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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 17
Issue 2 June

Article 8

June 1990

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James Midgley
Louisiana State University

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Recommended Citation

Midgley, James (1990) "The New Christian Right, Social Policy and the Welfare State," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol17/iss2/8>

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The New Christian Right, Social Policy and the Welfare State

JAMES MIDGLEY

Louisiana State University
School of Social Work

While the campaigns of the New Christian Right on abortion, affirmative action, school prayer and other issues have been well documented, little is known about the movement's attitude towards state welfare programs. Identifying three distinctive sources of fundamentalist antipathy to the welfare state, this paper seeks to draw attention to interesting although unconventional ideas about social welfare that should be recognized and understood by scholars concerned with the study of social policy.

During the last decade, conservative evangelical Protestants have attracted widespread attention because of their vigorous political activism. They have campaigned energetically on abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, school prayer and the suppression of pornography and homosexuality, and have adopted a conservative position on economic policy, international relations and other secular matters.

Known collectively as the New Christian Right, these groups are comprised of conservative Protestant evangelicals, fundamentalists, pentecostals and others who support social traditionalism, endorse religious values through legislative authority, and seek the eradication of permissiveness, secularism and social liberalism. Guth (1983, p. 31) reports that the term 'New Christian Right' gained currency in the early 1980s to refer to "a loose and poorly articulated collection of approximately a dozen TV evangelists, renegade mainline clergymen, nascent lobbies, an ill-defined constituency, and numerous coordinating committees" which had coalesced to form a coherent political movement with a clear agenda. Linked to a similar expression, 'the New Right', which connotes the ideological derivation of the Reagan (and Thatcher) administration's political platform (King, 1987; Levitas, 1986), the term has retained its utility even though its meaning remains imprecise. Equally imprecise is the term

'fundamentalist' which is often used synonymously with 'New Christian Right' although strictly speaking it refers to any spiritual persuasion which subscribes to a literal interpretation of religious teaching, favors simple, basic truths rather than complex theological arguments, and accepts the inerrancy of the scriptures.

The New Christian Right has used various tactics to influence the political process including well orchestrated media campaigns, direct lobbying, the public endorsement of legislative and presidential candidates, and even civil disobedience. Although media reports have exaggerated the movement's electoral strength, various studies (Liebman 1983; Latus 1983; Reichley 1987) have shown that significant voter support was mobilized in support of its agenda. In the 1988 presidential campaign, the movement made an ultimate bid for power by nominating a popular television evangelist, Rev. Pat Robertson, for the nation's highest office. Although Robertson was unsuccessful, he attracted a degree of popular support which is indicative for significant electoral potential.

More recently, the fundamentalist right has attracted considerable but unwelcome media attention resulting from revelations of financial and sexual scandals. These events have undoubtedly harmed the movement's political chances. But religious conservatives have proved to be resilient in the past, and in spite of a loss of impetus, a resurgence of fundamentalist political activism is likely. Indeed, as recent developments in the abortion struggle demonstrate, the movement's capacity for activism has not been diminished.

The activities the New Christian Right have been documented by scholarly investigators. In addition to several critical accounts which have declared their antagonism to the movement's position (Jorstad, 1981; Kater, 1982; Conway and Siegelman, 1982), more dispassionate studies which have investigated its political strength, theological and moral orientation and social significance have also appeared (Liebman and Wuthnow, 1983; Jorstad, 1987; Neuhaus and Cromartie, 1987; Bruce, 1988). This research has resulted in the accumulation of a substantive body of knowledge about a popular movement of contemporary significance.

In spite of this literature, very little is known about the New Christian Right's attitude to state welfare programs. While journalistic and other popular accounts have referred to the movement's opposition to the welfare state, no systematic analyses of its position have been published. For example, Jorstad's (1981) list of the major issues on which the New Christian Right has campaigned, includes opposition to social security, health insurance, the minimum wage, industrial regulation, statutory social services and other programs which are at the core of the welfare state ideal. But he offers no reasons for this antipathy, or analysis of the bases of the movement's objection to state welfare.

In view of the paucity of social policy research on the subject, this paper seeks to examine the New Christian Right's attitude towards state welfare programs. It identifies three major approaches to the question which draw on different historical, ideological and theological premises, and which comprise different sources of fundamentalist antipathy to the welfare state. By increasing awareness of these views, it hopes to inform and to elucidate what are interesting although unconventional beliefs about the role of the state in social welfare.

Historical Roots of the New Christian Right

While fundamentalist political engagement attracted considerable public attention during the 1980s, the Reagan era experienced the flowering rather than the beginning of conservative evangelical activism. Indeed, Protestant groups have been involved in politics ever since the Puritans and other religious dissidents first colonized the North Eastern coastal zones of the continent in the 17th century. But while these early settlers were traditionalist and often authoritarian, many of their 19th century descendants adopted a reformist stance crusading against slavery, and seeking to promote industrial and social welfare. Revivalism spawned a plethora of voluntary societies during the early part of the 19th century which were concerned not only with evangelism but with the promotion of public education, charity and reform. Christian reformers were at the forefront of the struggle for racial equality during Reconstruction and, constituting themselves as the Social Gospel movement, they

campaigns on behalf of industrial workers, slum dwellers and the poor (White and Hopkins, 1976; Marsden, 1984).

But, traditionalist factions within the evangelical movement rejected the progressivism of the Social Gospel and were increasingly disturbed by the growing theological revisionism of the mainstream denominations. The acceptance of scientific findings, the growth of religious pluralism (largely through European immigration), and the rapid increase in urbanization had facilitated the questioning of prevailing teachings. Biblical inerrancy, the literalism of the scriptures, and established theological doctrines (such as the virgin birth, the Second Coming and the concept of original sin) were skeptically debated to the chagrin of conservative Christians who challenged the "New Theology" with vigor. The publication of a series of tracts entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* by conservative Christians in the early decades of this century provided the movement with a name (Russell, 1976), and gave fresh impetus to what Reichley (1987) has dubbed the antimodernist revolt. This development was followed by the creation in 1919 of the World Christian Fundamentalist Association, the publication in the same year of the amplified *Scofield Reference Bible*, which, with its dogmatic annotations was widely used in evangelical circles. The fundamentalist revolt also produced a schism within the Protestant denominations, resulting in the creation of new evangelical seminaries and the affirmation of orthodox teaching by traditionalist scholars such as Machen, who left Princeton in the 1920s after denouncing the liberal trend within Presbyterianism as 'unchristian' (Machen, 1923).

Conservative fundamentalist groups also mobilized in support of prohibition and prosecuted the celebrated Scopes "Monkey" trial of 1925 (Russell, 1976). In the 1930s, some fundamentalist evangelists virulently denounced Roosevelt's New Deal as communist inspired and antiscriptural. However, these crusades did not succeed in securing control of the mainstream denominations, or in imposing the fundamentalist social agenda on the nation. Despondent, fundamentalists retreated, creating a multiplicity of nondenominational splinter churches, and adopting a separatist stance which drew consolation from their premillennialist belief in the imminence of the Second Coming.

The Cold War provided the movement with a new cause which enhanced its political chances. Successfully adopting the new medium of radio, fundamentalist evangelists such as Carl McIntire, Billy James Hargis and Edgar Bundy exploited popular anticommunist sentiment, and gained widespread public attention through their support of McCarthy's witch hunts. The McCarthy era also advanced the career of the young Billy Graham who subsequently brought a degree of respectability to fundamentalist activism by his successful cultivation of several American presidents.

While anticommunism was the dominant theme of fundamentalist politics in the 1950s, it was eventually replaced in the movement's demonology by the notion of secular humanism which, with its connotation of rationalism, scientism, social progressivism and toleration, is today regarded by many fundamentalists as the scourge of Christian America. LaHaye (1980, 1982) has, for example, successfully dramatized the threat of secular humanism, blaming humanistic beliefs for the decline in moral standards (as revealed in the pervasiveness of abortion, pornography, sexual permissiveness and the condoning of homosexuality), the weakening of the traditional family and its values, the increase in cynicism and hedonism among the young and other social ills. Since secular humanism is regarded by religious conservatives as the official doctrine of the modern state, and the favored value system of the liberal political, intellectual and corporate establishment, the restoration of traditional morality requires the mass mobilization of fundamentalist Christians and their allies in support of a determined bid for political power.

Armed with these ideas, organizations such as Moral Majority, Christian Voice, and Religious Roundtable entered the political arena in the 1970s and, as was noted previously, their dexterous application of modern electoral techniques mobilized significant support for Reagan's presidential bid. A driving influence was the commitment to extend the evangelical impulse beyond the goal of personal salvation to the promotion of societal piety and, in some cases, the advocacy of a return to earlier social arrangements when, it was argued, society was governed by religious precepts. Televangelist Jerry Falwell

(1980, p. 29) frequently made this claim, noting that "... our Founding Fathers established America's laws and precepts upon the principles recorded in the laws of God, including the Ten Commandments." Winthrop's sermons have been quoted by fundamentalist theologians such as Francis Schaeffer (1981) to substantiate the argument that America was not only established as a result of a sacred covenant between God and the Pilgrim Fathers, but that the "City upon the Hill" was essentially theocratic in character.

These notions were compatible with Reagan's political platform and he successfully enlisted the support of leading evangelists and fundamentalist political action groups who mobilized voters and substantial sums of money on his behalf (Jorstad, 1981; Latus, 1983; Gottfried and Fleming, 1988). Although Reagan described himself as a born-again Christian, he was not, in fact, the New Christian Right's first choice. But his ideology was appealing, successfully combining economic libertarianism with conservative social traditionalism and a strident patriotism. His populist style successfully exploited anxieties around issues of race, welfare, communism, and moral permissiveness. It also became evident that Reagan commanded popular support, and beginning with *Christian Voice*, most of the fundamentalist political organizations committed themselves to his campaign.

But, in spite of their links with the president and their determination to influence the political process, the New Christian Right did not implement its agenda during the 1980s. Although the movement mounted successful crusades against some prominent liberal politicians, and continued its activism on abortion, Christian education, pornography and other issues, the optimism which accompanied Reagan's initial electoral successes dissipated. Pat Robertson's bid for the presidency in 1988 was an attempt to revive fundamentalist activism, and although unsuccessful, was symbolic of the movement's resolve to impose its social vision on American society. This vision extols traditional values, the virtue of the family and local community, statutory sanction over moral behavior, capitalist economic ideals, and a rigorous antiwelfarism rooted in a traditional antagonism to state intervention in social affairs.

State Welfare and the New Christian Right

As was noted earlier, the New Christian Right has taken positions on a variety of social policy issues including family life, public morality, affirmative action, and education. Numerous arguments have been formulated in support of its stance but generally, its approach is inspired by an antipathy to modernism and 'liberal' tendencies in civil society. Deeply conservative, the movement has opposed progressivist social changes which contradict folkways that are believed to be inspired by scriptural teaching.

Drawing on these traditionalist beliefs, several fundamentalist leaders have expressed their opposition to governmental welfare programs, and some have characterized the welfare state as antisciptural. But while the movement's antiwelfarist attitude has been noted by some writers (Jorstad, 1981, 1987), no analysis of the historical, theological and ideological basis of its antipathy to state welfare has been published. Indeed, relatively little has much been published on the subject by fundamentalist writers themselves.

At least three distinct attitudes can be discerned in the limited corpus of fundamentalist writings on social welfare issues. These are derived from a combination of ideological, theological and popular beliefs influenced by the unique historical conditions in which the nation was founded and in which it evolved. Although characterized by a generalized antipathy to statism, fundamentalist objections to the welfare state reveal a complex and contradictory attitude. This is exemplified by the movement's espousal of economic libertarianism, but its advocacy of extensive statutory control over private morality, and proclivity for political authoritarianism and social control. In their synthesis of theology and secular motifs, these beliefs constitute an interesting set of ideas about the welfare state which should be recognized and understood by scholars concerned with social policy questions.

Traditional Values, Capitalism, and the New Israel

In spite of their popularity, Roosevelt's New Deal programs of the 1930s drew heavy criticism from leading fundamentalist

evangelists such as Gerald Winrod, William "Chief" Pelley and Gerald L. K. Smith who argued that the New Deal was communistic in inspiration and thus anti-Christian. As Clabaugh (1974) pointed out, the anti-New Deal preachers were intensely nationalistic, espousing a view of American society which extolled individualistic values and reflected a traditional dislike of government. Combining theological considerations with a recurrent antistatist theme in American culture, they formulated an objection to the New Deal that has found expression in the teachings of subsequent Christian right evangelists who have opposed the welfare state.

As the popularity of Roosevelt's programs increased, the anti-New Deal preachers, and Pelley in particular, became even more militant. Clabaugh (1974) reports that Pelley was impressed by European fascism, and emulating Nazi rituals he founded a quasimilitaristic organization which became virulently nationalistic, antisocialist and antisemitic. But with the coming of the Second World War, the movement lost all credibility and collapsed.

However, the populist anticommunism of the anti-New Dealers survived the Second World War to be resurrected in the 1950s by McIntire, Hargis and other fundamentalist preachers whose evangelism was characterized by an energetic patriotism that claimed divine inspiration for the American founding. Extolling individualism and the capitalist ethic as scripturally ordained, they vigorously opposed state intervention in social affairs.

Both McIntire and Hargis expounded the view that America was established by sacred design and that the nation was, in the imagery of Winthrop, intended to be a shining light to the world. Hargis noted that God had historically elected nations to serve his will, and that the task had passed from Israel to Britain and finally to America. As the New Israel, America was the "the freest of the free nations, the loveliest of all homelands and the most wonderful country in history" (Clabaugh, 1974, p. 130). McIntire argued that the nation's origins and subsequent historical development reflected its commitment to Christian values, and that its prosperity derived from the fact that Americans had kept the covenant. However, by questioning the scriptures, and

by adopting alien beliefs, Americans had begun to deviate from their sacred mission, and it was for this reason that war, economic hardship and other ills had been visited upon the people. In addition, communism was being used as a tool of Satan to undermine the nation's purpose. Urging a return to national piety, McIntire combined religious and patriotic themes, and by uniting what Clabaugh (1974, p. 84) described as "the fundamentalism of the cross with the fundamentalism of the flag", he successfully mobilized evangelical opinion in support of McCarthy's anticommunist crusade.

The rise of McCarthyism catapulted McIntire to national prominence. A long-standing critic of the social progressivism of the mainstream liberal churches, McIntire claimed that social activism derived from the Social Gospel was communist inspired, and that liberal clergy who supported these activities were collaborationists. The McCarthy committee delighted in these revelations, and soon McIntire and other conservative evangelists were denouncing liberal clergyman, and campaigning through the media against the social progressivism and revisionist theology of liberal protestantism.

After McCarthy's fall, McIntire and Hargis became successful radio evangelists, and their writings inspired subsequent fundamentalist leaders such as Jerry Falwell, who has also opposed the idea of the welfare state (Fowler, 1982). Falwell (1980) argues that America's commitment to individualist values, hard work, and the acquisition of property and wealth is divinely inspired. Free enterprise is thus consistent with the Christian life and with biblical teaching which holds that the state has no function except safeguarding "the lives, the liberties and the property of citizens" (1980, p. 69). But, he notes, that since the New Deal, the state has transgressed its prescribed role by adopting interventionist economic policies and establishing a variety of social welfare programs. This development is not only economically disastrous but antisciptural since the Bible teaches that "individuals should be free to build their lives without interference from government" (1980, p. 69). In addition, state social programs should be condemned since they seek to modify God's purpose: "the divine providence on which our forefathers relied, has been supplanted by the providence of the all-powerful state" (p. 70).

In this interpretation, state welfare programs are regarded as anti-Christian because they are inconsistent with traditional American individualist values which became institutionalized not because of an accident of history, or because of particular sociology realities on the frontier, but because of divine inspiration. Since, as McIntire (1946) argued, it is God who is the "author of liberty" and "whose thoughts are the ideology of freedom and democracy" (p. xvi), the American capitalist ethic and its antistatism is a reflection of God's purpose. The welfare state is contrary to Christian belief because it negates scriptural teachings that "support our American system of freedom, private enterprise, individual initiative, personal responsibility, competition and what we call the capitalist system" (1946, p. 26).

*Voluntarism, the Church and
the Role of the State*

While McIntire and Hargis claimed scriptural authority for their antiwarfarist position, their ideas owed more to popular cultural beliefs than to scriptural teaching. Another source of fundamentalist opposition to the welfare state, which is explicitly theological in character, comes from the late Carl Henry (1960), a leading evangelical theologian. Henry's critique of the welfare state begins by making a distinction between the respective functions of the state and church. Although he acknowledges that Caesar is ultimately under God's authority, the state has clearly defined responsibilities which differ substantively from those of the church. The state's primary function, he argues, is the maintenance of law and order, the dispensation of justice and the preservation of human rights. The church's function, on the other hand, is within the realm of love "... of mercy, of undeserved favor, of charity" (1960, p. 23).

Through the centuries, the church has fulfilled its ordained commitment to compassion, mercy and love, but in more recent times, the distinction between the respective functions of the state and the church has become blurred. By campaigning for the extension of state intervention in social affairs, the Social Gospel facilitated the abrogation of the church's mission, and in the 1930s, by endorsing the New Deal, the church abandoned its commitment to voluntary welfare. The view that industrial

society created new problems which could only be dealt with by the state, and that the Great Depression required massive state intervention, may have been plausible but it had three unfortunate consequences. (a) It engendered the theologically erroneous belief that state involvement in welfare infuses government with a moral and even spiritual dimension. Although the state may have a responsibility for welfare in times of national emergency, the idea that welfare is a moral dimension of government is unscriptural. The state may act with humanitarian motives but it can never act as an agent of God's love and mercy. (b) State welfarism has resulted in the expropriation of what was traditionally a religious responsibility. Christian support for the welfare state, and the payment of taxes to fund state welfare services diminishes the Christian ideal of giving as an act of love. It has also diminished the church's responsibility for welfare. To make matters worse, the church has become increasingly dependent on the state to operate its own welfare programs and this has weakened its autonomy. (c) The growth of state welfare has rendered the church impotent. The church is already left with little more than a token responsibility for voluntary service. As the state extends its scope, "the churches will have to console themselves mainly as centers of private devotion" (Henry, 1960, p. 23).

Henry's arguments have had considerable appeal and were resurrected with some force in the early days of the Reagan administration when some evangelical leaders argued that state responsibility for welfare should be transferred to the churches. Jorstad (1987) reports that Reagan made a reference to the issue in a speech in 1981, quoting Billy Graham's proposal that if each church in the country assumed responsibility for ten needy people, public welfare services could be eliminated. But, although this raised the expectations of conservative Christian leaders, Jorstad notes that "As it would turn out over the next years before Campaign '84, the President made no further reference in specific terms to that suggestion" (p. 119).

Although state responsibility for welfare was not transferred to the churches, the New Christian Right has supported substantial budgetary reductions in Federal social spending. Fundamentalist writer Tom McCabe (1981) welcome Reagan's

proposed welfare cuts of the early 1980s which sought to reduce social expenditures by as much as \$35 billion. Although many Christians were appalled by the president's budget proposals, and fearful of their consequences for those in need, McCabe argued that the cuts should be welcomed for giving the church an opportunity to reassert its traditional welfare ministry. As he put it: "Never in recent history has the church literally been handed such an opportunity to affect society. Instead of chastising Reagan's "heartlessness", the church needs to begin preparing and planning for the "imminent ramifications of the budget reductions" (p. 42). The benefits to the church, he argued, are considerable. By assuming its proper role, the church will fulfill God's commandments, reap the blessings which result from giving, demonstrate the power of love and compassion to society, and perfect the welfare system. There is no doubt, he claims, that local church effort, carefully administered by the deacons, will rectify the inefficiencies of current welfare bureaucracies. Fraud and abuse will be eliminated, and needy recipients will receive care, love and spiritual attention, which is more than the state can provide with cash handouts.

*Christian Reconstructionism,
the Ungodly State and Biblical Law*

Christian reconstructionism is a branch of the American fundamentalist movement that has not attracted much public attention but which has, nevertheless, gained increasing support in evangelical circles in recent years. Accepting the view that the founding fathers had entered into a sacred covenant with God, and that America is indeed the New Israel, the reconstructionists extend this idea by advocating the transformation of the country into a theocracy based on scriptural precepts derived entirely from old testament law.

In their espousal of theonomy, the reconstructionists differ from earlier fundamentalists such as McIntire and Hargis whose view of the political foundations of the New Israel synthesize scriptural teaching, secular philosophies, and a romantic conception of traditional American values. While their imagery is homespun, the reconstructionists evoke archaic themes, and appear to have more in common with Iranian clerics than contemporary American televangelists.

The writings of Rousas John Rushdoony, the movements founder and leading exponent, offers a critique of the welfare state which is derived from a wider critique of the modern secular state, and particularly of the notion of the separation of church and state. Rushdoony (1986) argues that it is a terrible sin to accept the proposition that the religious and secular domains should be separated since this amounts to the toleration of humanism as a competing religion espoused by the state, and thus in the dethronement of God and the rule of His law over humankind. And by condoning the coexistence of secular humanism and Christianity, the mainstream liberal Church has permitted the ungodly state to propagate its religion through the institutions of government. Education, the courts, welfare services and other state agencies today not only reflect humanistic doctrine but implement its teachings. In addition, the ungodly state has been allowed to "define itself in messianic terms as man's savior" (1986, p. 32) and to this end it has replaced divinely ordained institutions with humanistic institutions. For example, instead of seeking to discover and follow God's will, the state has established centralized planning to create its own future. Instead of endorsing scripturally mandated institutions for the care of the needy, the state has established public welfare services to provide for citizens. Rushdoony calls on the Church to challenge the state's claim to sovereignty and to proclaim the sovereignty of God's law and its "absolute and total jurisdiction over every area of life and thought" (1986, p. 3). Institutions based on humanistic conceptions must be swept away and practices derived from scriptural precepts must be implemented. As an ungodly humanistic institution, the welfare state must be replaced with biblical sanctioned institutions that meet social need.

Rushdoony's major work, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973), offers a detailed account of the scriptural basis for a reconstructed society and reveals how social problems currently dealt with by the modern welfare state will be addressed. The basic institution of welfare will be the poor tithe which is prescribed by the scriptures and has been practiced since the time of Abraham. Although civil governments had previously recognized the importance of the tithe, and had enacted legislation

requiring the payment of tithes to the church, these laws were gradually repealed under the guise of freeing citizens from an oppressive tax. But instead of reducing the burden of taxation, the expropriation of the welfare function by the state has facilitated the extension of state power, and the imposition of a heavier tax burden on the people. The reintroduction of the tithe will reduce the enormous costs of state welfare, foster Christian responsibility for the needy and have the purpose "of the strengthening of godly society" (1973, p. 55). Another advantage of the tithe is that it will create a more efficient system of welfare; since it prohibits the giving of aid to "subsidize evil, sloth or apostasy" it will abolish the problem of abuse which characterizes state welfare. Tithing also encourages sound habits of providence because tithers have to plan and budget their income to insure that they meet the requirements of the law. Finally, tithing has a positive political function since "it releases society from this dependence on the state... and places the basic control of society with the tithing people of God" (1973, p. 55).

The biblical institution of gleaning should also be reintroduced since it is mandated by biblical law and serves as an effective mechanism for helping the poor. Rushdoony points out that like tithing, gleaning was widely practiced in the United States until this century and that many farmers supported needy families as their permanent gleaners. Although it may be argued that gleaning is an agrarian institution, unsuited to the welfare needs of an urban, industrial society, Rushdoony suggests that needy people could collect discarded industrial materials and products from factories, repair them and sell them in order to make a living. Unfortunately, he notes (1973, p. 249): "the rise of welfarism has limited the growth of urban gleaning, but its potentialities are very real and deserving of greater development."

Rushdoony also advocates the reintroduction of the practice of bondservice which was instituted for "improvident Israelites" who, beset by debt and adversity, sold themselves into labor until the next sabbatical year at which time they were freed. The practice also applied to those who defaulted on the payment of loans, permitting debtors to redeem themselves

through honest service and repair their reputation. Rushdoony argues that biblical law governing the institution of bondservice "is both humane and unsentimental." Unlike the welfare state which permits the claimant to be free but dependent, bondservice encourages responsibility by denying freedom while facilitating rehabilitation and ultimate self-reliance.

Biblical injunctions against the maltreatment of the poor, the oppression of servants and workers, and the protection of widows, orphans and the elderly will also be reintroduced. These measures are intended to inculcate compassionate attitudes and to prevent the exploitation of the weak and needy. Although public punishments are not prescribed for transgressions of these precepts, their association with sinful behavior induces both a sense of personal shame and public humiliation. On the other hand, Rushdoony points out that certain social problems which are tolerated and often condoned by the modern welfare state can be dealt with effectively through public retribution. In the reconstructed theocratic society, the death penalty will be widely used to control deviant behavior. As he notes, the death penalty is specified in the scriptures for adultery, incest, murder, homosexuality, rape, kidnaping, cursing or striking a parent, blasphemy and for persistent juvenile delinquency (1973, p. 77). Although many will oppose the introduction of the death penalty for young offenders, Rushdoony argues that it is badly needed in some cities, such as Los Angeles, where delinquency is rapidly gaining the upperhand. As he put it: "The failure of the law to execute the incorrigible and professional criminal is creating a major social crisis and leading increasingly to anarchy" (1973, p. 191)

Rushdoony's reconstructionist vision requires the abolition of the welfare state and the redirection of state intervention to the task of enforcing biblical welfare laws. Instead of functioning as a service provider, the state will uphold biblical welfare injunctions through the force of punitive sanction, as it did in earlier times when failure to attend church or to tithe was punishable. And, as has been shown, the power of the state will also be used to deal with pressing social problems through the imposition of retributive punishments on incorrigible children, adulterous women, homosexuals, criminals and others who

transgress the moral prescriptions of an ancient and bygone society.

Conclusion: Understanding The New Christian Right

This paper has sought to document the New Christian Right's attitude towards the welfare state. It has done so primarily to enhance understanding of an approach to social welfare which has not been previously investigated by social policy researchers. The three positions documented earlier comprise an interesting body of thought which is being advocated by a popular movement of political consequence and which should, therefore, be recognized and understood. Although it is true that the New Christian Right's influence has waned, it should not be underestimated. Millions of conservative, religious Americans, who have electoral potential, subscribe to the movement's teachings and are persuaded by its position on state welfare. To dismiss the movement's objections to the welfare state as irrelevant would be myopic and naive.

An understanding of the fundamentalist approach to state welfare also has normative implications. Advocates of state welfare, who dominate scholarly research in the field, have phrased their defense of welfarism primarily in response to libertarian tenets ignoring other antiwelfarist positions. Obviously, ignorance of these positions precludes an informed and effective refutation. If fundamentalist objections to the welfare state are to be countered, they must first be documented and comprehended. In addition, there is a need to understand opposing positions, such as those advocated by the New Christian Right, so that dialogue may be possible. This is particularly important in view of the growing prevalence of sectarian schools of social work which teach and undertake research in the social policy field. In addition, there are religiously committed social workers who will feel sympathy for the fundamentalist approach. Mutual appreciation of different positions is desirable, and is predicated on a proper understanding of the arguments.

An understanding of the New Christian Right's position also has implications for analytical inquiry. As has been shown, fundamentalist objections to state welfare are derived from three

approaches which draw variously on historical, ideological and theological premises. While some of these sources of antipathy to state welfare will be familiar to social policy investigators, others will be novel and unconventional. The use of scriptural references as a theoretical basis for social welfare provision is unusual in a field which has been dominated by secular, social science ideas (Mishra, 1977; Forder, Caslin, Ponton and Walklate, 1984). As such it illustrates the need for a wider vision that encapsulates phenomena beyond the conventional ambit of social policy research. Since academic research into social policy has been primarily based on established western social and political theories, the analysis of unconventional conceptual approaches opens the subject to new realms of speculative endeavor. Excursions into these realms will, in turn, facilitate new generalizations that will sharpen its analytical significance.

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