

## FAITH BASED INITIATIVES

*I recognize that government has no business endorsing a religious creed, or directly funding religious worship or religious teaching. That is not the business of government. Yet government can and should support social services supported by religious people, as long as those services go to anyone in need, regardless of their faith. And when the government gives the support, charities and faith-based programs should not be forced to change their character or compromise their mission.*  
~ President George W. Bush<sup>1</sup>

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) focuses its efforts on the following populations:

- At-risk youth
- Ex-offenders
- Homeless
- Hungry
- Substance abusers
- Those with HIV/AIDS
- Welfare-to-work families

**Q. Is there any money specifically set aside for faith-based organizations?**<sup>2</sup>

A. No. While there are small programs like the Compassion Capital Fund that are designed to help faith-based and community groups with the challenges they face, the Federal government does not set aside funds specifically for those groups. However, each year hundreds of millions of dollars go to religious charities and grassroots groups to provide vital Federal services for the poor. The government does not ask, "Does your organization believe in God?" It asks, "Does your program work? Does it meet the specific requirements of the grant? Is it turning peoples' lives around? Is it accountable for the money it receives?"<sup>2</sup>

### Compassion Capital Fund Grantees

In 2003, HHS has announced more than \$30 million in Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) grants awarded to 81 organizations to provide technical assistance and increase the capacity of faith-based and community organizations that work with the homeless, addicted, and other Americans in need.

**Is it the federal and state government's responsibility to care for the poor, needy, addicted and sick?**

**Have Christians abdicated their responsibility to care for the poor, needy, addicted and sick?**

**If taxes were lower, people could afford to give more to charity. If taxes were lower, would people give more to charity? 2002 US Figure: \$242 Billion (Individuals: \$183.73 billion, ~2.2% of adjusted gross income)**<sup>3</sup>

**Are there differences in the way governments give support compared to the way "faith-based" institutions provide support?**

- Different people? (paid civil servants, volunteers, paid employees of charities)
- Different goals? (eradicate addiction, salvation, etc.)
- Different techniques? (psychology, hypnosis, etc.)
- Different motives? (job vs. ministry)

### Secular Objections (numerous sources)

**It is discriminatory for an organization to not hire someone based on their personal beliefs or lifestyle.**

**Faith based programs don't work better than non faith-based programs.**

**What if churches use funds to fix worship areas and not just service areas?**

**What if churches use these funds to proselytize?**

### Christian Objections

**The FBCI makes no distinctions in regard to religious affiliation. What if Islamic programs work? Shari Law probably has a pretty high "success" rate.**

**Can the US Government come in and tell you who you hire if you take their money? Could they in the future?**

**Is Jesus Christ a social program?**

***When Jesus comes into your life, he doesn't want to add or remove a few files on your hard drive. He wants to come in by removing your old operating system and setting up His own operating system (Jesus Christ 1.0). After His operating system is installed, He gives us the Holy Spirit. Among other things, the Holy Spirit acts as a virus checker identifying contaminated files.***

Hebrews<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.<sup>2</sup> For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

James<sup>19</sup> Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,<sup>20</sup> let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

<sup>1</sup> Protecting the Civil Rights and Religious Liberty of Faith-Based Organizations – *Why Religious Hiring Rights Must Be Preserved*, Document from Ref. 2

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance/helping.html#1>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.aafrc.org/press\\_releases/trustreleases/charityholds.html](http://www.aafrc.org/press_releases/trustreleases/charityholds.html)



## Message from Jim Towey

It is my privilege to serve as Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. President Bush has charged our Office with strengthening the partnership between the Federal government and those faith-based and community groups that provide compassionate care and produce impressive results. He firmly believes that these organizations have an essential role to play in combating poverty and lessening suffering.

Before coming to the White House, I worked with poor families and individuals for many years. And I have seen firsthand what faith-based organizations are capable of doing. They transform the lives of their struggling neighbors and restore their dignity. They improve communities. They reform our hopes, expectations, and standards of success. As President Bush has said, these organizations "inspire hope in a way that government never can. And they inspire life-changing faith in a way that government never should."

All too often, however, these worthy organizations are excluded from delivering services for which the federal government commits substantial resources. Many are prohibited from applying simply because they have a religious name or identity, even though their programs may be turning lives around.

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives is working together with the U.S. Departments of Health & Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Labor, Justice, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to remove these barriers. We are changing needless rules and regulations that discourage these organizations from working with the Federal government to serve those most in need. We are urging Congress to enact legislation that will provide new incentives for charitable giving. And we are reaching out to grassroots groups so that they do not remain strangers to a Federal government that needs their help.

As we go about our work, we encounter a number of questions. What exactly is the "faith-based and community initiative"? Is there money available, and how do I apply? Can our faith-based organization deliver federally-funded services without giving up our religious identity? What are the "do's" and "don'ts" of working with the Federal government?

This website is designed to provide answers to these questions. Please spend some time reviewing the information that is included here and learn how you can become part of the President's initiative.

Our Office and its partners throughout the Federal government are committed to working with those people who can bring hope and a better life to those in need. We stand ready to help faith-based and community organizations build upon and expand their good works and look forward to working with you.

## Faith-Based Fudging

How a Bush-promoted Christian prison program fakes success by massaging data.

By Mark A.R. Kleiman

Posted Tuesday, Aug. 5, 2003, at 9:35 AM PT



The White House, the [Wall Street Journal](#), and Christian conservatives have been crowing since June over news that President George W. Bush's favorite faith-based initiative is a smashing success.

When he was governor of Texas, Bush invited Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship to start [InnerChange Freedom Initiative](#), a Bible-centered prison-within-a-prison where inmates undergo vigorous evangelizing, prayer sessions, and intensive counseling\*. Now comes a [study](#) from the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society reporting that InnerChange graduates have been rearrested and reimprisoned at dramatically lower rates than a matched control group.

For those who know how hard it is to reduce recidivism, the reported results were impressive. Colson celebrated the report by visiting the White House for a photo op with the president. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay issued a triumphal press release. The *Journal* smacked critics of faith-based programs for "turning a blind eye to science" by opposing InnerChange. The report heartened officials in the four states that have InnerChange programs and buttressed President Bush's plan to introduce the Christian program in federal prisons.

You don't have to believe in faith-healing to think that an intensive 16-month program, with post-release follow-up, run by deeply caring people might be the occasion for some inmates to turn their lives around. The report seemed to present liberal secularists with an unpleasant choice: Would you rather have people "saved" by Colson, or would you rather have them commit more crimes and go back to prison?

But when you look carefully at the Penn study, it's clear that the program *didn't* work. The InnerChange participants did somewhat *worse* than the controls: They were slightly more likely to be rearrested and noticeably more likely (24 percent versus 20 percent) to be reimprisoned. If faith is, as Paul told the Hebrews, the evidence of things not seen, then InnerChange is an opportunity to cultivate faith; we certainly haven't seen any results.

So, how did the Penn study get perverted into evidence that InnerChange worked? Through one of the oldest tricks in the book, one almost guaranteed to make a success of any program: counting the winners and ignoring the losers. The technical term for this in statistics is "selection bias"; program managers know it as "creaming." Harvard public policy professor Anne Piehl, who reviewed the study before it was published, calls this instance of it "cooking the books."

Here's how the study got adulterated.

InnerChange started with 177 volunteer prisoners but only 75 of them "graduated." Graduation involved sticking with the program, not only in prison but after release. No one counted as a graduate, for example, unless he got a job. Naturally, the graduates did better than the control group. Anything that selects out from a group of ex-inmates those who hold jobs is going to look like a miracle cure, because getting a job is among the very best predictors of staying out of trouble. And inmates who stick with a demanding program of self-improvement through 16 months probably have more inner resources, and a stronger determination to turn their lives around, than the average inmate.

The InnerChange cheerleaders simply ignored the other 102 participants who dropped out, were kicked out, or got early parole and didn't finish. Naturally, the non-graduates did worse than the control group. If you select out the winners, you leave mostly losers.

Overall, the 177 entrants did a little bit worse than the controls. That result ought to discourage InnerChange's advocates, but it doesn't because they have just ignored the failure of the failures and focused on the success of the successes.

The Penn study doesn't conceal the actual poor outcome: All the facts reported above come straight from that report. But the study goes out of its way to put a happy face on the sad results, leading with the graduates-only figures before getting to the grim facts. Apparently, the Prison Fellowship press office simply wrote a press release off the spin, and the White House worked off the press release. Probably no one was actually lying; they were just believing, and repeating as fact, what they wanted to believe. It's hard to know for sure what those involved were thinking: Study author Byron Johnson canceled a scheduled interview at the last moment. The White House didn't respond to requests for comment.

InnerChange program manager Jerry Wilger says he doesn't know much about research, but he doesn't think it's fair to count the performance of the people who dropped out of his program against him, a fair-sounding objection that misses the point entirely. If InnerChange's 177 entrants were truly matched to the control group but ended up having more recidivism, then either the apparent success with the graduates was due to "creaming" or the program somehow managed to make its dropouts *worse* than they were to start with. If the program genuinely helped its graduates and didn't harm its dropouts, and if the whole group of entrants was truly matched to the controls, then the group of 177 should have done better than the controls. And they didn't.

So, the feel-good winners-only analysis simply isn't worth the paper it's printed on. Only the full-group analysis (known technically as "intent-to-treat," a holdover term from its origins in medical research) has any real value. And on that analysis, the program has a net effect of zero or a little worse than zero. That makes it a loser.

John DiIulio, an intellectually serious advocate of faith-based programs who was the first director of the Bush administration's faith-based initiatives and the founder of the Penn research center, acknowledges frankly the results weren't what a supporter of such programs would have hoped for. But he points out that a single study almost never provides a convincing yes or no answer on a program concept. "The orthodox believers point to a single positive result and say it proves faith-based programs always work. The orthodox secularists point to a single negative result and say it proves faith-based programs never work. They're both wrong."

The poor result of InnerChange doesn't mean that no faith-based prison program could work, but it does mean that this one hasn't, at least not yet. It joins a long line of what seemed like good ideas for reducing recidivism that didn't pan out when subjected to a rigorous evaluation. Maybe my own pet, [literacy training](#), wouldn't do any better in a real random-assignment trial. But that's why you do evaluations; they tell you things you didn't want to hear. If you're honest, you listen to them.

And if you're smart, you don't listen to the political advocates of "faith-based" this and that when they say they're only asking us to support programs that have been "proven" to work.

**Correction, Aug. 6, 2003:** *The article originally and incorrectly described InnerChange Freedom Initiative as "a fundamentalist prison-within-a-prison." The Prison Fellowship regards itself as being part of the evangelical tradition rather than the fundamentalist tradition. ([Return](#) to the corrected sentence.)*

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## **Bush's Faith-Based Initiatives Violate Religious Freedom**

By providing federal funds to religious groups that perform social services, President George W. Bush is trampling the American principle of religious freedom. He either does not understand that principle or has little respect for it.

Democracy and separation of powers also have not fared well under Bush's faith-based initiatives. Congress declined to enact his proposal for nearly two years, mainly because federal dollars would be going to groups practicing religious discrimination in hiring.

While the people's representatives debated, Bush grew tired of waiting and decided in December 2002 to act alone. He began issuing executive orders making pervasively religious groups eligible to receive billions of dollars from the federal government in exchange for providing public services.

Bush similarly disregarded numerous judicial decisions indicating that church-state separation is violated by his scheme to fund religious organizations. He arrogantly and recklessly pushed ahead by usurping the functions of both Congress and the courts.

### **Bush's bosh**

For many years, groups affiliated with religion have received government funds to perform social services. But they were required to keep the services separate from religious activities.

The separation was usually done by setting up a nonprofit corporation to provide the government-funded services. The nonprofit entity was distinct from the religious organization, had an independent board, and did not engage in religious discrimination in hiring employees or providing services.

Additionally, the services were rendered pursuant to widely accepted professional standards and free from religious proselytizing. Because the organization operated in a nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory manner - neither promoting nor opposing religion - government funding and regulation of its operations did not violate church-state separation.

Although this system worked well for many years and provided substantial funding to religiously affiliated groups, it was not good enough for Bush. He viewed the refusal to fund pervasively religious organizations not as respect for church-state separation but as discrimination against religion.

Bush therefore declared an end to "the days of discriminating against religious groups just because they are religious." He argued that "governments can and should support effective social services provided by religious people, so long as they work and as long as those services go to anyone in need, regardless of their faith."

Bush sees no problem with government-funded social services being delivered in religious settings. He asserts that "when government gives that support, it is equally important that faith-based institutions should not be forced to change the character or compromise their prophetic role. . . . [I]t should not matter if there is a rabbi on the board, or a cross on the wall, or crescent on the wall, or religious commitment in the charter."

In fact, Bush believes that social programs are more effective when religion is added. He touts his proposal by saying: "No government policy can put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives. That is done when someone, some good soul, puts an arm around a neighbor and says, 'God loves you, and I love you, and you can count on us both.'"

Proclaiming that "faith-based charities work daily miracles," Bush apparently thinks that religious conversion is the answer to crime, drug addiction, homelessness, teen pregnancy and other social problems - as long as religious groups are given enough federal dollars.

Thus, Bush's faith-based initiatives allow pervasively religious groups to receive grants from the federal government to perform public services. The services can be performed in churches and similar places where scriptures, icons and other religious symbols permeate the environment. And the groups can practice religious discrimination in hiring employees to provide the services.

Bush has even proposed using federal dollars to build and renovate churches and other religious structures, if part of the building is used for social services. Supposedly, the funding could not exceed the cost of that part and could not finance the principal room used for prayer.

Federal guidelines issued for the faith-based initiatives do prohibit public funds from supporting inherently religious activities, including worship, religious instruction and proselytization. But few expect the prohibitions to be enforced, particularly in light of Bush's incessant claims about the power of faith to change lives.

Moreover, attempting to distinguish between religious and nonreligious activities is virtually meaningless in regard to operations of pervasively religious organizations. Credibility is strained to the breaking point by calling any activity nonreligious when performed by a religious organization, in a pervasively religious environment, and by persons who had to meet a religious test before being hired.

The fact is that if government finances any portion of a religious group's operations, that leaves just so much other revenue for the group to use in directly promoting religion. For instance, providing funds to help build a temple frees up money for the church to use in religious advertising and evangelizing. Any public funding of religious organizations is, therefore, government support of religion.

A smaller part of Bush's proposal involves the use of vouchers in an attempt to avoid the prohibitions on funding inherently religious activities. His administration believes that if government gives people vouchers that they can redeem at a faith-based organization of their choice, the organization is free to include as much religion as it wants in providing public services.

Bush clearly is more interested in the religious aspects of social service programs than in whether the counselors are licensed and the procedures have a proven record of effectiveness. He extols programs that make religious conversion the primary goal, and points to the drug treatment program at the Healing Place Church, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as an example of what he wants to support. According to its website, the program relies "solely on . . . the Word of God to break the bands of addiction" and believes "that recovery begins at the Cross."

No wonder that after hearing Bush crow about the life-changing powers of faith, and seeing his proposals to fund religious groups, columnist Robyn Blumner warned: "Make no mistake, Bush's plan is to have taxpayers underwrite conversion."

### **Religious freedom dissed**

There are several ways that Bush's faith-based initiatives contravene religious liberty. Any one of them should be sufficient to sink the policy as a violation of church-state separation.

#### *Forcing people to support religion is incompatible with religious liberty*

Bush has promoted his proposal by saying "we must not worry about people of faith receiving taxpayers' money." But requiring citizens to fund religion is one of the most blatant and offensive violations of religious freedom. Integral to religious liberty is the right to choose whether to support religion and which one to support.

It should be too obvious to state that people lack religious liberty when the government takes their money and gives it to religions they have not freely chosen to assist. Bush, however, is denying Americans the right to choose and sending their tax dollars to religions picked by the government, no matter how strongly some taxpayers may oppose those religions.

The Founders of the U.S. believed that tax support of religion is an outrageous violation of religious liberty. In the Virginia Assembly in 1779, Thomas Jefferson introduced a bill opposing a proposal to provide tax revenue for Christian education. His "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" stated that it is "sinful and tyrannical to compel a man to furnish contributions for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors."

James Madison was equally vehement in denouncing government aid to religion. Joining Jefferson's fight against tax funding of religion, he wrote and distributed his famous "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments."

The Remonstrance contains a plethora of arguments for religious liberty and church-state separation. On the right of the individual to choose whether to support religion, Madison wrote: "The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. . . . It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him."

Madison's Remonstrance was instrumental not only in defeating the proposed tax support of religion in Virginia, but also in securing passage of Jefferson's bill in 1785. A few years later, Jefferson's bill was the prototype for the guarantees of religious freedom placed in the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, authored primarily by Madison.

Essential to the Founders' concept of religious liberty, then, was that there would be no public funding of religion. The same view was implemented at the state level. Among the original thirteen states, the ones that had tax support of religion eventually followed the lead of Virginia and the national government by eliminating it. And virtually all the states that joined the union in the nineteenth century adopted the principle that public funds would not be used for religion.

It is deeply troubling that although a chief concern of the Founders was the right to choose whether to support religion, it's a concern that Bush utterly lacks.

#### *Religious freedom prohibits government from promoting religious conversion*

Another way that Bush's faith-based initiatives violate religious freedom is by pressuring people to attend religious environments to obtain government benefits. Making matters worse, a reason the government leads them there is to promote religious conversion.

Although federal guidelines prohibit direct proselytizing of recipients while the social services are being rendered, Bush has made clear that the services can be delivered in settings where religious scriptures, icons and art pervade the environment. The locations can include churches, synagogues, mosques and other places used primarily for religious worship.

The guidelines also permit religious groups to "invite participants to join in your organization's religious services or events." But the groups cannot require participation in religious activities or condition receipt of government-funded assistance upon it.

There is little doubt that Bush hopes the recipients will express interest in the religious messages surrounding them while receiving public services. They can then be referred for religious counseling in a separate room used for that purpose, or in the same room but at a time when government services are not being provided. There, someone can put an arm around them and say, "God loves you, and I love you, and you can count on us both."

In effect, the government-funded social programs function as bait to lure recipients into religious environments. Once there, they are induced into inquiring about religion so that attempts can be made to convert them. And with Bush as president, it's unlikely that federal agents will be monitoring the situations to ensure that no overt attempts at conversion are made while public services are being delivered.

Exacerbating the problem is that recipients of government aid are often in positions of need and dependency, making them more susceptible to religious influences while receiving the services. They are under pressure to conform so as to avoid jeopardizing their lifelines to aid, even if conformity means violating their own religious principles.

Their predicament illustrates that whenever government promotes religion, citizens feel coerced to submit to the government's theology instead of following their own beliefs. The pressure is strong and inescapable because of the enormous power government wields over people's lives.

Whether the proselytizing is subtle or blatant, Jefferson and Madison would have objected to this arrangement. Jefferson stated in his "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" that no one should "be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever." He and the other Founders saw religious freedom as encompassing the right not to attend religious places.

Madison added that using "religion as an engine of civil policy" constitutes "an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation." The Founders knew from history that government misuses religion for its own purposes and is incompetent to judge competing religious claims.

*Religious discrimination in employment is outrageous and harmful*

By providing tax funds enabling religious groups to hire personnel based on religious criteria, Bush's faith-based initiatives are responsible for the discrimination that occurs.

Religious discrimination could not be more inconsistent with the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment prohibits government from interfering with religious freedom. But that is exactly what government does by putting people in a position of having to choose between their religious beliefs and getting a job.

The Framers of the Constitution also specified in Article VI, Clause 3 that there shall be no religious test for any public office. They recognized that religious beliefs are irrelevant to whether a person is qualified to perform governmental functions. They knew that effective public servants could come from all religions and also from the nonreligious.

For example, George Washington stated that the U.S. government "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, [and] requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens. . . ." In hiring workers for his own estate, he said, "If they be good workmen, they may be . . . Mohammedans, Jews, or Christians of any sect, or they may be Atheists."

George Bush is no George Washington. Without a twinge of conscience, Bush sanctions bigotry by funding public services performed by workers who have to meet religious tests before being hired.

In addition to disqualifying many applicants for job openings, this discrimination reduces the efficacy of the public services. Faith-based groups reject highly qualified candidates having the wrong religion and hire less-qualified personnel who meet religious standards.

But if the services funded by government are not religious in nature, as Bush claims, there is no justification for using religion as a criterion in hiring. U.S. Representative John Conyers (D-Mich.) objected to the religious tests by saying, "Cooking soup and giving it to the poor can be done equally well by persons of all religious beliefs."

Only if the employees are to perform religious functions would there be a reason for allowing religious discrimination in hiring. This fact belies Bush's claim that religion won't be funded.

The discrimination also exposes as untruthful Bush's contention that he is only seeking equal treatment for faith-based organizations. Other social service providers receiving federal funds are not permitted to practice religious discrimination in hiring. Allowing faith-based groups to do so is not equal treatment but favoritism for religion.

### **Additional problems with the proposal**

A number of other problems make faith-based initiatives a bad bargain for both the religious and nonreligious.

In the first place, members donate less to religious groups when their tax dollars are already going there. Some conclude that because they have given through taxes, they need not contribute as much voluntarily. The influx of government funding thus means less support from members and more reliance on government

As the groups become increasingly dependent on public funding, they are vulnerable to losing control of their operations to the government. History teaches that government controls what it funds. For instance, government assistance to religious colleges caused a secularization of many of them and a watering down - in some cases virtually to the vanishing point - of their religious message.

Religious colleges found that government attaches strings to the funding in order to further its purposes, which are not necessarily consistent with religious purposes. Recipients also must agree to government mandates, oversight and audits so that public dollars are not misappropriated or used for providing substandard services.

The problem is that when government waves substantial amounts of money in front of religious groups, they often find the temptation irresistible and cave to whatever the government wants, regardless of the impact on their religion. In essence, they betray their principles in exchange for the government's thirty pieces of silver, allowing government to crucify their religious mission.

Accepting public funds also makes religious groups reluctant to criticize government, in order to avoid biting the hand that feeds them. But by turning a blind eye to government's wrongdoing, the moral integrity of religious organizations is damaged and society loses what can be an important critic of government. Martin Luther King Jr. said: "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state."

And when religious groups start ignoring violations of the public trust, it is just a short step to actively participating in, covering up or making excuses for the malfeasance of public officials. These actions can be easy to rationalize when millions of dollars and the survival of a group's programs are at stake.

According to *New York Observer* columnist Joe Conason, Bush's faith-based initiatives have already "been transformed into a patronage operation" to further the political designs of government officials. In his book *Big Lies: The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How It Distorts the Truth*, Conason relates: "During the 2002 midterm election campaign, administration officials suddenly showed up at inner-city churches, seeking to entice African-American ministers politically with federal funding."

Republican leaders reportedly used a similar tactic in trying to stem African-American protests of the racially inflammatory comments made by Senate Republican leader Trent Lott in December 2002.

Even if religion does not actively partake in government's wrongdoing, a close relation between the two causes religion to be tainted by public corruption. Thomas Paine described government as a necessary evil. By partnering with a government that sometimes is evil, religion receives from the public the same criticisms and antipathy as are directed at government.

Relying on government support also makes religious organizations lazy and ineffective. Instead of concentrating on developing and marketing an attractive message, the focus shifts to lobbying for government aid. When those efforts prove successful, riding the government's gravy train renders the groups even less inclined to do the hard work of motivating people to become involved and donate voluntarily.

Further, when government picks and chooses between religious groups seeking support, an ugly and acrimonious competition between religions ensues. The Religious Right has emphasized that it wants certain "undesirable" religions excluded from Bush's program. In this atmosphere, claims of favoritism arise and ecumenical relationships are difficult to attain. Religious groups that lose out in the quest for public funding develop resentment toward the winners and also against the government that slighted them.

Many people actually lose respect for religions that need government support. An inherent contradiction exists in claiming to have an omnipotent God on one's side while simultaneously alleging a need for government assistance. Government should aid the sick and the needy rather than wasting resources trying to strengthen the Almighty. And if the alleged Omnipotence is not really so strong, government should not assist a fraud.

Finally, contrary to what Bush and other supporters of faith-based initiatives suggest, there is no proof that religious groups provide social services better than secular organizations. Stephen Goldsmith, a Bush administration official hired to oversee part of the program, admitted on National Public Radio on January 29, 2001 that he lacks "hard proof" of their superiority.

Bush nevertheless wants to cut funds from secular programs having strong records of effectiveness, although these programs already possess insufficient resources. He would direct the funds to religious groups that use unproven, unaccredited and unregulated methods.

## **Conclusion**

Bush's faith-based initiatives make substantial and perilous assaults on the principle of religious freedom. He would force taxpayers to support religious doctrines they disagree with, subject recipients of government aid to religious proselytizing, and promote religious discrimination in employment.

The Framers vigorously condemned all of those actions when they spoke of religious liberty and the rights of conscience. They separated church and state to prevent the government from ever implementing such intolerant, divisive and harmful policies.

Additionally, government's purported helping-hands will, after getting a firm grip on religious groups, put them in a chokehold that will enable public officials to control their operations and manipulate them for political purposes.

As U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) stated in opposing Bush's proposal: "The day will come when, having permitted excessive entanglement between religious institutions and the government, there will be no protection for religion when government flexes its muscles."

The Framers foresaw those results, too, when they separated church and state. They knew that separation was good for both religion and government.

Many supporters of faith-based initiatives have good intentions. But by displaying a cavalier or oblivious attitude toward violations of religious liberty, they are pursuing an extremely dangerous course.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis's warning is apropos: "Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by evil-minded rulers. The greater dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding."

Hopefully, federal and state judges will have the appreciation for church-state separation that Bush and other supporters of faith-based initiatives lack. If so, the courts will declare the entire program to be a patent violation of the Constitution's guarantee of religious freedom.

[http://www.humanismbyjoe.com/Faith\\_Based\\_Initiatives.htm](http://www.humanismbyjoe.com/Faith_Based_Initiatives.htm)

# Bush's Faith-Based Initiative Against Freedom

by [Alex Epstein](#) (February 1, 2003)

**Summary:** That our President is mounting an unprecedented attack on secular government--at a time when America is under attack by religious terrorists supported by religious regimes--is morally obscene. Those of us who value liberty must righteously repudiate Bush's faith-based initiative, and rebuild the wall between church and state.



[[www.CapitalismMagazine.com](http://www.CapitalismMagazine.com)] President Bush is very vocal about his religious beliefs; he likes to preach publicly about "the power of faith" and "the vital place of faith in the life of our nation." This does not bother most Americans, who believe that while the President personally wants to promote religion, he certainly recognizes that this is not the province of government--that we must maintain, in Jefferson's terms, "a wall of separation between church and state." But Bush's recent Executive Order mandating "Faith-Based Initiatives" and his State of the Union call for Congress to pass an expanded version of the law are the latest pieces of evidence that he intends to tear down that wall.

Of course, the President denies any church-state impropriety in doling billions of tax dollars to religious organizations for charitable activities; he says he is just ending the welfare state's "history of discrimination against faith-based groups." But Bush's justification for Faith-Based Initiatives reveals their actual purpose: "Welfare policy," he explains, "will not solve the deepest problems of the spirit. . . No government policy can put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives. That is done when someone, some good soul, puts an arm around a neighbor and says, 'God loves you, and I love you, and you can count on us both.'" In other words, the government is bankrolling religious organizations because they "help the needy" not only materially but also spiritually--by exposing them to religion. Thus, we can expect that Bush's taxpayer-funded "armies of compassion" will not only supervise Midnight Basketball games for "at risk youth," but also exhort the youngsters to save their souls by adopting the teachings of Jesus, Yahweh, Allah, or (depending on the government's commitment to

"inclusiveness") David Koresh.

Bush's new government establishment designed to help propagate religion is in direct violation of a Constitution which says that the government "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." Furthermore, Faith-Based Initiatives violate the right to free speech of the many taxpayers who are now forced to support the spread of ideas they oppose.

Clearly, Bush believes there are higher priorities than upholding the Constitution and protecting individual rights: namely, using his Presidency to promote religion. "For too long," he declares, "some in government believed there was no room for faith in the public square."

This is exactly wrong. The truth is that for too long (and in too many

places) people in government have believed that there is "room for faith in the public square"--i.e., that it is proper to use the government in the service of religion; this view has been held by everyone from the kings of the Dark Ages to the Ayatollahs of today. The Founding Fathers were the first to repudiate this view by establishing a government devoted solely to the protection of individual freedom, in which religion is constitutionally relegated to a private matter. The value of keeping religion out of government is not simply that it leaves people of various religions free to say the prayers and practice the rituals of their choice; more fundamentally, by prohibiting the government from forcing people to support or obey the dictates of religion, it protects freedom as such.

For years the separation of church and state has been under attack by the Religious Right, which has called for bans on pornography, oral sex between consenting adults, and abortions--in opposition to the right to free speech, the right to liberty, and a woman's right to her body. Such attempts to legislate religion have not had much success--until now.

Witness the Bush-led crusade to destroy a crucial scientific field: human cloning--including "therapeutic cloning" research, which many scientists believe has the potential to save millions of lives. Therapeutic cloning does not violate anyone's rights--its only "victims" are 150-cell embryos--but Bush seeks to prohibit it because it violates his Christian beliefs in the moral sanctity of embryos and the moral evil of man "playing God." If Bush succeeds in banning cloning, he will not only have committed a massive violation of the rights of the creators and potential beneficiaries of this technology--he will have established that in the Land of the Free, science may function only by permission of religion.

That our President is mounting an unprecedented attack on secular government--at a time when America is under attack by religious terrorists supported by religious regimes--is morally obscene. Those of us who value liberty must righteously repudiate Bush's faith-based initiative, and rebuild the wall between church and state.

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## **America separated on Bush's faith-based initiatives**

By Chuck Raasch, GNS Political Writer

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — In a state where church steeples are often the highest points in the small towns dotting the prairies and mountains, there are many questions about President Bush's proposed marriage of government and religious social services.

The questions come from conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, from the politically connected and the not-so-connected. Their breadth runs the gamut:

Who decides who's worthy of the money?

What controls will there be on how the money is used?

What strings will come if more faith-based organizations accept federal money?

How deeply will the IRS or other government agencies go into a church's or a mosque's or a synagogue's books if they — or an affiliated organization — accept federal money? Will the Freedom of Information Act apply to faith-based institutions.

And won't it all get tied up in court, anyway?

Bush defended his proposal in a White House news conference, arguing that as long as there is a "secular alternative" available, his proposal does not cross the line separating church and state.

Bush just opened his office of faith-based initiative this past week, but even before John Dilulio came on board to run it, there were signs the idea was in trouble. Many on the religious left had already criticized the plan as an unconstitutional marriage of state and religion.

But a bigger blow came when Pat Robertson raised questions on his religious television show, the "700 Club." It brought out in the open what

Bush advisers had already realized: There is much wariness among Bush's religious right base. At the Conservative Political Action Conference last week, for instance, Terrence Scanlon warned that bad things usually follow federal money into private organizations. Scanlon's Capital Research Center tracks federal money that goes into liberal organizations.

Robertson said he was worried that Bush's faith-based initiative would open a "Pandora's box" and said controversial groups might qualify for federal money. He cited Hare Krishnas and the Church of Scientology as examples.

Some background: Robertson has had a long-running feud with the federal government. Throughout most of the 1990s, the Internal Revenue Service and the Christian Coalition, which Robertson founded in 1989, engaged in a protracted feud over the coalition's tax-exempt status. The feds argued the Christian Coalition was engaging in political activity benefiting Republicans.

Last July, a federal judge ordered the IRS to refund taxes the Christian Coalition had paid in 1990 after the Coalition had sued the IRS for unfairly denying its exemption for tax-exempt status. Conservatives have argued that the IRS was selectively going after the Christian Coalition while not challenging the tax-exempt status of such left-leaning organizations as the Democratic Leadership Council and the NAACP.

Bush has made faith-based initiatives a central part of his social agenda, arguing that all he wants to do is to expand the government's support of religious organizations that are already aiding the poor and disadvantaged.

Two examples often cited are the Salvation Army and Catholic Charities.

"When you look at their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the poor, compared to the government's inefficiency, there is no comparison," said Ralph Reed, a Republican consultant and informal Bush adviser, who helped Robertson form the Christian Coalition.

Bush, Reed argued, is creating nothing new, he's just expanding on good works that already work.

Nationally, there appears to be split support of Bush's plan.

A new poll released Thursday by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press said 64% agreed that religious organizations should be allowed to compete with non-religious organizations for government funding to provide services such as job training or drug treatment. Only 30% opposed it in the Pew poll.

But only 46% said they liked the idea that Bush was creating a faith-based

initiative office in the White House. Thirty eight% don't like that idea.

As the debate intensifies, the questions will remain substantial.

Deciding who qualifies may be the hardest.

What would have happened, for instance, had there been a more readily available source of federal funds for faith-based initiatives in the late 1980s, when the infamous Jim Bakker's PTL empire was crashing and burning, and those trying to salvage his ministry were seeking financial support to keep it going?

Could Bakker have gotten government money to prop up what turned out to be a corrupt organization? After all, he purported to do good works for the poor and disadvantaged, even as he was being battered for his ostentatious lifestyle — which included everything from expensive cars to hush money for a sex scandal to air-conditioned dog houses.

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/raasch/r084.htm>