restrictions on benefits for legal immigrants, punitive time limits and work requirements, and cuts in the food stamp program. Although they managed to modify some provisions of the bill, their overall efforts were unsuccessful. In August 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, thus ending welfare as we knew it.37

How can we explain the change in the bishops’ attitude from criticism of the 1996 welfare reform law to support of President Bush’s faith-based initiative? Several factors led the USCCB to view charitable choice more favorably. First, the bishops and many others noted the apparent success of the 1996 reform law in dramatically reducing the rolls of welfare recipients. From 1996 to 2001, caseloads nationwide dropped by half and poverty rates declined as well. Second, the efforts of the Republican National Committee to cultivate Catholic voters during the 2000 presidential election may have disposed church leaders to be more receptive to the new initiatives of President Bush. Likewise, the transition from the Clinton administration to the Bush presidency renewed the hopes of some bishops that preferred legislation, such as stricter anti-abortion laws and school vouchers, might be enacted by the new Republican administration. Third, the geographic importance of the Catholic vote in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections and the fact that Bush lost that vote nationally in the 2000 election are factors that have led the Bush administration to be especially solicitous of Catholic church leaders. In particular, Bush advisers recognize that the success of the faith-based initiative depends upon partnering with Catholic agencies that provide a vast array of social services nationwide. These factors help to explain in part why the American bishops were more receptive to the Bush administration’s charitable choice proposals than to the 1996 welfare reform legislation.

Personal relationships also played a role in the hierarchy’s support for the Bush faith-based initiative. On 26 January 2001 (less than a week after his inauguration), President and Mrs. Bush were invited and attended a dinner at the home of Washington’s Cardinal-designate, Theodore McCarrick—a first. Retired Cardinal James Hickey, papal nuncio Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, and Bishop William Lori, Bishop of Bridgeport, were also present. The purpose of the Chilean sea bass dinner was to get acquainted, and from the president’s perspective, it could also serve as an opportunity for outreach to the major religious leaders of a constituency that had not supported his election. This was particularly important to the new president in light of his campaign gaffe—visiting Bob Jones University and inadvertently appearing to support the anti-Catholic stance of many of the members of its faculty.

Although his actions subsequently resulted in an apology to John Cardinal O’Connor, Bush still found that many Catholics were less than enthusiastic about his election. Mending Catholic fences was in order. Dinner with the new cardinal was a good place to start.

McCarrick was a close confidant of the pope; he was active in the bishops’ national organization, and he had many contacts with those in its highest circles. He was politically well connected, too, having been appointed to the U. S. Commission on International Religious Freedom by President Clinton in 1998 and subsequently sent by him to assess religious freedom in China. McCarrick also had ties to the Jewish community, a result of his association with the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, led by Rabbi Arthur Schneir, with whom the cardinal traveled to Russia, Rumania, China, and the Balkans.

McCarrick, then, had the potential to be an important ally on the faith-based initiative, and initially he articulated a position of positive, albeit limited, support:

Done properly and with respect for our traditions of pluralism, this is an opportunity to further civil society, and [to] recognize the importance of religion in any social order. However, faith-based programs, with their indispensable roles, must not just be another way to privatize public obligations, an excuse for the government to abandon its own responsibilities to the poor.38

Moreover, he observed the elevation of public discourse brought about by the administration’s initiative:

There is an increased interest in the role of religion in solving our nation’s and the world’s problems. . . . Whatever one thinks about the wisdom of revising the relationship between government and religious programs, we should be encouraged that this country may be rediscovering the role of faith communities in dealing with some of the most intractable problems of society.39

The results of the McCarrick dinner were quickly observed. Within four days of the social event, Karl Rove, the president’s chief of staff, contacted Deal W. Hudson, an influential Catholic friend and editor of Crisis magazine, to convene a critical meeting. It was to include the chief executive, Steven Goldsmith, chairman of a national advisory board on faith-based initiatives, and John J. DiIulio, its new head, along with thirty Catholic leaders at the White House. Ostensibly to discuss the importance of faith-based social services, this gathering afforded George W. Bush the opportunity to interact with a cross section of Catholic leaders, including administrators who managed schools, hospitals, nursing homes, day-care facilities, orphanages, drug rehabilitation centers, AIDS clinics, disaster relief services, and hospices. Partici-


39. Ibid.
pants were quick to see its purpose, with Hudson commenting, "The president and his advisers knew very well that for their faith-based program to work it must establish a full partnership with existing Catholic social service providers. This meeting is the beginning of that partnership."

It could be seen in the reaction of one of the attendees, Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O. F. M., archbishop of Denver, who went back to his diocese with an optimistic attitude. He praised the president for his "sincerity" and his "grasp of the issues." Chaput viewed the meeting with the president as a "positive beginning." Stressing service as part of Catholic identity, Chaput saw the faith-based initiative as a way to solve common problems that required both government and charitable responses. He voiced some concerns and noted that they needed to be explored. However, the archbishop was quick to say that he was impressed that the president "had the courage to raise these issues in a new and hopeful way." Moreover, the president's meeting established "a good reason for confidence," that "we should give the president's creative programs a hearing and hope for their success."

The very next day, on 31 January, the president reinforced his attempts to forge closer relations with Catholics by inviting the leadership of Catholic Charities to the White House. He discussed the reform of the tax code and floated the idea that non-itemizers should be allowed to deduct charitable giving from their taxable incomes. While this was all part of his future agenda, it was becoming even clearer that Bush wanted to build bridges to the agency, and in turn, to the Catholic constituency. He commented that "our mission in the White House is to say we welcome you, we welcome your love, we welcome your finances, we welcome your compassion."

Relations between the Catholic leadership and the Bush administration began to grow closer. On 12 February, Roger Cardinal Mahoney, chairman of the Domestic Policy Committee of the United States Catholic Conference, spoke favorably about the president's plan on faith-based and community initiatives:

The United States Catholic Conference welcomes President Bush's priority on overcoming poverty as he begins to lead our nation. . . . Our bishops' conference also welcomes his initiative to recognize and assist the role of "faith-based and

40. Deal W. Hudson, quoted in "30 Catholic Leaders to Meet with Bush." Hudson is the publisher and editor of Crisis magazine who convened the meeting; accessed online from http://www.mccw-usa.org.
42. Ibid.
community groups" in the struggle against poverty in our land. We look forward to a fuller dialogue on the specifics of this initiative. We will seek opportunities to share our experience, concerns and hopes in an effort to help the Administration create a workable program.44

Cardinal Mahoney admitted that the church was concerned about excessive government regulation, maintaining the dignity of those in need, preserving the church’s ethical and religious integrity, insuring the prophetic role of religious institutions, and respecting the responsibilities and limitations of both. But he seemed to brush these concerns aside as he asserted that the church was “encouraged”45 by the tone of the inaugural address, the president’s public statements, and his meetings with Catholic and other leaders. Mahoney summed up the church’s interpretation of the faith-based program by saying that “this initiative is about holding up community, not tearing down government,” and that it recognizes pluralism and takes “seriously the concerns and fears of those who had doubts about stronger ties between religious groups and the federal government.”46 He concluded by saying that the bishops were encouraged by the individuals that the president appointed to the initiative, that his administration was addressing one of the most fundamental problems of American society, and that the hierarchy welcomed a just public policy toward those in need.47

In the spring, as support for the faith-based initiative continued to wane among many other religious constituencies, the president accepted an invitation to deliver the commencement address to the Class of 2001 at the University of Notre Dame. Using the platform of the most prestigious Catholic university in America, Mr. Bush attempted to tie his political ideology and religious beliefs on compassion to Catholic social teachings and those of former President Lyndon Johnson. Emphasizing “God’s special concern for the poor,” he called for a “third stage” in the War on Poverty, challenging the graduates to practice caring, kindness, and courtesy, rather than simply working to provide benefits to the needy.

President Bush explained his White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to much applause, and unveiled four new proposals. They included a “compassion capital fund” that would match private giving with federal dollars; a way for all taxpayers, even non-itemizers, to deduct charitable contributions; a three-fold increase in funding for homeownership; and a $1.6 billion plan to provide new

45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
funds for drug treatment. Most relevant to his faith-based initiative and, in turn, to Catholic social and charitable organizations, was the fact that all these funds, and the president stressed “all of them,” would be “opened to equal competition from faith-based and community groups.”

On 13 June 2001, the U. S. Catholic bishops endorsed the legislation of Representatives Watts and Hall to implement President Bush’s faith-based, and as of that time, community initiatives as well. The hierarchy urged a “greater investment of public and private resources in overcoming poverty” and sent a letter to the bill’s sponsors expressing their support for H. R. 7.

The rationale for the official church endorsement of the bill was due to its “focus on overcoming poverty, and its affirmation of the complementary roles and responsibilities of religious groups, community organizations and government.” Cardinal Mahoney called the proposal a “new asset[s] in addressing the most difficult problems in our neighborhoods and communities.” At the same time, he claimed that the political battles over it were “polarized and ideological, focused more on old battles of church-state issues and attempts to gain partisan advantage than on new opportunities to reach out to help those pushed to the sidelines of our national economic life, rather than on the need “to increase federal resources.” Both he and the bishops supported the “Compassion Capital Fund.” The letter particularly supported sections 101 and 102 of H. R. 7 and viewed the entire proposal as a “positive and needed recognition of the pluralism of American religious life.”

On 26 July 2001, the bishops applauded House passage of H. R. 7 and urged the Senate “to look beyond partisan politics in its work on companion legislation.” Even though the House passed the bill without the “compassion fund” provision, the bishops accepted such a
trade-off and the realities of politics. In a statement to the press, the hierarchy continued to acknowledge its support of the bill’s provisions, recognizing it as a new tool to help those working to overcome poverty and address the problems of neighborhoods. And, they reiterated the USCCB rationale claiming that the Initiative recognizes that religious groups can be effective partners with government and community organizations in providing social services, without jeopardizing their identity and integrity or undermining the rights and dignity of those in need. It is also important to acknowledge that the work of faith-based and community groups, though important, cannot substitute for just public policy and the responsibilities of the larger society, including the federal government. They cannot replace needed government action to address the more than 40 million Americans without health care. . . .

ANOTHER CATHOLIC RESPONSE: CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholic Charities was founded in 1910 to instill a sense of solidarity among Catholic social service providers, and to establish a network for the various charities that they administered. It enjoyed a unique position among American charitable and social service organizations throughout its history. Catholic work with the poor, dependent children, prisoners, elderly, the sick and the disabled had begun as early as 1727, when Ursuline nuns took in orphans in the colonies. During the nineteenth century, Sister Elizabeth Seton founded a religious order, the Sisters of Charity, and established many child-care facilities and homes for the aged. In World War II, Catholic Charities emerged as a significant source for humanitarian aid. It distributed financial and other services in Europe through its global infrastructure of social agencies, and during that time, received support from the U. S. government for shipping costs and the portage of its relief goods. Because Catholic Charities was already on the ground in Europe, it could provide help even before the fledging United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) could do so. Thus, it could also funnel humanitarian aid to “Catholic” countries like Germany and Italy in the wake of American, anti-Axis sentiment.

By the early 1970s, Catholic Charities, a 501(c)3 tax-exempt agency, began to accept an ever growing number of government contracts. In return, it had to redefine its mission in essentially secular terms, broadening its purpose to become an institution that provides services to people in need and advances justice. Purists felt that this created an inappropriate dependence of a Catholic organization on government.

56. ibid.
57. For a further discussion of Catholic humanitarian efforts, see Jo Renee Formicola, The Catholic Church and Human Rights (New York: Garland Press, 1988), ch. II.
They saw it as "fraught with peril," and a situation that would cause a shift in the mission of the agency from one based on the corporal works of mercy to one committed to improving societal systems though policy development, legislative analysis, and community mobilization. In short, some Catholics felt that the leadership of Catholic Charities, of necessity, would become more concerned with lobbying and advocating for specific welfare programs than in doing Jesus' work of service to the poor.58

The most current statistics show that each year, more than 9.5 million people in need turn to one of 1,400 local Catholic charities for a variety of social services. With a paid staff of over 50,000 people, and volunteers and board members that number over 200,000, the agency spent over $2.2 billion in 1999 to provide social services in the United States,59 most of which came from government sources and contracts. Not surprisingly, 53 percent of Catholic charities' revenues came from state and local government, and 9 percent came from the federal government. Only 12 percent came from church and community support, and 7 percent from other sources.60

Prior to the Bush faith-based initiative, Catholic Charities was already receiving the bulk of its operating funds from public coffers, and had not experienced any real barriers to its operation. Thus, it approached the Bush faith-based initiative with "cautious optimism."61 The Reverend Fred Kammer, S. J., president of Catholic Charities USA, spoke for the agency when he said that he applauded Mr. Bush's efforts to simplify bureaucratic requirements, to avoid polemics, and to establish a level playing field for religiously inspired and other service providers.62 But, at the same time, he called on the government to protect his and other agencies from extremists on the political left and right, as well as to be certain that agencies that would be eligible for federal funds in the future be both mission-driven and competent.63

Initially, one might have expected that Catholic Charities would fear a potential loss of government revenues as a result of possible competition from other religious, charitable, and social agencies. But

60. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
this did not seem to be the case. The agency's early concerns, instead, were centered on how the faith-based initiative would work, what type of accreditation standards would be applied to social and charitable providers, and whether or not additional funds would be available. Early meetings with members of the White House staff clarified these questions. And when the leadership of Catholic Charities found that there would ostensibly be no new money for charitable services, the agency decided to take no position on the president's approach to faith-based initiatives since their long-standing contracts were secure.

This is significant because Catholic Charities also focuses on "legislative advocacy and policy analysis in the areas of welfare, affordable housing and child and health care." As an independent, non-partisan agency, it chose not to take an official position on charitable choice or the Watts-Hall bill, H. R. 7, in order to work on other legislation that it considered more relevant to its mission. Catholic Charities decided to let the bishops take the lead on this matter. As a result, the agency felt no compunction about jumping into the political fray a few weeks later, in February 2001, to join with twenty-five other faith-based organizations and call on the Bush administration to restore benefits to legal immigrants that had been eliminated. These included participation in the Food Stamp, Medicaid, and State Children's Health Insurance programs.

The Bush Administration and Catholics

Why do the bishops, then, repeatedly support President Bush and his faith-based initiatives when so many other religious, political, and charitable groups have criticized them? And why does the Bush administration continue to seek support from the Catholic hierarchy for these policies? The explanation for this almost symbiotic relationship lies largely in the political context of the 2000 presidential election. For the Catholic bishops, it centers on the hopes and expectations of church leaders that a Republican White House will champion policies they favor. For the Bush administration, it revolves around the election imperative and the importance of cultivating the Catholic vote for the future.

From the bishops' perspective, the White House's faith-based initiative could address some of their potential needs and institutional con-

64. Ibid.
cerns. As episcopal administrators of large dioceses with multiple social services and programs, they stand to benefit from the Bush initiative—provided there is expanded government funding. Catholic hospitals and social service agencies need support and financial assistance. As policymakers within their own church, the bishops support the Bush faith-based initiative because they want to position themselves strategically to benefit from it in the long term.

The bishops also had high expectations of policy synchronicity between the Bush administration and the Catholic Church on several major issues. With Bush in the White House, the chances of receiving favorable action on restricting abortion—a signature issue for the bishops—are perceived to be much greater than they would have been if Democratic candidate Al Gore had been elected president. The Bush administration has also supported school vouchers—another issue of keen interest and financial importance to church leaders. Such issue compatibility means that the bishops have strong incentives to support President Bush’s programs en bloc, in hopes that he will return the favor and support measures important to the Catholic Church.

Such quid-pro-quo reasoning was evident during the 2000 election campaign in the decisions of Cardinal Edward Egan of New York, Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, and Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston to appear with candidate Bush on the campaign circuit. They also wrote pastoral letters to parishioners urging support of pro-life candidates on Election Day.67

No less important a factor in the relations between President Bush and Catholic Church leaders is political necessity. The Bush administration had, and continues to have, good reason to cultivate Catholic voters and build good relations with the Catholic hierarchy. The concentration of Catholics in large “swing” states with many electoral votes (New York, California, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and New Jersey) is a political reality few national politicians can afford to ignore.

In the 2000 campaign, the Republican National Committee established a Catholic Task Force to wean Catholics away from the Democratic Party. The GOP Catholic Task Force had some success, although nationally, Catholics voted for Gore by a margin of 50 percent to 47 percent (with 2 percent for Nader and 1 percent for Buchanan).68 Bush political advisers want to continue efforts to appeal to Catholics with policies such as the faith-based initiative, restrictions on abortion

68. Ibid.
and stem-cell research, and support for school vouchers. They hope to win increased support among Catholic voters in the 2002 mid-term and 2004 elections.

As part of this Republican effort to cultivate Catholic support, the Bush administration has appointed significant numbers of conservative Catholics to key posts in the new administration. In the early days of the 2000 presidential campaign, conservative and neo-conservative Catholics, such as Richard Neuhaus, editor of *First Things*, Deal Hudson, editor of *Crisis*, and John DiIulio, subsequently appointed to head the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, tutored Bush in Catholic social doctrine. On the campaign trail, Bush referred frequently to his philosophy of "compassionate conservatism," and to Catholic themes of subsidiarity and the common good.

Once in the White House, Bush appointed many Catholics to key cabinet and staff positions. Cabinet officials include Tommy Thompson, secretary of Health and Human Services and Mel Martinez, secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Other important Catholic appointments include John Negroponte, ambassador to the United Nations, Al Gonzales, White House counsel, and John Klink, former adviser to the Holy See’s Mission to the United Nations who has been nominated to head the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Catholic appointees have proliferated in the Bush administration. Staffers include Scott Evertz, director of the White House Office of National Aids Policy; Ann Wagner, co-chair of the Republican National Committee; Marc Racicot, executive director of the Republican National Committee; and Tom Ridge, head of the Agency of Homeland Security. Tim Goeglin is special assistant to the president, and Ana Gamonal serves as director of Hispanic Affairs for the Republican National Committee. Princeton Professor Robert George, Philadelphia advertising executive Brian Tierney, Rev. Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute, and Deal Hudson, editor and publisher of *Crisis* magazine, all serve as advisers to Bush on the Catholic vote.69

A second indication of the Bush administration’s efforts to cultivate Catholic voters is the frequency of Bush appearances with church leaders. This began, of course, during the 2000 presidential campaign. In the wake of the Bob Jones controversy, Bush campaign handlers tried to reassure voters that Bush was Catholic-friendly. They sought out Catholic forums and photo-ops, replete with church banners and Roman-collared clerics, to assure everyone that conservatives and evangelicals would not dominate a Bush presidency. Once in the White House, the president’s political advisers continued this pattern.

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of frequent public appearances with Catholic bishops. The dinner with Archbishop McCarrick came only seven days after President Bush's inauguration. And, as mentioned previously, four days later, Bush met with a large gathering of Catholic leaders in the White House. The president has continued to meet privately with church leaders in his travels across the country, including Boston's Bernard Cardinal Law, Philadelphia's Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, Archbishop Justin Rigali in St. Louis, and Bishop Donald Wuerl in Pittsburgh. In addition to these private meetings, Bush has participated in many public Catholic functions, such as the dedication of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington at which Bush gave a speech praising the pope and hosted a White House reception for sixty bishops and other dignitaries. In May 2001, the president received an honorary degree at Notre Dame and gave the commencement address invoking Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day. The intent of these high-profile meetings is, at least in part, the cultivation of Catholic voters and the maintenance of smooth relations with the American Catholic bishops.

The bishops' support of President Bush's faith-based initiative, then, must be situated in this political context, that is, as a positive charitable, social engagement by which both the White House and the USCCB each stand to advance their own future political agendas. The White House and the Republican Party are looking towards winning major national and state elections, while the bishops envision the potential of having a friend in the White House and supporters in other significant positions of power. The Catholic hierarchy foresees working with a president who is pro-life, who will appoint pro-life justices to federal courts, who will support school vouchers and the funding of parochial schools as well as advance the accommodation of religious groups in matters of federal funding of social services.

**The Future**

In light of the difficulties in the American economy and national security, the stalled interest in H. R. 7, and the radically altered priorities of the Bush White House since 11 September, what might be expected with regard to Catholic efforts on behalf of the waning faith-based initiative?

First, the Catholic bishops will be able to continue to react positively only if the Bush White House and the congressional constituency for faith-based initiatives maintain their efforts to implement the social/charitable policies. Now that President Bush and Senators Lieberman

70. President Bush's speech is reprinted in *Origins* 30 (12 April 2001): 690-91.
and Santorum have agreed upon a compromise measure to provide federal funds to religious charities and other non-profit organizations, it is expected that the bishops will support the revised bill. Moreover, Catholic Charities U.S.A., which took no position on the original proposal and the House measure, backed the Senate compromise. In a letter to President Bush, the Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, the new president of Catholic Charities U.S.A., welcomed two key provisions in the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment Act of 2002 (CARE): 72

The bill will help spur additional giving to charities by allowing non-itemizers to claim charitable deductions on their taxes, thereby making the tax code fairer for the majority of these individuals and families, many of whom are members of low-income households. The legislation also will provide additional, guaranteed funding for the Social Services Block Grant without corresponding reductions to other critical programs that serve the poor. 73

As mentioned earlier, the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment Act, worked out by President Bush with Senators Lieberman and Santorum, must first be passed by the Senate and then be reconciled in conference with the House measure passed in July 2001. These House-Senate negotiations could be difficult since the Senate version omits the original charitable choice provisions contained in the House measure that would permit hiring discrimination based on religion and that would allow the direct subsidization of religion. However, the fact that President Bush agreed to the Senate measure may be enough to persuade House conferees to go along with the Senate version.

This means that the controversy over charitable choice will be postponed until Congress is able to debate renewal of the 1996 welfare reform law in light of escalating security priorities; however, this may take longer than expected. Catholic Charities USA will undoubtedly continue its advocacy for the poor—working for bills that increase unemployment insurance benefits and that provide income tax rebates for low-income households. According to Sharon Daly, the vice president

72. On 1 January 2002, the Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, former executive director (dean) of the Harvard Divinity School and past director of the Office of Justice and Peace of the United States Catholic Conference, succeeded the Rev. Fred Kammer, S.J., as president of Catholic Charities USA. Hehir brings to this job years of experience on domestic policy, social justice, and human rights—as well as managerial experience in public education, governmental lobbying, and agency monitoring of these issues. As an academic, he has written numerous articles on public theology and church-state relations. As a superb policy analyst, he is known in strategy circles for influencing the views of the Catholic hierarchy. In the 1980s, he played a major role in crafting two major pastoral letters of the NCCB on nuclear deterrence and economic justice. Thus, it can probably be expected that Hehir will put his considerable political skills to work for Catholic Charities, and provide a link between the Catholics, social services, domestic policy, and the Bush initiative.


Thus, in the end, it is possible to conclude that the "Catholic" response to the watered-down version of the Bush faith-based initiative will continue to be positive. Catholic Charities USA can give qualified support so long as it retains the freedom to continue lobbying for the needy. As for the USCCB, the bishops see it as an opportunity to affect the formulation of policy, to guide the principles of the government with regard to the poor, and a new way to carry out their mission to the marginalized in society.

Catholic bishops hope to maintain and enlarge the freedom of the church to carry out its salvific and social responsibility by altering the relationship between church and state, thereby possibly bringing about a partnership with the government on educational, social, and charitable services. President Bush's faith-based initiative has been instrumental in cementing ties between the Bush administration and the Catholic hierarchy. While the Bush administration anticipates winning Catholic votes in future elections, the bishops look forward to the institutionalization of major change with regard to a more favorable church-state relationship in American society. Indeed, both groups seek to get the best part of the faith-based bargain, and on their own terms.

74. Testimony of Sharon Daly before the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy made available by Catholic Charities USA. Related to S.685, Catholic Charities would support responsible fatherhood, appropriate child support, and expansion of earned income tax credits for larger families, restoration of social service block grants, employer sponsored child care, and increased child welfare. With regard to S.1530, it would support adoption assistance payments for children adopted through non-profit agencies.