



### ***“History, Social Work, and Christianity”***

Thank you for taking part in this home study text-based course. The purpose of this course is to inform participants of the history of collaboration between Christian principles and the profession of social work. The articles contained in this course address the secularization of social work, traditionalism, and the common ethical standards that are held by both the faith-set of Christianity and the profession of social work.

The following text-based course contain six separate readings pertaining to the use of a faith perspective when looking at social work. The articles are as follows: *Reconsidering Secularization and Recovering Christianity in Social Work History* by James R. Vanderwoerd; *Looking Back to Move Forward: Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory* by Charity Samantha Fitzgerald; *Parenting, Policies, and Practice: Christian Influence on Child Welfare in America* by Jill C. Schreiber; *Faith as a Protective Factor against Social Misconceptions of Black Girls: A Historical Perspective* by Tanya Smith Brice; *“Accepting a Trust So Responsible”: Christians Caring for Children at Buckner Orphan’s Home, Dallas, Texas, 1879-1909* by T. Laine Scales; and *“To Give Christ to the Neighborhood”: A Corrective Look at the Settlement Movement and Early Christian Social Workers* by T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly.

After completing this course, participants will be able to:

1. Identify how the social sciences have been fundamentally shaped by a modern, progress-oriented framework that elevates particular forms of knowledge and marginalizes others.
2. Explain how the historical influences of Christianity have been used to justify the recent policy approaches in faith-based initiatives in American social policy.
3. Describe the concept of religious traditionalism.
4. Describe the influence of Christianity on the development of child welfare policy in America.
5. Explain the legacy of the settlement house movement on the professionalization of social work.

Upon completing the reading section of this course, please take the 25 question post-test located on the website provided to you when you purchased this course. After achieving a score of at least 80% and completing a training evaluation, you will receive your CE certificate verifying that you have earned 4 continuing education contact hours approved by the Association of Social Work Boards.

Thank you again for your interest in this course, and for your interest in this critical area of social work.

# Reconsidering Secularization and Recovering Christianity in Social Work History

*James R. Vanderwoerd*

*This article explores contemporary social work's uneasy and ambivalent relationship with its Christian origins by use of the concept of narrative. The argument is organized in three parts: first, the concept of narratives is used to describe the dominant secularization story in social work and identify some of the emerging alternative narratives. Second, the article explores in greater detail particular themes from historians of religion in Canada that challenge the interpretations and assumptions contained in the dominant secularization narratives of social work. Third, the article discusses the implications of these alternative narratives in one particular area that is currently relevant to social work—human rights—and shows how it has become captive to the secular narrative. The paper concludes with implications and challenges both for Christians and non-Christians in social work.*

**It has been said that “Christianity has been like the family silver,** an acknowledged but rarely examined major premise of the Anglo- American social work tradition” (Bowpitt, 1998, p. 676). Virtually every history of social work and social welfare mentions something about the Christian influences and connections of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, as in Bowpitt's metaphor of the “family silver,” most references to these Christian influences are portrayed as something from the past that has little if any current relevance to social work and social welfare today.

This article explores contemporary social work's uneasy and ambivalent relationship with its Christian origins more deeply by use of the concept of narrative (Smith, 2003a). By placing the conventional social work narrative of professionalization within the larger narrative of modernization—and its offspring, secularization—this article shows that the “story” of the social work profession is not, in fact, a neutral recounting of historical facts, but rather, a version of events that intentionally emphasizes scientific, humanistic accomplishments at the expense of Christian influences and actors (Smith, 2003b). In other words, the story of social work is a contested story; the linked narratives of professionalization and secularization are evidence of adherence to a particular set of values and assumptions and the rejection of other values and assumptions. Or, put differently, the story of social work represents a contest of worldviews in which the modern, professional, secularized version has won the day. It has done so by minimizing, ignoring, and dismissing other versions<sup>1</sup>—the most notable of which, this paper argues, is the part of the story informed by a Christian worldview.<sup>2</sup>

The argument is based on attempting to weave together a number of distinct strands of scholarship that are mostly separate from one another; thus, this paper represents an initial attempt to synthesize material that, for the most part, has remained unconnected. One consequence of this approach is the necessity, for the sake of brevity, to skim across the surface; consequently, much further work remains to explore in greater depth each of the areas surveyed, as well as to identify other areas that have been neglected. The reason for drawing from various literatures is that much of the scholarship on social work and social welfare history

has been limited by its confinement to sources within a fairly narrow range, mostly encompassing only accounts and interpretations from within a handful of social sciences: primarily social work, and secondarily the related discipline of sociology, and the sub-discipline of social welfare. My argument is that telling the story only within these disciplines has resulted in an account that privileges a modern, secularist understanding that neglects—or worse, distorts—important elements of the story that are relevant to social work’s narrative told by others.

In particular, the article draws upon scholarship in the sociology of religion and in the history of religion that provides alternative accounts of the social work profession’s development. The argument is organized in three parts: first, the concept of narratives is used to describe the dominant secularization story in social work and identify some of the emerging alternative narratives. Second, the paper explores in greater detail particular themes from historians of religion in Canada that challenge the interpretations and assumptions contained in the dominant secularization narratives of social work. Even though these histories are not directly about social work, the historical evidence from these histories reveals the limits of social work’s conventional narratives and gives rise to alternative interpretations of the profession’s history. Third, the paper discusses the implications of these alternative narratives in one particular area that is currently relevant to social work—human rights—and shows how it has become captive to the secular narrative. The article concludes with raising challenges both for Christians and non-Christians in social work.

### **Contested Narratives in Social Work and Social Welfare**

As sociologist Christian Smith (2003a) makes clear, telling stories and using them as a way of understanding who one is and how one ought to live is a fundamental characteristic of virtually every human community. According to Smith (2003a), The stories we tell are not mere entertainment. Nor do they simply suggest for us some general sense of our heritage. Our stories fully encompass and define our lives. They situate us in reality itself, by elaborating the contours of fundamental moral order.... It is by finding ourselves placed within a particular drama that we come to know ... how we are to act, why, and what meaning that has in the larger scheme of reality (p. 78).

As Smith rightly notes, it is not just that social scientists use the concept of narratives to understand others, but that they themselves also come to their inquiry through their own interpretive narrative which shapes how and what they observe. In other words, social scientists must be self-reflexive and become aware of the narrative within which they make sense of the world. Of course, this insight draws from the now-familiar post-modernist position which criticized the modern narratives that privileged and justified the assumptions inherent in Eurocentric, humanist, rationalist, and secular viewpoints (Middleton & Walsh, 1995). This insight about the interpretive power of narratives has been recognized more recently by social work scholars. John Graham (1996) divides the approach of social welfare historians into three stages: the early stage claimed to approach history from an objective and neutral stance, and was superseded in the 1960s and 1970s by histories that specifically criticized these earlier histories from the vantage point of particular identified marginalized groups (such as women and ethnic minorities). We are currently in the third stage, Graham argues, in which a multitude of narratives are recognized, but in which none are given dominance, thus leading to endless claims and counter-claims of legitimacy and validity among competing narratives. Following Graham’s analysis, more recent historical scholarship in social welfare has intentionally identified the

dominance of modern narratives and sought to expand the universe of narratives from which social work and social welfare are understood (Moffatt, 2001; Payne, 2005). For example, Moffatt (2001) argues that the dominant approach to the history of social work,

... ignores underlying assumptions, the values embedded in these assumptions, and the subjectivities that influenced various events.... Value-oriented, humanistic contributions to our understanding of the social work profession have been neglected because of the dominance of a narrative of social work that presupposes a nonproblematic relationship among empirical findings, scientifically based techniques, and interventionist controls over clients or subjects (p. 3).

Despite this recognition of multiple narratives, the modern, secular, progressive view remains the prevalent viewpoint undergirding most approaches to social work and social welfare history in Canada and the USA. A number of authors have already convincingly demonstrated this secular bias in American social work. Religious historian Martin Marty, in a seminal article in the influential journal, *Social Service Review*, concluded in 1980 that “the literature of the profession genially and serenely ignores religion” (p. 465).

Subsequent analyses of social work literature in textbooks, journals, conference presentations and course syllabi bear out Martin’s observation. Ram Cnaan addressed these issues in his book, *The Newer Deal: Social Work and Religion in Partnership*.<sup>3</sup> Cnaan and his colleagues (1999) conducted a systematic review of the literature that led to their conclusion that “religious issues and religious-based social services have been ignored” (p. 67). Similarly, David Hodge (and colleagues, 2006), currently one of the most prolific writers and scholars on religion and social work, conducted a content analysis of over 70 of the most recommended diversity textbooks used by the top ten social work schools in the USA. They compared references to several vulnerable groups—African Americans, Latinos, persons who are gay and lesbian, and women—with two specific religious groups: evangelical Christians and Muslims. As Hodge noted, “the results indicate that faith groups are largely invisible in influential social work textbooks as subjects of direct interest. Further, when faith groups are discussed, the portrayals tend to be unfavorable. Rather than being depicted in a manner consistent with their own worldviews, they are portrayed as seen through the lens of the dominant worldview” (p. 221).

Canadian authors have also noted a general bias against religion and spirituality in Canadian social work literature (Coates, 2007). Based on a non-systematic and initial review conducted by the author of the most commonly available textbooks on Canadian social work practice, social welfare, social policy and social welfare history, there appears to be a similar bias as that documented in the American social work literature. Canadian social work literature also pays scant attention to religion, and, when it does include it, tends to portray religious influences as pejorative and anachronistic. Religion, especially Christianity, is typically characterized as judgmental, moralistic, unscientific, and an obstacle to progress, professionalism, and sophisticated diagnosis, assessment, and intervention.

Based on the explanation of the secularization narrative described above, a principal reason for this bias is the underlying narrative that influences these textbook authors’ interpretation of religion, specifically, Christianity. In particular, they appear to be operating

from a modernist narrative. What is this modern narrative? Christian Smith (2003a) narrates a version of the modernist progressive story from within the discipline of sociology. While this is not directly social work's story, others (e.g., Keith-Lucas, 1989) have argued persuasively that social work's story is similar, and that social work's narrative is rooted in the same modernist story. Smith's narrative goes like this:

Once upon a time, the vast majority of human persons suffered in societies and social institutions that were unjust, unhealthy, repressive, and oppressive. These traditional societies were reprehensible because of their deep-rooted inequality, exploitation, and irrational traditionalism—all of which made life very unfair, unpleasant, and short. But the noble human aspiration for autonomy, equality, and prosperity struggled mightily against the forces of misery and oppression, and eventually succeeded in establishing modern, liberal, democratic, capitalist societies. While modern social conditions hold the potential to maximize the individual freedom and pleasure of all, there is much work to be done to dismantle the powerful vestiges of inequality, exploitation, and repression. This struggle for the good society in which individuals are equal and free to pursue their self-defined happiness is the one mission truly worth dedicating one's life to achieving (p. 82).

According to this narrative, it is perfectly reasonable—indeed inevitable—that religion would give way to science, progress, and technology. But this narrative is based on a distinctly modern understanding of the very concept of religion itself—a concept that has become so entrenched that it has taken on mythical proportions and is accepted without testing any of its underlying assumptions. In the field of international relations, both Thomas (2005) and Joustra (2009) point out that the modern understanding of religion harks back to the 16th century Wars of Religion.

The modern, individualistic, and liberal analysis of this conflict is based on understanding religion primarily as a set of personally-held private beliefs. However, this understanding represents a distinct break from a much longer tradition in which religion is understood as a community of people living together out of their shared beliefs. The liberal modern view sees religion as private, personal, and increasingly irrelevant; this is the viewpoint embodied in the secularization thesis. From this point of view, a person who acts out their faith in public is seen to violate the social norms in which religion is best kept safe at home. No wonder, then, that secularization needed to write Christianity out of the social work story; it had no language or conceptual framework to understand how religion could be brought into the public world of social work without transgressing the barrier from private to public.

Recently some Canadian historians have made similar observations, arguing that the modern progress narrative has shaped the way many historians have understood and explained Canada's transition from the 19th to the 20th centuries, which is the time period when social work emerged as a profession. What this recent work adds in particular is how the modern progress narrative has resulted in a failure to take into account the importance of religion. For example, Gauvreau and Hubert (2006) point out,

... dominant historiographic paradigms ... rely implicitly and unquestioningly upon a master narrative of historical change supplied by the classic secularization theory, positing that modernization, generally defined as industrialization, urbanization, and the expansion of the capitalist market economy, necessarily diminishes the social significance of religion (p. 6-7).

Overall, then, the story of the social work profession and its history has been told by those who either intentionally or unconsciously have accepted the dominant secularization story of the social sciences. From within that narrative framework, social work is widely portrayed as originating from religiously-motivated amateurs who moralized the destitute and the poor in the 19th century. However, armed with new social scientific methods, social workers in the early 20th century developed advanced methods that eliminated religion, increased effectiveness, and therefore opened the way to advancement into full-fledged professionalization. Dennis Guest (2003), author of one of the more respected Canadian social welfare histories, for example, argues that “Protestant theology” justified help to the poor that provided “unsolicited and largely irrelevant advice” (p. 17-18). Several other textbook authors and social work organizations then build on Guest’s analysis by describing social welfare development and the emergence of the social work profession as a process of increasing sophistication guided by scientific methods that improved upon the “moral advice” offered by religiously-motivated “friendly visitors” of the 19th century.

Nevertheless, as part of the broader trend in recognizing multiple narratives in social work and social welfare, new attention is being given to spirituality and religion, in keeping with a widespread increase in the importance of spirituality in the health and human services and social sciences (Koenig, 2004; Thomas, 2005). The recent founding of the Canadian Society for Spirituality & Social Work (CSSSW) has been instrumental in encouraging new investigations of the role of religion in social welfare history. Graham, Coholic and Coates (2007), all original members of CSSSW, observed that:

The conventional interpretation of the rise of social work emphasizes a narrative of transformation from a nineteenth and earlier century tradition of sacred, non-professional volunteerism, low technique, and little established research, to the early twentieth century emergence of a profession that was secular, scientific, technical, and orientated to higher learning.... Social work, like many disciplines of the early twentieth century, was thought to be part of the triumphant march of secular, technical progress, and human rationality (pp. 24-5).

The recognition of alternative narratives provides the space for reconsidering social work’s history and development. The following section of the article takes advantage of that space by presenting an overview of how Christianity has had a much greater influence on social work’s story than the predominant secular narrative would suggest.

### **Social Welfare History as if Christianity Really Mattered**

Historical scholarship in other disciplines reveals a different interpretation of the development of social welfare.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, these histories explicitly operate from narratives that challenge the modern, secularization-as-progress story. Conventional accounts of social work history, as noted above, demonstrate that these alternative histories have not been included in most social welfare and social work histories. These histories are done by scholars in other disciplines, and their conclusions and interpretations, apparently, do not inform the conventional social welfare history. Whether this is intentional exclusion or simply lack of awareness is beyond the scope of this article, but regardless, there do exist alternative narratives that provide a different understanding of the role of Christianity in social welfare history and development.

This is not readily apparent, however, because these histories are not in themselves explicit histories of social welfare or social work, but rather histories of topics and developments that are relevant to social work: for example, histories of the social role of churches, the family, gender, public policy, public education, religious development, immigration, and so on (Christie, 2002; Van Die, 2005). In other words, it takes some careful sleuthing of these histories to identify those parts that provide additional understanding of the origins and development of the social welfare system and the social work profession.

A preliminary, and thus as yet incomplete, analysis of these histories reveals several insights that raise questions about the prevailing interpretations informed by modernist, secularization assumptions. It is not simply that secularization did not happen, but rather that the timing and the nature of secularization were more complex and more contested than the story that has generally been told. The conventional narrative of modernization generally holds that secularization is a natural and inevitable consequence arising from multiple factors such as industrialization, the rise of nation states, capitalism, scientific advancement, technology, and so on (Smith, 2003b). According to this view, secularization “just happens,” and is, therefore, no one’s fault; further, no one can be held accountable for religion’s alleged demise.

This perspective minimizes the extent to which particular groups and leaders actually set out to advance a secular viewpoint intentionally to replace religious institutions and leaders. For example, Christian Smith (2003b) describes secularization in the U. S. at the turn of the 20th century as a “revolution” driven by motivated activists. Similarly, in Canada, various groups strategically challenged the dominance of Protestantism by advocating for tolerance based on official multiculturalism in which Christianity would be forced to give way in the face of other religious and cultural belief systems (Gidney, 2004; Wills, 1995).

One of the prevailing myths of the secularized account of social work and social welfare is the untested assumption that Christian approaches were unsophisticated and unscientific, and therefore a secular approach necessarily had to replace religion in order for social work to be taken seriously and to gain legitimacy. For example, Wills (1995) and Finkel (2006) are typical in assuming that the lack of scientific approaches was one of the prime factors that drove social welfare away from religion.

These explanations are based on the secular assumption that religious institutions, and the people who work in them, are either incapable of or unwilling to use the tools and methods of science, and, therefore, that religion and science are incompatible. But these assumptions are not supported by the available evidence. Hudon and Hubert (2006), in their history of the role of the Catholic church in providing charity in Quebec in the 19th and early 20th centuries, demonstrate that the church developed and pioneered an extensive infrastructure and capacity for data collection and management within parishes. By these means, the church was able to track



trends, uncover social problems, and develop plans for the collection and distribution of resources. Hudon and Hubert argue convincingly that these statistical methods actually predated and were superior to government-based methods such as the census. Similarly, Maurutto's (2003) history of the role of Catholics in social welfare in Canada, specifically in the city of Toronto, demonstrates that Catholic social agencies and the Catholic Church embraced and adapted social science methods and employed them in both Catholic charity organizations and in the establishment of Catholic schools of social work.

The role of Protestants in English Canada also challenges the assumption that the use of scientific methods could only be done from a secular approach. Protestant clergy took the lead in the early 20th century in mastering social scientific methods to gather, interpret, and communicate information about a wide range of social problems. The early motivation was a concern for the decline of rural communities and Protestant leaders organized extensive networks of clergy and laymen to conduct surveys on the plight of these communities. Their expertise in survey construction and analysis led several clergy to academia, where they were leaders in establishing and teaching in departments of rural sociology, agriculture, and community planning. As Christie and Gauvreau (1996) describe, "By making the social survey an endemic part of the local clergyman's duties, the Protestant churches became the dominant institution in the sphere of social investigation. In terms of both sophistication and number, the Protestant churches far outdistanced the universities" (p. 179).

In addition to the role of individual Protestant clergymen and churches in developing and pioneering social science techniques, the Protestant influence became institutionalized through the establishment of the Social Service Council of Canada in 1908, and their journal, *Social Welfare*, in 1918. Through the national Council, as well as the provincial Councils, Protestants were at the forefront in studying social problems in Canada and were highly influential in shaping public opinion and government responses to social welfare. In fact, Christie and Gauvreau (1996) argue that the Social Service Council was responsible for building the information infrastructure upon which Canada's social welfare state was built. As they tell it,

During the 1920s ... the church-funded Social Service Council of Canada functioned as the primary instrument for the investigation, interpretation, and publicization of such social problems as child welfare, immigration, rural planning, housing, penal reform, family law, old-age pensions, and unemployment insurance. These endeavours occurred largely because of the alliance of the churches with women's groups and other social reform organizations, and thus provided the fundamental infrastructure of knowledge necessary for the creation of modern social welfare policy.... The Social Service Council of Canada in fact served during the 1920s as the main vehicle by which university social scientists journeyed towards their later role as members of a government brain trust (p. 198).

The Council's journal, *Social Welfare*, functioned as the pre-eminent scientific and scholarly English-language social welfare publication in Canada, and was accepted by the fledgling Canadian Association of Social Workers as its *de facto* publication (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011).

Further, the Social Service Council of Canada operated as the umbrella organization for the emerging profession of social work. Although the Canadian Association of Social Workers was founded in 1928, the Social Service Council's longer history, legitimacy, and expertise made it the most influential voice for Canadian social work well into the 1930s. These histories of social welfare in Canada demonstrate convincingly that far from eschewing scientific methods, Catholic and Protestant Christians adapted and indeed pioneered social science methods that had long-standing influences on the development of Canadian social welfare and on the development and professionalization of social work. Conventional social welfare history also portrays Christian influence on social welfare as being limited to its European origins from earlier centuries. For example, one social welfare textbook's treatment of history discusses Christian influences in the 1700s, but then makes no more mention of it throughout the 19th or 20th centuries (Turner, 2009). Here, too, however, historical research from other disciplines demonstrates that Christians continued to have an influence on social welfare well into the 20th century (Gauvreau, 1991; Christie, 2002; Rawlyk, 1997). In addition to the active participation and leadership of Christians in social work and social welfare science and data gathering, both Protestant and Christian leaders were at the forefront of social welfare and social work advancement. Catholics, for example, played a prominent role in developing a large and influential system of social services agencies in Toronto throughout the mid-20th century (Maurutto, 2003). Similarly, a recent English-language translation of a book on the origins of Quebec's social welfare state shows that Catholic and Jesuit leaders actively lobbied for the Quebec Family Allowance Act of 1943, including Father Leon Lebel, who was involved in this struggle as early as the 1920s (Marshall, 2006).

In English-speaking Canada, too, Christians played key roles within social welfare and social work education, and thus continued to contribute Christian perspectives well into the first six decades of the 20th century. Clergyman were directors and faculty members at the University of Toronto (E. J. Urwick), McGill University (J. H. T. Falk), and St. Patrick's College (later Carleton University; Fr. Frank Swithun Bower, Fr. Shaun Govenlock) from inception up until the 1960s (Christie & Gauvreau, 1996; Graham, Coholic & Coates, 2007).

The social gospel movement also played a significant role in mobilizing Protestants to become involved in addressing a wide array of social problems confronting Canada in the early 20th century. Many Christians played an active part, but probably one of the better known, James S. Woodsworth, serves as a good example of the influence of the social gospel on Canadian social work and the development of the Canadian welfare state (Christie & Gauvreau, 1996; McNaught, 2001). Although Woodsworth began his career as a clergyman in the Methodist church, he was actively involved in social issues, notably serving as superintendent of the Christian settlement house, All People's Mission in Winnipeg, Manitoba. His experience in settlement work, as well as his passion for mobilizing the church to address the social problems of the day, also led him to found the Canadian Social Welfare League. The League was the vehicle for developing a social work training program in which Woodsworth was one of the principal persons involved in creating and delivering the curriculum. From there he turned to politics, and was one of the co-founders of the Cooperative Commonwealth Foundation, which eventually evolved into the New Democrat Party. He was elected to federal parliament in 1921 and served for more than two decades until his death in 1942. As leaders within the CCF/NDP, Woodsworth and others, including Tommy Douglas, the Baptist minister and first leader of the CCF, played prominent roles in convincing a series of mostly Liberal federal governments to adopt many of the planks of Canada's welfare state that Canadians now take for granted,

including old age pensions, unemployment insurance, family allowances, and universal health care.

Secular accounts also portray women as actively challenging patriarchy by drawing on so-called secular approaches to confront males in leadership positions. These accounts pit secular women against men defending the establishment status quo, including institutional religion (Finkel, 2006; Graham, 1996). But, again, historical scholarship outside social welfare paints a more complex picture. Mitchinson (1987) describes the role of three prominent women's organizations in the late 19th century, all of which were explicitly religious: the missionary societies that were affiliated with Protestant churches, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Each of these groups actively worked for reform in Canadian public life, not as a secular challenge to religious influence, but as a direct extension of their religious beliefs that had a substantial influence on Canadian social welfare. As Mitchinson noted, "It is in the three areas of their religious motivation, awareness of secular problems in society and desire for a stable social order that these women's organizations prepared Canadians for the welfare state and perhaps even directed the shape it took" (p. 89). Similarly, Charlotte Whitton is often hailed as one of the most influential women in Canadian social work history; what is missing or downplayed was that Whitton was an Anglican who professed a clear connection between her Christian faith and social work (Kinnear, 2001; Moffatt, 2001).

Beyond the social work profession itself, Christian influences continued to exert themselves in Canadian public life well past the Second World War, again, contrary to the narrative told in conventional social welfare and social policy accounts. Four brief examples make the point.

First, official Canadian government policy and the rhetoric of leading political figures consistently regarded Canada as a Christian country into the 1960s (until officially superseded by the Multiculturalism Act of 1971), and this is made clear by the existence—indeed, the official government sanctioning and support—of the "Christian Pavilion" to showcase Canada to the world at Expo 67 in Montreal (Miedema, 2005). Second, historian George Egerton (2004, 2005) demonstrates that Christians were actively involved in the protracted negotiations that led eventually to Canada's own constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as evidenced by the preamble, "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God..." Third, Canadian public universities evoked Christian imagery and rhetoric well into the 1960s to articulate their role in Canadian society. As historian Caroline Gidney (2004) notes, "Indeed, for the first six decades of the twentieth century, university presidents and principals continued to project a moral vision of the university that was rooted in the nexus of beliefs that characterized liberal Protestantism" (p. 25). Finally, Christian groups from all denominations have continued to have an extensive influence on crucial public policy right up until today on a wide range of issues including poverty, Aboriginal justice, immigration, criminal justice, mental health, persons with disabilities, child welfare and more (VanderVennen, 1991). All of these examples demonstrate that religion—particularly Christianity—continued to have a prominent influence in Canadian public life (Bowen, 2004; Van Die, 2001), even though conventional narratives of social work and social welfare largely depict religion as being essentially irrelevant after the 19th century.

### **Some Implications for Contemporary Social Work: Human Rights**

How do these differing narratives matter today? What difference does it make that Christianity's role in the history and development of social welfare has been minimalized or

regarded as mostly negative? The argument of this article is that it does matter, and thus affirms the contribution of others<sup>5</sup> who have already called for recovering the importance of religion to social work. Rather than repeating their calls for greater “cultural competence” with regard to specific areas of practice, the article concludes by briefly showing how the dominance of a secular perspective has shaped one current issue in social work and social welfare: the recent attention in social work to human rights.

Even though the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights is more than sixty years old, it has only been recently that social workers have begun to focus on human rights explicitly as a critical area for social work practice and social work education (Finn & Jacobsen, 2003; Hawkins, 2009; Ife, 2005; Mapp, 2007; Reichert, 2007; Webb, 2009). The overriding concern in these writings appears to be a lament for the lack of human rights principles as a guide for social work practice, and a corresponding call for social workers to incorporate human rights into their practice and into social work education. In an example that typifies this concern, Hawkins (2009) pointedly argues for increasing human rights literacy.

All of the documents which comprise the United Nations Agreements on Human Rights are readily available via the internet. As discussed below, familiarity with these documents should be part of every student’s higher education, particularly in social work. In addition, students should have basic knowledge of the philosophical underpinning, historical development, and contemporary debates of these fundamental principles. Basic knowledge of the underlying premises of human rights and familiarity with the specific documents outlining these rights is known as “human rights literacy.” (para. 28).

While not contesting the value of human rights principles for social work practice, what is surprising in the social work literature on human rights is the almost complete absence of references to the substantial contributions that Christians have made to the concept of human rights. Typical historical overviews of human rights in social work literature begin with Greek and Roman democracy, skip lightly from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, and land on the 20th century “birth” of human rights in the 1948 United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to Lena Dominelli, a prominent British social work theorist on oppression and human rights (2007),

The idea of human rights has a long history. John Locke espoused the concept of “natural rights” as the basis for life, liberty, and property, residing with individuals. These understandings were further developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau... [and] also shaped the thinking of participants in the French and American Revolutions.... Adherents to these causes and their ideas often crossed the Atlantic to reach beyond the particular nation-state where they first arose and underpin liberal democracies today (p. 19).

However, an ample literature exists to document the substantive role that Christian actors and Christian thought have played in the formation and development of the concept of human rights over the past centuries (Bucar & Barnett, 2005; Hollenback, 2003; Nurser, 2005; Shepherd, 2009). For example, Max Stackhouse (2005) argues that “intellectual honesty demands recognition of the fact that what passes as ‘secular,’ ‘Western’ principles of basic human rights developed nowhere else but out of key strands of the biblically rooted religions” (p. 33). Similarly, John Witte, Jr. (2009) suggests,

While acknowledging the fundamental contributions of Enlightenment liberalism to the modern rights regime, we must also see the deeper genesis and genius of many modern rights norms in religious texts and traditions

that antedate the Enlightenment by centuries, even by millennia (p. 32).

What explains the absence of Christian contributions to human rights in the writing of social workers? John Nurser's account of the role of churches' participation in the efforts to develop a universal statement of human rights is fascinating and instructive. According to Nurser (2005):

It has become clear that the part played by Protestant groups, but also Catholics and religious Jews, in establishing human rights in international affairs is deeply unwelcome to those who have written on the subject. The picture commonly conveyed is of an initiative by a group of public service jurists working wholly within the *laïque* framework of the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man. Even individuals well disposed to the Christian tradition assume the essential independence from religious roots of human rights.... Some of those most involved in preparing and putting into effect the human rights revolution of the late 1940s are (often unintentionally) airbrushed out in properly Stalinist style. This results, at a minimum, in tendentious history (p. 3).

It would seem that a secular bias prevents certain observers from being able to see—let alone account for—the substantial contribution made by Christians in human rights. Even when such accounts are clearly available, they appear not even to be considered when social workers discuss human rights and its implications for social work practice. It is not surprising, therefore, that David Hodge refers to religious freedom as the “forgotten human right” (2006).

### **Conclusion**

The narrative framework of secularization has so captivated the social work profession that it has failed to take fully into account the Christian influences in its own history (Bowpitt, 2000). Secularization assumes that religion is irrelevant, biased, private, and unscientific; these assumptions relegate religion to a minor part in the story. What this article has shown, however, is that Christianity is central to social work's history and development as a profession. The social work profession bears the marks of the Christian imprint clearly, yet the 20th and 21st century tellers of social work history barely mention it. For the social work profession at large—both Christians and those of other faiths or none at all—this conclusion affirms two areas of importance that have already been identified by others.

First, thorough historical scholarship must remain a priority in order to avoid accounts that oversimplify or misrepresent the complex and nuanced developments of our past. In the introduction to a recent issue of *Arete*, the editors observed that, “[s]ocial welfare history continuously struggles for recognition in the social work academy” (Carlton-LaNey & Brice, 2007, p. 1). Social work and social welfare historians (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011, Moffatt, 2001, Pople & Leighninger, 2004) have consistently argued for increasing—or at least maintaining—the level of historical research and this article confirms these pleas.

Second, as already noted above, there has been a recent heightened awareness of the need for greater understanding of spiritual diversity within social work and the need to incorporate these understandings into the work of cultural competence. These developments have led to the

explicit inclusion of standards related to spiritual competency in the most recent revisions to social work accreditation standards in both the USA and Canada.

The argument of this article—that Christianity’s role in social work’s history has been minimized—also poses challenges for Christians in social work. Speaking now personally as a Christian to other Christians in social work, I would argue that our task is to heighten our awareness of the influence of the secularization paradigm, and thus be better able to challenge and refute the secularization narrative. Further, as Nicholas Wolterstorff (2006) urged, we need to recapture our own story and get in the habit of telling and re-telling it. But here lies a problem: religious pollsters (Chaves & Anderson, 2008) have affirmed what many readers of this journal probably already suspect—Christians are not so confident anymore in claiming that our story has any greater claim than any other story (Berger, 2010). Here we see the influence of postmodernism, even as we acknowledge the power of the modern myths of secularization (Meinert, Pardeck, & Murphy, 1998). So, in telling our Christian story, can we be content merely to get our story included among all the other stories offered in the “postmodern smorgasbord” (Middleton & Walsh, 1995, p. 59)? Or, are we prepared to make the claim that our story—what we would argue is actually God’s story—really is the “true story of the whole world” (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004)? To Christians, I would humbly submit that we must be bold: we say that the biblical story is true, and if we don’t claim it as so, we reduce the power of God’s word to just another dusty historical manuscript.

There is no point to the biblical story unless one claims that it is true. As theologian N.T. Wright argues (2006), Christianity only makes sense if one reads the biblical story as the *grand* narrative, not just one narrative among many. What we need, then, is to tell and retell the story so that we begin to take up our calling to join in God’s great work of redemption and reconciliation in which he is making all things new (Isa. 65: 17; Rev. 21:5). Anything less is a capitulation to some other story in which we fail to love God with all our heart, soul and strength, and instead put our trust in human efforts to save us.

But just saying this is not necessarily going to convince those who live by different stories. What do we say to them? Here I appeal to what Christian Smith calls a “civil pluralism.” As he puts it, “confronting the inescapably enstoried nature of our lives does not have to lead to violent and oppressive tribal power struggles of utter relativism. While fully living within our truly different narratives, we might still draw on our narratives to learn to live together in some measure of peace” (2003a, p. 93). As Christians we need to speak with conviction from within our own narrative in such a way that others can hear us. But, we also have to be respectful enough of others to listen to their story, and to engage in the tough work of nurturing relationships that foster respectful dialogue in which we seek common ground among our different stories. Anything less than that is a failure to love our neighbours as ourselves. v

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- Endnotes

1. Others have already noted how the standard narratives have ignored other groups, most notably those identified as oppressed or marginalized, such as women (Day, 2000; Mitchinson, 1987) and various cultural, ethnic or linguistic minorities (Day, 2000; Estes, 2007; Graham, 1996; Jansson, 2005).
2. Or rather, Christian worldviews, since Christians participated and acted not from within one unified and coherent worldview, but rather many and sometimes conflicting variations of Christian thought.
3. Cnaan points out in his preface that he himself is secular, and therefore seems to argue that he does not have a personal stake in advancing religion, unlike others who have written on this topic.
4. I want to particularly note the invaluable contribution of the Mc-Gill Queen's University Press series on Studies on the History of Religion. It was discovery of this series that first led me to this topic, at their book display at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2005 at the University of Western Ontario.
5. For example see Cnaan & Wineburgh (1999), Canda & Furman (2010), Coates, Graham, Swartzentruber & Ouellete (2007), and Hodge (2009).

# Looking Back to Move Forward: Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory

*Charity Samantha Fitzgerald*

*This article argues that thoughtfully approaching contemporary social policy requires critical reflection on the past and specifically examines the historical evolution of theory. It is contended that theory plays a vital role in social welfare by providing helpful representational images, fostering explanations of the evolution of social welfare, and supplying a basis for the formulation of policies and programs. This article discusses a normative theory known as religious traditionalism and considers its relevance to social welfare. A version of religious traditionalism derived from Christian social thought has been important in recent times in shaping social welfare policies in the United States. The article chronicles the historical development of religious traditionalism and its social welfare implications. It examines how secular and religious writers have used Biblical concepts at different times to formulate commentaries on social welfare issues. In particular, it discusses the work of scholars and religious thinkers such as Edmund Burke, the Popes, and the leaders of the Social Gospel movement. It then assesses the contributions of two contemporary American writers, Marvin Olasky and John DiIulio. Attention is drawn to the disjointedness between the contemporary iteration of religious traditionalism and its historical precedents.*

*Interventions grounded in comprehensive Christian social thought, it is argued, would be a departure from recent faith-based policy.*

**To illustrate the importance of history in conceptualizing** social policy, I examine the theoretical perspective known as *religious traditionalism*, to be defined in the next paragraph, and examine its relevance to social welfare in the United States. In particular, I discuss the popularization of Christian social welfare thinking as exemplified in the works of Marvin Olasky and John DiIulio, both of whom have written on social welfare issues and contributed to policy developments such as the compassionate conservatism approach espoused by President George W. Bush and the charitable choice provision of welfare reform.

I define religious traditionalism as a normative theoretical approach that invites religious perspectives into the public square, particularly religious perspectives that are perceived to be rooted in well-established historical traditions. Of course, the construct of tradition is open to interpretation, but advocates of religious traditionalism nevertheless believe that their interpretation is legitimated by historically institutionalized practices and by sacred texts that have been authoritatively interpreted and reinterpreted throughout the ages. The moniker religious traditionalism has been used by political scientists to describe a construct that embodies

both beliefs and behavior as defined by various measures extracted from the National Election Studies (see Kelly & Morgan, 2008; Layman & Carmines, 1997). This paper defines religious traditionalism more broadly than a measurement-based construct to refer to the worldview which others might label conservatism (see Conservatism, 2009). I eschew the use of the term conservatism in favor of the term traditionalism because of the polarizing context and alleged culture wars associated with the former. In American Protestantism, I contend that traditionalism has contributed significantly to shaping faith-based social welfare interventions.

At times, policy practitioners convolute or cherry-pick single elements of a complex theory, thus rendering the original conceptual framework distorted and robbing it of its richness and scope. Through historical analysis, I argue that the latter has occurred and is occurring through certain faith-based approaches to social welfare policy. Some faith-based initiatives have been deployed without due attention being given to the content and breadth of the historical theory that undergirds these initiatives. Faith-based initiatives as currently enacted are divorced from the entirety of their textual foundations, and they have unfortunately become the subject of political theater and electoral politics. Fragmented Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory interventions, such as the charitable choice clause, do not truly reflect their purported historical and theoretical underpinnings. Both charitable choice and the subsequent orders do not fully explicate a coherent, substantive theory based on a wider interpretation of Biblical teaching or many subsequent historical commentaries on the issues of religion and social welfare. To truly weigh the merits of religiously motivated social welfare, it is necessary to critically review recent faith-based initiatives in the United States in the light of wider theoretical approaches and to return to textual foundations and historical precedents.

I begin by concisely delineating the textual foundations of a religiously motivated approach to social welfare in the Christian tradition. I contend that the Christian roots of religious traditionalism can be found in the Bible. Throughout history, scholars have used Biblical principles to formulate a theoretical framework for religious traditionalism and for a religiously based approach to social welfare. I then examine the development in the theory of religious traditionalism during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. During the Enlightenment, prominent conservative scholar

Edmund Burke challenged revolutionary ideas with specific reference to the French Revolution and advocated for conserving what exists because he believed that the hand of God nurtures institutions and constitutions over time. I continue tracing the development of religious traditionalism by examining the ideas of the papal encyclicals of the 19th and 20th centuries. I consider the role of the Social Gospel movement in the United States. Both the papal encyclicals and the Social Gospelers sought to apply Biblical principles to rapidly industrializing societies. To maintain social harmony, both privileged religious unity over class cleavages. Finally, I introduce the contemporary contributions of Marvin Olasky and John DiIulio. Marvin Olasky (1992) outlined an iteration of religious traditionalism in his book, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*.

His theory maintains that the state assumption of social welfare responsibilities has eroded the hallmarks of effective services that existed prior to the 20th century. To end the perceived welfare crisis, he recommends the end of state-run entitlement programs and the expansion of community-based organizations that place faith at the center of their respective missions. John DiIulio (2007) concurs with Olasky's assertion that faith-based organizations combat social problems, especially in marginalized, urban neighborhoods. He

rigorously defends the constitutionality of state support for faith-based organizations, harkening back to the so-called Founding Fathers' plan for a godly republic.

I argue that the evolution of religious traditionalism throughout time built successively on earlier ideas and that each contributor has striven to interpret the original religious textual foundations in a specific historical context. The current presentation of religious traditionalism as explicated by conservative contemporary writers should be viewed in this light. I suggest that the recent invocation of religious traditionalism to justify narrowly conceived, faith-based interventions, such as charitable choice, ignores the wider content and the breadth of religious traditionalism. As will be shown, religious traditionalism has had implications for social harmony throughout the centuries. These implications are lost in the current rhetoric. While religious traditionalism has, does, and will continue to constitute one of several normative theoretical bases of the American welfare system, I argue that recent developments with regard to faith-based social welfare initiatives need to be critically assessed in the light of the wider normative implications of the theory and its potential to make a significant contribution to addressing the many social problems affecting American society today.

### **The Evolution of Religious Traditionalism from the 18th to the 20th Centuries**

The text at the heart of Western religious traditionalism is the Bible, or the holy scripture of Christianity. The role of scripture is extremely significant in religion (see Graham, 2005). Scripture embodies religious authority, plays a central role in public ritual, and also informs devotional life. Though written centuries ago, the tenets contained within it are taken to be true by its adherents then, now, and forever. Western theorists inspired by religious traditionalist ideas have at different times drawn from the Bible for inspiration. According to religious traditionalists, the moment may change, but what is contained in the Bible will endure forever. There are many Biblical concepts that inform a religiously motivated approach to social welfare and numerous Biblical passages that relate to poverty and social service provision. Until recently, religious traditionalists have generally avoided a narrow interpretation of Biblical teaching on social welfare issues, and from the 18th to the mid-20th centuries, they drew from both the Old and the New Testaments broadly and holistically to formulate Biblical conceptions of a just social order. Key Biblical concepts from the New International Version that religious traditionalist theorists have drawn from to construct religious traditionalism include the nature of the Christian god (Psalm 89:9; Isaiah 66:13; Revelation 1:7-9; Psalm 100:5), the interconnectedness of persons to form a cohesive society (Ephesians 2:19-21; Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Matthew 19:19; Psalms 133:1), the primacy of family (Genesis 7:1; Joshua 2:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:5), the concept of subsidiarity (Exodus 18; 1 Timothy 5:16), the value of work (Genesis 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:9), and the moral obligation to care for the vulnerable and the needy (Deuteronomy 15:11; Exodus 22:22-4; Amos 8:4).

Biblical principles alone do not a theory make. Rather, secular and religious scholars alike have applied these principles into social, political, economic, and cultural contexts to construct the theory of religious traditionalism as discussed below. The move from the Bible to a religiously informed theory of social welfare is neither self-evident nor linear. From the founding of the early Christian church, thinkers have striven to use Biblical principles to critique the social order and to promote a distinct conception of social welfare. St. Augustine, at the turn of the 5th century, critiqued the decadence of the time and urged personal responsibility (see Mendelson, 2010). Centuries later, St. Francis of Assisi took a voluntary vow of poverty and went to great lengths to live in a manner absolutely congruent with Biblical teachings and to encourage others to do the same through the founding of the Franciscan order (see Saint Francis

of Assisi, 2011). In the 1200s, St. Thomas Aquinas promoted the idea that God has created the natural order such that people are born into families and communities, and moral behavior consists in upholding the integrity of these settings (see McNerny & O'Callaghan, 2010). John Calvin, too, believed that God ruled over all things on Earth and that people are to carry out His divine providence (see Calvin, 1558/2010). During his lifetime at the turn of the 17th century, St. Vincent de Paul created charities for poor and infirm people, motivated by strong Christian convictions, and later he was made the patron of all charitable societies (see Degert, 1912).

All these men who lived before the 18th century grounded visions of social welfare in religious teachings and convictions. Both the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution threatened the viability of religious thought to critique and to amend the social order. The Age of Enlightenment suggested that reason—not faith—could serve as the basis of the social order (see Enlightenment, 2008), and the French Revolution attempted to supplant the role of the church with that of the Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory state as a preeminent social institution (see French Revolution, 2009). The teachings of centuries of religious social thinking teetered on the brink of obsolescence. Christian social thinking, however, survived these threats to its existence and its reputability, and it persisted in informing an approach to social welfare. The writings of secular Enlightenment thinker Edmund Burke, the papal encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, and Social Gospel appeals constructed the coherent framework of modern religious traditionalism from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

### **Burkean Perspective**

In the midst of the Age of Enlightenment, Edmund Burke offered a dissenting voice from his contemporaries who privileged scientific reasoning over religious beliefs. Though he upheld the unflinching Enlightenment faith in progress, he employed Christian metaphysics and an empirical epistemology that distinguished his theories from others espoused during the Enlightenment (Freeman, 1980). Burke clung to the primacy of the Christian God and history (Freeman, 1980). These pillars of his theoretical outlook were chosen in response to the historical context during which he wrote, that of the French Revolution. Burke upheld the spirit of liberty that undergirded the revolution, yet he despised the manner by which the revolution was brought about, which he claimed was lacking in reverence for religion, traditions, law, and order (Burke, 1960a).

He spoke against what he perceived as the anarchy and the incivility of the revolution until his dying day. This brief historical contextualization frames his contributions to religious traditionalism. For Burke, religion reigns supreme (Canavan, 1987). History, the state, and society, flow from divine will. According to Canavan (1987), Burke's theology can be summarized in four tenets. First, God created the world and has overseen its history. Second, He directs the world for the good of people. Third, humans cannot understand divine will; and, fourth, humans must humbly trust in His plan. McConnell (1996) notes that Burke's belief in religion was genuine and heartfelt, yet he also acknowledged the political and the social utility of religion, such as continuity with the past. It also provides a moral code, which promotes social stability and forms the basis for civil society (McConnell, 1996). Furthermore, it restrains the actions of people because its focus is on the supreme good (McConnell, 1996). Thus, people are better citizens because of their religious convictions (MacCunn, 1990). If Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory it were not for religion, the moral fabric of the nation would crumble because nothing human-made can serve as its substitute (MacCunn, 1990). However, Burke did not laud religion merely for its political and its social

utility. If usurped by the political establishment, contended Burke, religion loses its potency (McConnell, 1996), which could be evidenced through the laboratory of history.

According to Burke, history is a trove of wisdom (Burke, 1991). Solutions to past problems are embodied in existing institutions and rights. Humans, according to Burke, should use prudence not to destroy what God has built up over time since existing institutions are the result of natural selection guided by divine will. Indeed, the flourishing of institutions and rights should be preserved, and change should be approached with extreme caution. When change is undertaken, it should be incremental. Old tenets embodied by institutions tend to favor norms conducive to social order, which is why the institutions have flourished for so long. Nevertheless, existing institutions can be changed gradually so that they maintain resonance with the prevailing national character. Though seemingly paradoxical, change is necessary to conserve, but complete eradication is irrevocably detrimental to the political, the social, and the moral fabric of a nation. In sum, history provides divinely ordained instruction. Humans should not be so presumptuous as to innovate (see Canavan, 1987; Freeman, 1980; Frohnen, 1993).

The state, according to Burke, is an instrument of divine will evolved throughout history. As Stanlis (1991, p. 43) reveals, Burke famously wrote, “He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection.—He willed therefore the state.—He willed its connection with the source and original archetype of all perfection.” The state, therefore, is absolutely inseparable from religion, but it is subordinate to religion. The state is divinely ordained to set up the conditions for citizens to carry out God’s will and to flourish. According to Canavan’s (1990) reading of Burke, each state assumes a different form contingent on the customs of each national context. Embedded in the customs of each nation, a state can support already existing beliefs, but it cannot impose new ones.

The direction of state activities falls largely on political leaders’ shoulders. Political leaders cannot act on whims. Since their power emanates from God, they must answer to the divine being (Burke, 1991). Thus, religion curbs political leaders’ powers. Prudence is the foremost political virtue. Change brought about by political leaders is to be gradual; it should be a process of preservation and reformation. The good of the old should be conserved, and the new should be carefully appended. Policymaking is a process of compensation, reconciliation, and balance. Temperate change carried out by leaders holds promise both for permanency and for improvement in the future, according to Burke. Political leaders should fix their eyes on heaven’s mandates rather than those from citizens. If politicians cater to the whims of citizens, then they will find themselves going to extreme measures, or outbidding each other, until they end up enacting something that is far from what they had envisioned (Burke, 1960b). Moderation is key.

A way of operationalizing moderation is to avoid state interference in the market. Though Burke decried poverty in unequivocal terms, Freeman (1980) shows that he did not believe the state should take an active role in redistributing income or in administering poor relief. Burke characterized the state as being paternalistic, but this paternalism stopped short of mediating between employers and employees and feeding the poor. Inequality, contended Burke, indicated progress. It is a natural condition. Thus, he had a high political tolerance for inequality and poverty, and he advocated against direct state intervention in the promotion of social welfare. The pursuit of social welfare from a Burkean perspective pertains to the jurisdiction of civil society. Both religion and the state provide a basis for civil society. Religion supplies the moral vision, and the state frames the conditions through which civil society can thrive (Stanlis, 1991). The relationship between individuals and civil society is reciprocal; both nourish the other. Civil

society nurtures what is good for individuals and families (Canavan, 1987). In turn, individuals unite corporately to promote the common weal (McCue, 1997). Civil organizations offer people the opportunity to exercise their moral obligations to each other, obligations that arise from divine law. It is only through this social cooperation that human nature can be perfected. Civil society also tempers the aggressive, destructive ways of individuals through self-regulation (Burke, 1960a). Finally, civil society provides continuity from one generation to the next; its organizations have emerged over time by the hand of God (Burke, 1991). Civil society's ability to function emanates from social obligations.

As Canavan (1987) reports, Burke believed that society emerges from relations based on individuals' relation to God, and thus to each other as members of the divinely ordained human community. Individuals cannot supply the entirety of their wants. Thus, society exists to supply the complementary conditions for individuals to reach their God-given potential. The common weal is the object of society, and social laws, which are based on religious obligations, are stronger than any government-issued law. These social laws have developed over time, and thus individuals have come to understand what is socially acceptable and socially expected. Individuals, thus, are compelled to link personal welfare to social welfare. The continuation of a peaceful social order is contingent on cooperation and trust, which is cemented by morality.

The family is the preeminent social institution to inculcate morality. In sum, God has given humans a complex arrangement to ensure peace and prosperity throughout history. Children are taught to be moral beings by families and grow up to cooperate socially, which permits a vibrant civil society and a stable political order. The causal chain is bidirectional. A stable political order also permits the flourishing of a vibrant civil society, which nourishes strong family relations, which foments individual moral character development. Each part plays an important role in this God-centered ordering.

The Catholic social thought explored here reinforces the Burkean perspective, especially the focus on divine will in all things. Catholic social thought deviates from Burke's ideas by interjecting emotive pleas for social justice and poverty alleviation. Industrialization and modernization had incited social dislocations in Europe during the 1800s. Quelling the dislocations required a modification of each part's role in the whole in order to maintain the peace, the harmony, and the prosperity that had flourished throughout history.

### **Catholic Social Thought**

As Catholics came to accept the changes brought about by the French Revolution and the fact that democracy was not just a fad, distinctly Catholic political parties emerged in several European countries under the catchall name of Christian Democrats. These parties attempted to reconcile Biblical principles and Catholic thought with the so-called social question, the social problems that emerged in response to industrialization and modernization. Catholics had been reticent to engage politically because they viewed the events of the French Revolution with horror. Catholic Enlightenment writer De Maistre even termed it "satanic" and expressed vociferously a longing for the restoration of the monarchy (Maier, 1965). In the middle of the 19th century, however, a Catholic social impulse evolved that overcame reluctance to engage politically. Maier (1965) notes that influential Catholics became so aggrieved by the great gap between the poor and the wealthy and by the social strife encountered by the working classes that they decided to take action. By the end of the 19th century, the Pope, too, followed suit by encouraging Catholics to participate in democratic elections and to Christianize democracy from within the accepted political framework.



Thus, the Christian Democrat party emerged not from above by topdown imposition from the Vatican, but from below. Later, the Holy See acknowledged the nascent political parties, and Pope Leo XIII disseminated *Rerum Novarum* (1891), a rich encyclical that lent substance and coherence and further strengthened and informed the Christian Democrats' social platform (Maier, 1965). Pope Leo XIII wrote *Rerum Novarum* (accessible at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html)) in response to the changing economic climate induced by industrialization ( 3). The encyclical focuses on mediation, which can peacefully resolve conflicts and avoid revolt. Maintaining focus on God insulates people from being lured by transient, conflictive theories. Rather, religion has proven itself to be enduring ( 7). The Pope perceived divine providence to be the thread that ties the past to the future (¶ 58). Thus, the Pope spoke as a moral authority on the dangers of extreme socialism or extreme capitalism, both of which were fads that would detract from human thriving. He argued against socialism by affirming the legitimacy of private property (¶ 4). Nevertheless, the Pope affirmed the need for new measures by the state and by the capitalists in order to fill the void left after the demise of “ancient workingmen’s guilds” (¶ 3). Thus, he maintained focus on stable, middling social and economic orderings that would ensure peace and prosperity for the future.

Pope Leo XIII emphasized the distinction yet interdependence of social groups. His emphasis on community is grounded in Paul’s conception of the Christian community as a metaphorical body (¶ 19). Capitalists need laborers, and laborers need capitalists. The parts of the body must work together respectfully. The Pope wrote that the church aims to promote harmony among classes by aligning all of mankind under belief in the Christian God (¶ 21). Looking to the divine as the ultimate master, people should not claim sole ownership of their possessions. Rather, when needed, community members should share their possessions out of a sense of duty and, more fundamentally, a sense of Christian charity (¶ 22). With a divine father, humans will be united not only by a sense of friendship but also of fraternity (¶ 25). The encyclical, however, stressed that it was natural for social groups to be distinct and thus unequal whilst condemning extreme inequality.

Although his emphasis is on social solidarity and cohesion, the Pope did take special note of the poor. Underlying the discussion of poor is the belief that poverty is not the result of moral depravity but rather the result of social dislocations provoked by capitalism. Alleviating acute poverty will restore the moral order. Thus, the encyclical did not refer to the poor in a punitive manner. Rather, it expressed sincere concern for the well-being of the poor by noting that the church cares for both the spiritual and the physical well-being of its congregants (¶ 28). Thus, when necessary, Pope Leo XIII noted that the church would intervene on behalf of the poor (¶ 29). He also extolled charity as “the mistress and the queen of virtues” (¶ 63). Through charity, according to the Pope, the needs of the poor are met, and parishioners are afforded the opportunity to live out divine law (¶ 63). It is important to note that the encyclical eschewed the rhetoric of rights; that is, the poor have no right to claim relief. Instead, they are beholden to others to carry out their charitable duties. The Pope cautioned against the state assumption of welfare, which he perceived as being inferior to charity (¶ 30).

The Pope also cautioned against state intervention by invoking the concept of subsidiarity. Pope Leo XIII wrote that individuals and families should be allowed to thrive so as to circumvent the need for state intervention. He affirmed the sanctity of the family. “The family

must necessarily have rights and duties which are prior to those of the community, and founded more immediately in nature” (§ 13). In the next article, he wrote, “The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error” (§ 14). He further stated that if a family has a great need, public authority should come to its aid, but only if no other body can render aid is state intervention warranted in familial affairs.

Above all, the Pope emphatically stated that any well-intended social intervention would fail without the restoration of moral order (§ 57). Only religion has the potency to combat social problems. Religion has been at the center of human existence for centuries, and using the past as a lesson for the future, it will continue to be at the center of human existence. Religion has ensured the posterity of humankind, and the wise individual will learn from the past by continuing to promote religiously centered theories to ensure the posterity of humankind. The encyclical reminded people to continue to turn to the Bible to mitigate conflict by focusing on the transcendent. The encyclical was extraordinarily influential in Catholic social thought, so much so that it warranted a sequel 40 years later, Pope Pius XI’s (1931) *Quadragesimo Anno* (accessible at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19310515\\_quadragesimo-anno\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html)), which affirmed and defended the principles of *Rerum Novarum*.

### **The Social Gospel Movement**

Across the Atlantic, similar traditionalist themes were being discussed, albeit in different terms. In response to industrialization and modernization, radical ideas were brewing in the United States, articulated by prominent Protestant scholars, pastors, and activists, hereafter termed the Social Gospelers. The Social Gospelers purported that society exists, and the welfare of the individual is inextricably bound up with the welfare of society. These ideas were radical, given the American cultural penchant for rugged individualism. Nevertheless, the proponents of the Social Gospel were not revolutionaries. Rather, they believed in the contemporary application of traditional concepts (Szasz, 1982). History, contended Social Gospelier Walter Rauschenbusch (1907/1964), was the workshop of a living God. During each era, God inspired new applications of traditional concepts. Social Gospelers, such as Rauschenbusch, Samuel Zane Batten, and Richard T. Ely, believed that Christianity was losing its potency at the turn of the 20th century because the gospel as it was being preached from the pulpits did not address the lived realities of men, women, and children. Hence, Social Gospelers empathized with workers’ attraction to socialism, and they argued that there was a distinctly Biblically derived response to socialism that could address workers’ concerns (see Rauschenbusch, 1984). The Biblically derived socialism would supersede secular socialism since it was based on centuries of tried and true concepts. The challenge to Christian theorists of the day was not to revise Biblical principles since, argued Ely, they reflected an absolute idea. The challenge to Christian theorists was to consider how these principles applied to a modern, industrial society, and their conclusions pointed to Christian socialism.

Unlike the Christian Democrats or the papal encyclicals, Social Gospelers were not reticent to use the term *socialism*. I contend that the Social Gospelers’ definition of socialism was in many ways analogous to the Christian Democrats’ definition of social capitalism. Christian socialism, to the Social Gospelers, signified the interconnectedness of individuals’ welfare bound by the Biblical mandate to love others as they love themselves (see Gorrell, 1988). What was good for one was good for all. When one suffered, all suffered. Socialism, thus defined, was a middle ground between individualism and collectivism (Rauschenbusch, 1984).

The Social Gospel movement shared with its Catholic, trans-Atlantic counterpart a striving for the middle ground. Nevertheless, the idea of society and the departure from staunch individualism was a truly radical innovation. The acknowledgement that society exists was not a new idea plucked from ivory towers. Rather, the Social Gospelers unearthed the societal construct from the Christian tradition. As discussed above, Social Gospelers clung to traditions, specifically the Christian tradition, which, in the words of Ely, “established the most perfect system of ethics the world has ever known” (1886/1966, p. 176). Repeatedly, Social Gospelers evoked the metaphor of the body of Christ to justify the existence of society. No single person existed in isolation, and no person could function without the support of others (see Gladden, 1966). All people had inherent worth and dignity and a moral obligation to fulfill their roles to ensure the functioning of the entire organism. Individuals were not loose grains of sand but were tied together by an inextricable bond, a Christ-mandated love for one’s neighbors. The whole organism was only as strong as the weakest part, so it was in the best interest of the strong to take into consideration the welfare of the weak.

To ensure the functioning of each part, the Social Gospelers relied on an ecological model. Problems had both social and personal dimensions. Poverty was not merely the result of individual failure but also the result of societal failure (see Batten, 1911). Given widespread slum conditions, the need for both parents to work outside the home, the deplorable working conditions faced by workers, and the monotony of tasks required by industrialization, Social Gospelers believed that the social dimension of problems faced by poor families was self-evident.

Everyone needed to have access to safe and sanitary living conditions to thrive. To create widespread tenable living conditions, Christians, as Batten (1911) argued, should focus not only on small-scale charitable interventions but also on structural conditions. Charity was necessary but not sufficient. The challenge for Christians was to address the causes of poverty through structural reforms. These changes would not be easy, but they were morally imperative stemming from God’s commandment to love others. The Social Gospelers strove to convince the capitalists that they had vested interests in the welfare of the workers. To achieve harmony between employees and employers, Social Gospelers emphasized the need for mediation between the two. Each would have to make concessions. Compromise was necessary to ensure the functioning of the social organism. Social Gospelers believed that an appeal to capitalists’ religious convictions could overcome the desire to make profit at any cost, and they believed that the working class could improve its condition by focusing on social harmony rather than class cleavages.

The homeostasis brought about by mediation between capitalists and employees could be called the Kingdom of God. Unlike the Christian Democrats, the Kingdom of God construct did not necessarily mean the maintenance of status among social groups. Rather, Social Gospelers advocated for equal opportunity among social groups and among people (see Batten, 1911). There could be fluidity within the organism so long as all were cognizant that every part of the organism played a substantive, though distinct, role, and the resources of the earth ultimately belonged to everyone.

To orchestrate individuals into harmonious collective action to promote the social welfare, Social Gospelers acknowledged the vital role of each the church, the state, and the family (Batten, 1911). God, and His earthly representation, the church, was the heart of the social organism. He bound all people together, and all people across the ages. Without Him, the other institutions could not function, existence was not possible, and any social reform would amount

to naught. By maintaining focus on a heavenly being, earthly social relations could be set aright. The church was to foster a moral conscience as well as to focus on material conditions. Jesus, claimed the Social Gospelers, was concerned with the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of his followers. Thus, salvation entailed more than just shoring up treasures in heaven; it entailed working to bring the Kingdom of God to life here and now.

The role of the state, argued Social Gospelers, was encompassing yet subsidiary to that of the church. On the one hand, the state brings into

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fellowship those who might not hold a specifically Christian worldview. The state harnesses all, irrespective of personal beliefs, to work towards the common good by promoting public health, universal education, and just working conditions. Social Gospelers advocated against the role of the state in promoting specifically sectarian legislation. Sectarian legislation, they believed, would act against social harmony (see Ely, 1966). Nevertheless, they believed that the state should derive its inspiration from the Bible as it interprets pre-modern normative concepts into a modern context. The state should temper the ills of individualism, yet it should not undermine self-determination. It should be an organ of mediation. The family completed the triumvirate. The family, according to Social Gospelers, was the first of all social institutions, historically speaking. The family is the institution through which individuals come to know themselves and find contentment. Social Gospelers, most of whom were members of the middle class, realized that the demands placed on working-class families made it difficult for them to fulfill Biblically normative family roles, such as the gendered division of labor, the inculcation of morality, and the cohesiveness of the family unit (Curtis, 1991). Thus, the Social Gospelers suggested interventions that would enable working-class families to aspire to the Biblical prescription of the family.

The continuance of this social order—an order that was Christ-centered, that conceived of individuals as interrelated components of a social organism, that embraced a person-and-environment worldview, and that heralded a triumvirate of church, state, and family—would be self-perpetuating. Peace and harmony would beget further peace and harmony.

Moreover, an exemplary Christian nation that pursued the Kingdom of God would inspire other nations to follow similar courses of action.

Contemporary Religious Traditional Thinkers

Religious traditional writers of the Enlightenment, Catholic social thought, and the Social Gospel incorporated many, if not all, of the Biblical concepts delineated earlier to elaborate a religiously motivated approach to social welfare. Through the mid-20th century, contributors to religious traditionalism, such as Reinhold Niebuhr (1959), maintained the focus of preceding contributors on an ecological view that defined social welfare broadly. In contrast to their predecessors, however, mid-20th century contributors, dubbed the Christian realists, considered Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory

practicality while formulating their prescriptions for social welfare (see Dorrien, 1995). They tempered previous religious idealism with political pragmatism, which resulted in a vision of incremental progress towards a religiously informed socialism. In the latter half of the 20th century, religious traditionalist thinkers, such as Michael Novak (1990) and Richard John Neuhaus (1990), became disillusioned with this approach and called for the curtailment of welfare state growth in their respective publications. This shift towards a neoconservative approach to social welfare paved the way for contemporary contributors to religious traditionalism, such as Marvin Olasky and John DiIulio.

I argue that late 20th century religious traditional thinkers have extended Novak's and Neuhaus' radical shifts in rhetoric but have focused primarily on caring for the needy. Contemporary contributors often have integrated other concepts, such as subsidiarity, into their theories only as they relate to social service provision for the poor. Instead of focusing on a cohesive, harmonious society like Catholic social thinkers, Social Gospellers, and Christian realists, contemporary religious traditional thinkers focus on a single segment of society: poor people. A characteristic of religious traditionalism as a theory had been its internal consistency over time. The theory has never been static; it has always evolved to be relevant to the historical moment. However, the contemporary iteration, I ultimately argue, betrays the historical foundations of the theoretical framework, and it feeds into the logic that prescribes narrowly conceived interventions, such as charitable choice. This section examines the contributions of Marvin Olasky and John DiIulio. Olasky prescribes a paradigm of social welfare provision that eradicates any role for the state. DiIulio, on the other hand, details the constitutionality of contracting with faith-based organizations. Both thinkers define social welfare as services for the poor.

Marvin Olasky: The Father of Compassionate Conservatism

Marvin Olasky's (1992) *The Tragedy of American Compassion* offers a comprehensive modern iteration of religious traditionalism (which George W. Bush termed *compassionate conservatism*). His text argues that the needs of the poor were better addressed before the 20th century than during the 20th and 21st centuries. According to Olasky, pre-20th century social services rendered to the poor focused on spiritual transformation in addition to the relief of material deprivation. Also,

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Olasky argues that prior to the 20th century, more fortunate persons were personally involved in caring for less fortunate persons. In contrast, presently more fortunate persons address the needs of less fortunate persons through money donated either voluntarily through charitable contributions or involuntarily through taxes. Since the more fortunate have lost touch with the plight of the less fortunate, Olasky argues that the country is experiencing compassion fatigue, or a reluctance to

care for the poor and thus the rendering of ineffective social services. Spiritual attention and personally invested services amounted to better care for the poor in previous centuries, according to Olasky. Following Olasky's reasoning, the federal government's involvement in welfare eroded the hallmarks of effective and compassionate service delivery. According to his argument, the programs of the New Deal created a bureaucratic quagmire that has only increased in loathsomeness with time. Franklin D. Roosevelt, maintains Olasky, intended for the New Deal programs to be temporary. Instead, the programs created entitlements, which severed the relationship between shame and welfare. These entitlements have expanded throughout the 20th century, notably during the War on Poverty, and they have created a moral mess. They serve the poor ineffectively, and they create resentment among taxpayers. In sum, bureaucratic programs ill serve both the less fortunate and the more fortunate. The only solution, according to Olasky, is to end entitlement programs toward the end of strengthening indigenous social organs, specifically community- and faith-based ones, that deploy sticks more often than carrots.

#### Constitutional Theory and Government Contracting

John DiIulio perpetuates Marvin Olasky's focus on caring for the needy. DiIulio, however, departs from Olasky's paradigm because he is favorably disposed toward state involvement in social service provision for the needy. DiIulio does not want to get rid of the state in social service provision. He argues in his book, *Godly Republic* (2007), that to effectively serve the poor, it is necessary to level the playing field so that faith-based organizations, especially grassroots organizations serving Black and Latino families, can compete alongside secular nonprofits for government contracts.

To state his case, DiIulio traces what he believes to have been the Founding Fathers' intentions regarding the relationship between Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory

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church and state as enshrined in the constitution. His commitment to the constitution is in some sense Burkean, since Burke held constitutions as living documents that bind the past, the present, and the future.

DiIulio describes the Founding Fathers' vision for the United States to be that of what he calls a "godly republic." This republic was to be neither Christian nor secular. Rather, it was conceived of as a nation where people of all faiths and of no faith at all could live together harmoniously.

Contrary to popular belief, the words *separation of church and state* appear nowhere in the constitution, in amendments to the constitution, or in drafts of the First Amendment to the constitution. The founders did not envision strict separation between church and state. Rather, this phrase originated from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson in 1802 to a group of Baptists in Connecticut who worried that their civil liberties were threatened. Wrote Jefferson, "I contemplate

with solemn reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church and State” (Jefferson as cited in DiIulio, 2007, p. 59).

The founders’ godly republic did not promote religion, but it was friendly towards religion (DiIulio, 2007). All the founders, even Franklin the deist, believed that religion would play a vital role in sustaining the nascent republic. The founders believed that religious belief is conducive to prosocial behavior, that religion is a contentious issue and should be handled with care, and that the republic must recognize a supreme being to set limits on the government’s power. They hoped that many religious sects would thrive but were clear that the government would privilege none of them (DiIulio, 2007).

To foster the pros associated with religion and to obviate the cons, the founders worded the First Amendment very carefully, according to DiIulio (2007). The First Amendment is written as follows: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances” (DiIulio, 2007, p. 48). Thus, the amendment delineates the establishment clause, which prohibits both the creation of a national religion and the federal preference of one religion over another. According to the establishment clause, claims DiIulio, faith-based organizations should be given consideration when  
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the government awards contracts. Excluding faith-based organizations from vying for contracts, he contends, is tantamount to promoting atheism, thus violating this clause.

He does not rest his case on the Founding Fathers’ vision in support of faith-based organizations’ eligibility for government contracts.

He also examines how the courts have interpreted the First Amendment throughout the 20th century to substantiate his argument, and he cites court cases that espouse the accomodationalist perspective, a moderate involvement with faith-based organizations. DiIulio shows that a key case in the interpretation of the First Amendment was *Lemon v. Kurtzman* in 1971. This case debated the constitutionality of reimbursing nonpublic schools, which included Catholic schools, for certain expenditures, such as teacher salaries. The court found that the financial arrangement resulted in excessive entanglement between church and state. However, it stated that certain arrangements between church and state are permissible if they meet three criteria: (1) They have a secular purpose, (2) the effect neither advances nor hinders religion, and (3) they do not create excessive entanglement between church and state. Though *Lemon v. Kurtzman* struck down a certain relationship, it opened the door for future arrangements between the government and

religious organizations as long as they fulfill these criteria. DiIulio meticulously argues the constitutionality of faith-based organizations applying for government contracts. Nevertheless, I contend that his arguments reduce religious traditionalism to a singular focus: the provision of social services by faith-based organizations to the needy. As discussed in the previous section, religious traditionalism has implications beyond a narrow focus on the poor. Consequently, I will conclude by commenting on the disjointedness between the most recent contributions to religious traditionalism and their predecessors from the 18th to the mid-20th centuries.

### Conclusion

I have argued that theory plays a vital role in shaping coherent, cohesive social policies. I have traced the evolution of religious traditionalism, a normative social welfare theory that offers comprehensive prescriptions for social policies. The Bible, the foundational text for Christian religious traditionalism, provides ample material from which thinkers can draw to define and to pursue social welfare broadly speak-Christian Social Thought , Religious Traditionalism , and Welfare Theory 286 Social Work & Christianity ing. Each of the three major contributing streams to religious traditionalism from the 18th to the 20th centuries, Edmund Burke, Catholic social thinkers, and Social Gospellers, drew from the same primary source, the Bible, but did so in slightly different ways. Different terminology was used, and these theories resulted in different interventions contingent on national contexts. Nevertheless, they dealt with broad issues affecting morality, harmony, and solidarity. Throughout the 18th to the 20th century, religious traditionalist thinkers acknowledged that people are ultimately beholden to a divine being and that all humans are invaluable, which underscores any actions to be taken on Earth. Members of the social body are to treat each other with love and kindness, and all are to be afforded the opportunity to flourish. Indeed, for the body to function, all members of the body need to employ their gifts. Christian social thinkers during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries had been internally consistent as each contributor derived theoretical iterations holistically and faithfully to a foundational source. The variations of religious traditionalism during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries were not explained by political fads. Rather, the variations could be explained by the acknowledgement that for a theory to remain viable, it must be malleable.

I contend that those who assumed the mantle of religious traditionalism at the end of the 20th century betrayed the richness of the theoretical framework built during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Both Marvin Olasky and John DiIulio depart from the ideas upheld by religious traditionalists over centuries. In so doing, their contributions are incongruent with those of their predecessors, and they prescribe interventions to social problems that are narrowly focused. Olasky misreads



history, and DiIulio removes God as being foundational. Religious traditionalist thinkers of the 18th, 19th, and 20th century defended the potential of the state as a social organ that can promote social harmony. Burke believed that the state was an instrument of divine will, and Niebuhr argued that increased state involvement in social welfare flowed from a divine plan.

Olasky, in contrast to preceding religious traditionalist thinkers, assumes that state intervention is a historical aberration, or a straying from the divine plan. He argues that poor people were better cared for during the 18th and 19th centuries by charities than those of the 20th century by the state. To support his contention, he relies on a romanticized interpretation of history. For example, he upholds Reverend

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Brace's orphan trains as a laudable intervention without recognizing that the intervention was highly detrimental and intrusive to certain social classes and ethnic groups. The paper contends that Olasky's interpretation of history stems from subsuming enduring religious principles to a neoconservative political agenda that portrays the state as a problem rather than a part of the solution. Formulating theory to fit a pre-determined ideological agenda undermines the constancy of religious traditionalism.

DiIulio strays from the process of religious traditionalist theory building by taking the constitution, rather than God, as foundational. Religious traditionalism has been driven first and foremost by an unflagging faith in a Christian God and a divinely ordained social order. God is constant; historical moments change; and religious traditionalism remains a viable theory through transposing the underlying belief in the Christian God into prescriptions for historically relevant applications. John DiIulio has reversed the order of reasoning. Political rhetoric about constitutionality serves as the foundation for his contributions to religious traditionalism, and religion follows. Context is taken as foundational, religion as secondary.

More problematic in both Olasky's and DiIulio's reasoning is what they take as their definition of social welfare. There are many indicators that can be used to define social welfare: income distribution, housing, health, rates of incarceration, access to food, labor mobility, work-life balance, and education, all shaped by class, ethnic, racial, and gender constructs. Christian social thinkers of centuries past would make comprehensive prescriptions that promote the welfare of all people along the lines of these indicators. These two contributors to religious traditionalism, however, define social welfare narrowly as services for the poor, which reduces the contextual frame to a minute pixel. Olasky and DiIulio use the charged political context of a so-called welfare crisis as the grounding for their contributions.

The narrow rhetoric undermines the social harmony that their predecessors so emphasized by driving a wedge between the haves and

the have-nots. Their logic erodes social solidarity and betrays the body metaphor because they have erased the idea of reciprocity. Religious traditionalists have never lobbied for radical redistribution. The religious traditionalists of centuries past have typically assumed that divisions are organic but that they are neither value-laden nor indicators of moral worth. Olasky and DiIulio espouse ideas that can be used to affirm the Christian Social Thought, Religious Traditionalism, and Welfare Theory

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conclusion that the poor are different and, perhaps Olasky would add, deficient. The contributors to religious traditionalism from the 18th to the 20th centuries acknowledged that all parts were needed to make the whole function; each part had merit, and each gained from interactions with the other parts. Lost in the rhetoric of Olasky and DiIulio is the acknowledgement of reciprocity.

Minimizing the scope of religious traditionalism has fed into the policy logic of faith-based initiatives, such as charitable choice. During Bill Clinton's administration, welfare underwent a huge transformation as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children when he signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA contained section 104, the charitable choice clause, which made explicit the ability of faith-based organizations to receive federal funds. Charitable choice attempts to level the playing field by barring state and local governments from discriminating against faith-based organizations while contracting out social services (Carlson-Thies, 2003). The goal is not to give preference to faith-based organizations but rather to provide equal opportunity to all organizations, irrespective of religious orientation, in the issuance of social service contracts by the government (Carlson-Thies, 2003). This clause permits faith-based organizations to compete for contracts while employing discriminatory hiring practices, displaying religious icons, and refraining from the establishment of a separate 501(c)3 (Wineburg, Coleman, Boddie, and Cnaan, 2008).

The narrow interpretation of Christian teaching fostered by Olasky and DiIulio also had electoral repercussions. Republican contender George W. Bush leveraged the idea of charitable choice as he campaigned for president to galvanize evangelical voters under the moniker of compassionate conservatism. He proceeded with a compassionate conservative agenda via executive orders. On the first day of his second week in office, Bush signed an executive order creating the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFCBI) and satellite offices for the initiative in five cabinets (DiIulio, 2007), thereby rewarding the evangelical voting bloc. In practice, the OFCBI was delayed in opening, understaffed, and underfunded (Kuo, 2006). Subsequent to the creation of the OFCBI, there was little change in existing charitable choice laws (DiIulio, 2007). Bush signed other executive orders that appeared to expand religious organizations discretion in hiring, but the orders amounted to smoke

and mirrors to placate the evangelical constituency.

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Former Bush insider David Kuo (2006) went so far as to accuse Bush of mocking the evangelical voters that supported him. According to Kuo, compassionate conservatism was a political trope to mobilize voters. The OFCBI was the laughingstock of Bush officials, claimed Kuo. He argued that funding for faith-based organizations actually decreased by \$20 million per year during the Bush administration in comparison with expenditures during the Clinton administration. The overtures Bush made to the faith-based community, such as conferences that offered technical assistance to smaller organizations applying to federal monies for the first time, were timed to coincide with important elections in key precincts in order to garner political capital. Kuo remained convinced that the governor he had previously met in Texas genuinely had a heart to help the poor and the disadvantaged, but that Christian teaching had become perverted in a political game to shore up votes. The ideas espoused by Olasky and DiIulio serve as a justification for narrow faith-based initiatives that have more to do with politics than with a fully explicated religious traditionalist framework. Though much has been written about the manipulation of evangelical voting bloc by the Bush administration through faith-based interventions, my goal has been to draw attention to the historical and theoretical foundations of these interventions. The very theories that undergird these initiatives have been infiltrated by politics. In such a charged context, the ability of religious traditionalism to offer substantive interventions has been perverted. v

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# Parenting, Policies, and Practice: Christian Influence on Child Welfare in America

*Jill C. Schreiber*

*Christianity has been integral to the development of America's child welfare policy in two ways: Christian beliefs have influenced evolving American cultural norms about parenting, and Christians have responded to children whose needs were not met by their parents, both by creating institutions and agencies and by influencing policies. Christian influences were explicit when Protestant Christianity was the cultural norm, but its influence is still present in the secular child welfare systems today.*

*Since cultural norms are slow to change, changes are more apparent when taking a broad scope. To portray the variations in the role of Christianity in child welfare policy, this article compares three changes in centuries in American history: the Post-Colonial Era (late 1700–early 1800s), the Progressive Era (1890s–1920s), and what I refer to as the Modern Era (late 1900s–early 2000s). In colonial times, children were perceived to be the property of their fathers, and harsh physical punishment was deemed religiously necessary for successful child rearing. Over the past three centuries, mothers and children have developed more rights, limits were placed on physical discipline, and cultural values of self-actualization and independence have gradually replaced those of unquestioning obedience to authority.*

*The first societal responses to poor parenting focused on poverty, and with time they evolved into child protection. Christians founded the first institutions that were focused on children— orphanages. Currently, state public child welfare systems assume primary responsibility for child welfare, and are necessarily nonreligious. However, religious issues are still relevant. For example, many religious child welfare organizations receive public funding for their work through subcontracts. Private charity is always commendable. It is of ancient origin, and has blessed the world and sweetened dependent child life alone for ages. Public charity, more modern, is stronger in its power, when fully and properly exerted. Both are to be encouraged and continued. And yet out of them all cannot there be matured a system which should include both private and public, and which should be brought to a higher perfection, under which all children should be protected from ill treatment, should be reformed if delinquent, and should be cared for if dependent, all being restored to the kind and elevating influences of good home life?*

*(Randell, 1893, p. v).*

**Christianity is a factor in child welfare today for many** reasons. Most individuals in America are Christians (Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life, 2008), and this would include children, biological families, and professionals in child welfare. Many child welfare institutions and service providers also have ties to the Christian faith (e.g., Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Social Services). Christian values have also grounded many legal and policy decisions.

Because the United States was initially an overwhelmingly Protestant country, it is not surprising that the norms held for parenting were Protestant ones. Christian values and ethics also guided responses to situations when these parenting norms were not being met. Christian involvement in child welfare is motivated by a variety of Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) scriptures to care for widows and orphans and by a familiar passage from James: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their

distress” (James 1:27, New Revised Standard Version).

This review begins with a summary of the Post-Colonial context and then considers the Progressive Era, when the needs of children became more of a concern to society and public services became more professional. The development of child welfare in the 21st century, with less explicit religious content, is then discussed. Finally, I conclude that it is important for educators and researchers to acknowledge Christianity’s current influence in child welfare.

### **Post-Colonial Era Relationships between Children and Parents**

In early America, child welfare was based on tradition, English poor laws, and Protestant beliefs and Biblical texts, specifically Deuteronomy (Mason, 1994). In this era, just as slave children were the property of their masters, free children were perceived to be the property of fathers. Children were removed from fathers who could not support them and were “bound out” to masters who could. The focus of the law was on relieving the public of economic burdens, not on the best interest of the child.

Fathers in the 18th century were expected to raise children who were not only vocationally able but religiously trained (Reardon & Noblet, 2009). Vocational training and religious catechism in early America were similar to medical and educational requirements of parents today; to fail to meet societal expectations could lead to removal of children. For example, a 17th-century Massachusetts Bay Colony statute stated: “Masters of Families are to Catechize or cause to be Catechized, their children and Apprentices at least once a week, on the grounds and Principles of religion” (cited in Mason, 1994, p. 6). Religious catechism coincided with general education because “the universal child’s book of the day was the Bible” (Earle, 1899, p. 228). Other than a primer, and possibly a hymnal, the Bible might be the only book a child would read from.

Both free and slave children alike experienced corporal punishment. Harsh physical punishment of children was justified as religiously necessary. Many of the early Americans who came from Europe brought with them a belief that eternal salvation is dependent on “breaking the will of the child” or “beating the devil out of them” (Greven, 1992). Biblical scriptures such as “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Proverbs 23:13, King James Version) were commonly used as justification for beatings, deemed necessary to ensure that children were not rude, stubborn, or unruly. In several states parents were even excused from charges of murder if “death occurred while lawfully correcting the child” (Mason, 1994, p. 104). South Carolina defended the use of knives as tools for disciplining children: “Provisions on killing by stabbing do not apply to person, who in chastising or correcting a child chances to commit manslaughter without intending to do so” (South Carolina code of law, cited in Mason, 1994, p. 104). Before the late 19th century, public officials rarely interfered with a family’s right to discipline their children (Sealand, 2003). If a father could not control his children, the state intervened. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island had “stubborn child laws,” under which a son who would not obey his parents was to be brought to the state for chastisement. The consequence for the child could be as severe as death (Mason, p. 11). There was little or no public response to what we today define as child abuse or neglect. The closest thing to our current understanding of child welfare was a focus on meeting the needs of destitute people.

### **Society’s Responses to Concerns about Children**

In the Post-Colonial Era, there were few provisions of social support and even fewer organizations that focused on the needs of children. All institutions were local, and there were no



state or national policies. Although public institutions existed, most of the organizations that provided social support (including services exclusively for children) were private and sectarian.

### ***Public Poor Relief***

At the start of the 1800s, destitute people were cared for at a local level in concordance with the poor-law system practiced in England. Folks (1902) describes five methods of caring for the poor that were used before 1850 (p. 3):

- 1) By outdoor relief, given to families in their homes.
- 2) By farming out to a number of families, each pauper being awarded, as a rule, to the lowest bidder.
- 3) By contract with some individual, usually the lowest bidder, who became responsible for the care of all the paupers of a given locality.
- 4) By support of the almshouse directly under the control of public authority.
- 5) By indenture.

Children were less likely to be farmed out or put on contract, but indenture was thought to be especially applicable for them. Almshouses were first built in the large cities for both children and adults, often with minimal or no differentiation in how they were housed or treated.

### ***Orphanages***

The first institutions especially for the care of children were created by Christians. The first private orphan asylum was established in 1727, attached to the Ursuline convent in New Orleans. George Whitfield, the celebrated itinerant preacher, established the Bethesda orphan house in 1738 in Savannah, Georgia. By the start of the 1800s, private institutions for children had been established in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. The first public institution for children that was not part of an almshouse was opened in 1794 in Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>1</sup>

There were not yet many orphanages at the start of the 1800s, but by the end of the century they were quite common. This shift was the result of two major changes. By the mid-1800s, in response to awareness of the negative effects of housing children with adults in the almshouses, laws were enacted that limited or forbid the placement of children there. Additionally in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment made “involuntary servitude” illegal, rendering the indenture system for children unconstitutional. Since these previous avenues for child raising were closed, more orphanages were needed.

The majority of children housed in orphanages were not orphaned, but rather came into care from broken families, single-parent homes, or married but destitute parents. These children entered care for a variety of reasons. “Within a single institution we frequently find mental defectives, backward children, delinquents, dependents, and neglected or ill-treated children” (Mangold, 1910, p. 331). Most agencies making decisions about children in need of care used indenture, adoption, or ‘placing out’ when children reached appropriate ages (twelve for boys and fourteen for girls). “As a rule, the orphan asylums seemed to regard the placing out system rather as a convenient means of disposing of their older wards” (Folks, 1902, p. 64).

Although a few orphanages developed under public supervision, the vast majority were private, and most of those religious. By 1904, there were 119 public orphanages or children’s homes and 956 private, serving a total of 92,000 children: 52,000 in sectarian homes, 30,000 in other private homes, and 10,000 in public homes. Most religious orphanages were constructed by groups affiliated with Catholic or Protestant organizations (Askeland, 2006). The first non-Christian home was Jewish; it was established in New Orleans in 1856. Although

some private orphanages were supported by groups of people “prompted solely by philanthropic impulses” (Folks, 1902, p. 56), these “non-religious orphanages” were often Protestant by default (Crenson, 1998, p. 42); for example, they held nondenominational Protestant religious services and included the Protestant Bible in their schools.

Some child advocates believed institutions were the proper method of care for dependent children, pointing to the values of “discipline, education, moral instruction, good environment, physical training and other advantages” (Mangold, 1910, p. 303). Others perceived orphanages differently, citing “the manifold evils of aggregation, of the absence of individuation and the unnatural conditions and surroundings of an institution” (Mangold, 1910, p. 303). Sophie Minton, the chairman of the Committee on Children States Charities Aid Association, stated it plainly: “The same drill which makes a good soldier annihilates the individuality of the child” (Minton, 1893, p. 45). She and others had a strong preference for placing children out.

### *Placing Out*

Michigan, Ohio, New York, and Connecticut favored placing out above institutions. Their institutions were “strictly used as ‘clearing houses,’ or first steps to placing out” (Minton, 1893, p. 45). Boardingout and Placing-out Societies found homes for children and gave the caregivers a small fund, but children were expected to do their share in household work to earn their keep. It was not necessary for foster families to be well off: “rough conditions are nothing if the influence is good, morally and physically” (p. 47). Indeed, “the wish to place a child on a higher social scale than which it was born” was deemed inappropriate (p. 48).

Another version of placing out was Orphan Trains, which were one of the solutions to the plight of destitute inner city children. In 1853, Charles Loring Brace, a young minister, founded the Children’s Aid Society. The society arranged the trips, raised the money, and obtained the legal permissions needed for relocating the children. Brace wrote, “The great duty is to get [the children] utterly out of their surroundings and to send them away to kind Christian homes in the country” (The American Experience, n.d., ¶ 3). Between 1854 and 1929, more than 100,000 children were sent to new homes in rural America. Some of the children had good placements; some experienced abuse or other mistreatment.

Early efforts to place children into private homes rather than orphanages ran into fierce resistance from Roman Catholics, who feared that Catholic children would be placed in Protestant homes and would consequently convert. This objection was categorically dismissed during the 1879 National Conference of Charities and Corrections (the predecessor to the National Association of Social Workers, or NASW). The religious bias is evident in the following quote:

It will be very difficult, therefore, to provide for some of those [Catholic] children. . . . [F]ew Catholic families in New England are now sufficiently intelligent and prosperous to adopt or to train the children who need homes; and, as they usually have large families of their own, it is difficult to find among them homes to be compared with those freely offered by Americans and Protestants (cited in Crenson, 1998, p. 33).

In spite of these concerns about religion, placing out became the practice of the day. The orphanage movement that was a hallmark of the 19th century became less popular in the early 20th century, when childhood and motherhood came to center stage.

## **Progressive Era**

### **Christianity and Progressive Culture**

In the early 20th century, the origins of child welfare had their roots in Christian values. Although religious institutions had always provided mutual aid to their own members in times of crisis, in the Progressive Era (1890s–1920s), the Social Gospel Movement called for the church to support people outside of their congregations. The “Social Gospel” was based on the principle of social responsibility, rooted in the Bible, that defined a good Christian as one who was active in reforming society according to Christian morality (Ebaugh, Saltzman, & Pipes, 2005). It stood in opposition to theology based on “the inherent depravity of the poor” (Winston, 1999, p. 124). Social Gospel adherents claimed that they were replacing the “Gospel of Wealth” with the “Gospel of Jesus.”

Concerns about industrialization, urbanization, and immigration were part of the impetus for the Social Gospel movement. Early proponent Rev. Josiah Strong stated in 1885, “The city has become a serious threat to our civilization, because in it . . . each of the dangers (Romanism, socialism, wealth, intemperance, immigration. . .) is enhanced and all are focalized” (Winston, 1999, p. 16). However, not all Christians during the Progressive Era supported the Social Gospel movement. Lutherans, for example (and others), were opposed to its values and believed that social reform could only be achieved by the “transformation of individuals” (Pittman-Munke, 1999).

Social work as a profession evolved out of the combination of religious impulses (including the Christian Social Gospel and the Doctrine of Charity) with secular liberalism, associated particularly with political economy and ethical individualism (Leiby, 1978). Since secular liberals and religious charity workers held different values, many issues were contentious; however, the two groups shared concerns about child welfare. Children were the object of universal sympathy; by making them the focus of reform, sectarian and ideological differences were neutralized (Crenson, 1998).

### **Relationship between Children and Parents**

The role of families changed during the Progressive Era. Families became more private and isolated, partially due to increased mobility, and this was accompanied by an increase in the values of individualism and trust in societal progress: The work by parents must be done within the home. The home is an institution fundamental to our civilization. Its preservation must be rigidly guarded, and the duties taken from the home must not be so numerous as to lessen the cohesive force of this civilizing power. In fact, the state is using the home as one of its means of achieving further progress. (Mangold, 1910, p. 293)

Growing importance was placed on motherhood and a sentimentalized family life (Sealand, 2003). As the labor movement developed in the 19th century, fathers left the home each day to earn “living wages” to support their households, leaving mothers to take over the responsibilities of home and children. “In nineteenth century America, the maternal role was exalted to the exclusion of all other occupations for women” (Koven & Michel, 1993, p. 278).

### **Society’s Responses to Concerns about Children**

#### ***Maternalism***

After the turn of the century, middle-class women were “urged to impress Christian values of their communities through charitable work” (Koven & Michel, 1993, p. 10), yet they were expected to live out the ideals of domesticity while doing so. The esteem for motherhood led to a rise of “maternalists” who worked for social change (predominantly

in public policies) that supported poor and working mothers. Theirs was a different focus from that of feminists, who were advocating for equality and suffrage. Maternalists were predominantly Protestant, white, well educated, and middle class, working “on behalf” of poor women and children who were unable to advocate for themselves (Kornbluh, 1996).

Jane Addams was a maternalist. Focused on social justice and collective action, she provided concrete support for working mothers, including day nurseries in her settlement house. Settlement houses were a product of the Social Gospel movement (Koven & Michel, 1993), although they were not explicitly religious. (Addams, for example, did not allow religious instruction at Hull House.) Maternalists and other child advocates of the day focused on a broad range of policies, including child labor, infant mortality, appropriate recreational opportunities (parks, playgrounds, and libraries), juvenile justice, children’s health, and compulsory education. They also addressed issues more commonly associated with child welfare today, including adoption, foster care, and maltreatment (called child cruelty). In response to concerns about maltreated children, both adoption and foster care were legalized (Askeland, 2006). However, the objective of “child saving” was not to protect children from cruel or abusive parents but to save society from future delinquents (Pfohl, 1977).

### ***Child Cruelty***

In the 1870s, the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC)<sup>2</sup> was organized (Marten, 2004). By 1910, more than 250 private organizations identified themselves as “anti-cruelst” or “child rescue.” These organizations explicitly identified poor people and/or immigrants as those most likely to beat a child (Sealander, 2003 pp. 57, 59). Child cruelty was considered a type of neglect. Neglect in the Progressive Era “included parental incompetence, not properly caring for the needs of a child, and parental unfitness, usually immoral behavior or drunkenness” (Reardon & Noblet, 2009, p. 98).

Harsh physical punishment was generally still acceptable in the early 1900s, and people had to give reasoned arguments to oppose it. One such argument was carefully stated by Gerry Elbridge, who in 1882 addressed the National Conference on Charities and Correction:

It is in the interests of the republic that the people should not be disintegrated or impaired by any diminution of the intellectual, moral or physical strength of its members. . . [and that children as the] future component parts of the sovereignty, should be so cared for and reared that males when mature shall be competent to bear arms for the protection of the republic [and] that women shall be physically capable of bearing children (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1974, p. 127).

He also argued that humans are made in the image of their maker and that “the purity of the children is the most beautiful type of the purity of God himself” (p. 128). He concluded his address discussing the mission of SPCCs:

They protect the helpless, they bring back the outcast, they seek to save children in danger of being irretrievably lost. For physical cruelty is the parent of vice. Want and neglect are the incentives to crime, and crime not only destroys its perpetrator, but eats like a corroding ulcer into the nation which countenances its existence. (Elbridge address to National Conference on Charities and Correction in 1882, cited in National Conference on Social Welfare, 1974, p. 130)

Concerns about abuse were based on a combination of theology with the Aristotelian principle of “*parens patriae*.” “This principle maintained that the State had the responsibility to

defend those who cannot defend themselves. This was also understood by some to assert the state's privilege in compelling infants and their guardians to act in ways most beneficial to the State" (Pfohl, 1977, p. 312). Both child delinquency (violating criminal codes) and child dependency (coming from a poor home with neglectful or abusive parents) damaged the State, and thus children experiencing either were targets for "child saving" in the late 1800s. However, this perception of dependency changed in the early 1900s.

On Christmas day in 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt issued a call to more than 200 child welfare experts and philanthropists to attend a meeting on the care of "children who are destitute and neglected but not delinquent" (Crenson, 1998, p. 11). At the meeting a month later, the participants made several recommendations, including the establishment of a federal children's bureau. They also proclaimed that "children should not be removed from their families except for urgent and compelling reasons, and destitution was not one of those reasons" (Crenson, p. 15). This was a turning point, since previous policy had determined poverty to be sufficient for removal of children. Charity workers had long argued that public outdoor relief (assistance in one's home rather than placement in an almshouse) was pauperizing, was dangerously open to political corruption, placed an unfair burden on the taxpayer, lacked proper supervisory methods, and discouraged help from relatives, friends, and churches. To counteract these concerns, state boards were developed in New York in 1916 that were enabled but not required to provide financial assistance, but "only when the mothers are suitable persons to bring up their children properly and require aid to do so" (Hopkins & Cupaluolo, 2001, p. 27).

### ***Mothers' Rights***

Custody and parenting rights were linked to the changing status and power of women and to the powerlessness of the poor. In the early 20th century, when women were beginning to be awarded other rights (property, litigation, contracts, and suffrage), few states gave women rights to their children.

Parental rights had first been awarded to a mother in America in 1809 in *Plather v. Plather* (Reardon & Noblet, 2009). This coincided with a new focus on a natural law understanding of a "mother's special capacity to guide and nurture" (Reardon & Noblet, p. 88). However, *Plather v. Plather* was an isolated case, and higher courts overturned a similar ruling in 1844, where a judge expressed concerns about "natural law," stating, "human laws cannot be very far out of the way when they are in accordance with the law of God [which supports the father as head of the family]" (Reardon & Noblet, p. 89).

However, mothers eventually earned parental rights, starting with unwed mothers, who gained legal rights to their children in the early 1900s. Previously unwed mothers had either raised their illegitimate children without the support of the law or saw their children taken away. In the Progressive Era, tensions arose between the evangelical women who had managed maternity homes for decades and those in the new profession of social work over how to best deal with the issue of unwed mothers. Kunzel (1993) researched a plethora of primary sources, including case notes from maternity homes, for her book *Fallen Women and Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945*, the main source for the next section.

### ***Unwed Mothers***

Unmarried mothers were a lightning rod for social concerns during the Progressive Era, similar to the issues of gay rights and abortion today. Were illegitimate children better served by staying with their biological mothers or by being adopted into traditional families? Kunzel

(1993) described the differences between charity workers, who worked for religiously based maternity homes, and professional social workers.

One difference was their very different perceptions about whose welfare was of primary importance. Evangelical workers in maternity homes perceived the unwed mothers as fallen sisters who had been taken advantage of by males. They saw men's seduction as predatory and brutalizing and women as victims of these tempters. The script of seduction and abandonment was so strong that one institution's entrance forms even labeled the space for the name of the biological father as "the betrayer" (Kunzel, 1993, p. 181).

The maternity home workers' solution to this fallen state was the salvation granted by the position of motherhood. Believing that responsibility for a baby was a steadying and uplifting influence on a woman (p. 33), they required mothers to have lengthy stays in the maternity homes (usually six months). The goal was for the mothers to bond with their babies so they would be less likely to relinquish their maternal rights. "Evangelical women's belief in the redemptive power of motherhood led them to endorse the potentially radical notion of a fatherless family" (p. 130). Evangelical charity workers valued religion and love of sister, and they denied that "human beings could be investigated, diagnosed, and treated with scientific and objective precision" (p. 133). Consequently, they did not always believe that science provided the best approach and were concerned with the lack of a bond that existed in a professional relationship.

By 1910, many social workers began to state that child illegitimacy was within their domain. Social workers had a very different perception of the problem of unwed mothers and consequently reshaped ideas and attitudes about them and their children. They did not see the mothers as "victims of men" but instead as weak, immature, and not well adjusted. In the social workers' view, their clients were the babies, not the mothers. For instance, Amey Watson wrote the following in her 1923 social science dissertation at Bryn Mawr College: "After all, it is the child that is our real interest and it is his or her welfare that we are most vitally interested in saving" (quoted in Kunzel, 1993, p. 128).<sup>3</sup>

By the early 20th century, social workers invoked the legitimizing rhetoric of science "to brand evangelical women's tradition of womanly benevolence as sentimental and sloppy, to pronounce unmarried mothers untrustworthy interpreters of their own experience, and to name themselves the rightful authorities over the 'social problem' of unmarried motherhood" (Kunzel, 1993, p. 115). A consequence of perceiving mothers as the problem, rather than as victims, was a dramatic shift in adoption rates. According to the dispositional records of agencies serving unmarried mothers, between 1890 and 1930 only 20 percent placed their babies for adoption, but by 1950, 80 percent did. By the 1930s, maternity homes were by and large out of business (p. 122).

### ***Orphanages and Placing Out***

In the early 20th century a variety of concerns were raised about orphanages. One concern was the placement of delinquent children into orphanages with dependent children. "Contamination of the moral children by those displaying immoral tendencies can hardly be avoided" (Mangold, 1910, p. 331). Another concern was cost. In the early 1900s, 23,000 New York City children lived in religious orphanages—21 percent of the orphanage population of the United States (Hopkins & Cupaluolo, 2001). It cost the city an astounding five million dollars annually for "substandard orphanages" (Hopkins & Cupaluolo). Placing-out programs were much less expensive.

In 1917, the first year of the New York City placing-out program, the “modest” goal was to move 1,000 children into private homes. In response to strongly voiced concerns, there was intensive recruitment in Catholic parishes so that appropriate religious homes could be provided for the children being placed. “All children have been placed in homes of their own faith, while in the case of Catholic homes, a letter has in every case been obtained from the parish priest vouching for the family’s practical Catholicity” (New York, City Department of Public Charities, Children’s Home Bureau, 1917, cited in Crenson, 1998, p. 304). Other states also developed “religious protection” clauses that demanded that children be placed in adoptive homes of the same faith as far as practicable (Askeland, 2006).

The overwhelmingly Christian culture of the United States was reflected in formal social work meetings, such as the 1920 National Conference of Social Work. Many of the presenters were ministers. The President Address was given by Owen Lovejoy, the general secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, who stated that whatever a man may say with his tongue or whatever he may think he thinks in denial of any religious faith, if we find him keen in the service of humanity and everlastingly on the job, we are bound to claim him as of that apostolic succession of which James was the original when he said:

“Show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith by my works.” . . . A practical application of the Second Great Commandment—namely “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” is by no means a denial of the first. But it is so evident that man is incurably religious and so many ages have been devoted to preaching obedience to the Unseen that many people feel the necessity of emphasizing the suggestion that “if we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?” (Lovejoy, 1920).

Lovejoy assumed that his audience was familiar with Christian Scripture and that it was relevant to their profession. However, as the field of social work developed, a strong desire by its practitioners to become more scientific and professional developed.

### **Modern Era**

Although the past century has seen a growth in nonreligious Americans and in diversity of religions, the United States remains a predominantly Christian country (78.4 percent). Only 4.7 percent claim another religious affiliation, and 16 percent say they are unaffiliated with any religion (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). The influence of Christianity on parenting still exists (and is dominant in some subpopulations), but it is often overlooked in child welfare research and education.

### **Relationship between Children and Parents**

Widely divergent views on parenting norms existed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “In modern societies, . . . norms governing the socialization of children, education, employment, sexuality, and life’s purpose become increasingly oriented around market values, individual rights, self-actualization, and secularism” (Browning & Miller-McLemore, 2009, p. 3).

In modern America, some conservative Christian parents still require children to submit to parental will in order to learn to submit to God. Often these parents use physical discipline, although there are legal limits to the type and severity allowed them. Of the few studies that address the role of religion in child welfare, many of them focus on religiously based child abuse (Capps, 1992; Jackson et al., 1999; Nelson & Kroliczak, 1984; Rodriguez & Henderson, 2010; Socolar, Cabinum-Foeller, & Sinal, 2008). Some Christian parents continue to believe

that, rather than being abuse, harsh physical punishment is good parenting, necessary to counter the innate sinfulness of children, but the number of such parents is decreasing. “The idea of original sin is far less prominent today in almost all expressions of modern Christianity” (Browning & Miller-McLemore, 2009, p. 14).

In today’s legal system, the determination of medical or educational neglect is moderated by parental religious beliefs. In response to a case about Amish parents’ rejection of compulsory education until age 16, the Supreme Court determined that “a parent’s right to control their child’s upbringing is strongest when it is motivated by religious conviction” (Browning & Miller-McLemore, 2009, p. 213). With respect to the definition of medical neglect, all 50 states grant an exemption for parents who refuse for religious reasons to secure conventional medical treatment for their children (Browning & Miller-McLemore, p. 213).

### **Society’s Responses to Concerns about Children**

#### ***The Battered Child Syndrome***

After the zealous transformation of child welfare during the Progressive Era, there was less vigorous innovation between the 1920s and the 1970s. After the mid-1920s, cruelty to children ceased being a broadly publicized or major policy issue, as the country focused on economic issues during the Depression and on military issues during the wars. A resurgence of interest in “child battery” came by way of the medical field.

In the 1950s, long bone fractures showing up on children’s x-rays were determined to be deliberately caused. Kempe published “The Battered Child Syndrome” in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1962. With a diagnostic label and subsequent intense media coverage, pediatricians began to find abuse among young patients. Why, however, were radiologists the impetus for the resurgence in interest in physically abused children rather than other types of doctors or social workers? Pfohl (1977) suggested that the social distance from parents was key. Parents were often seen as the real patient (they paid the bills), and professionals were “psychologically unwilling to believe that parents would inflict such atrocities on their own children” (Pfohl, p. 316).

During the early 20th century, the distance grew between religion and the practice of social work. Canda and Furman (1999) refer to this period as a time of *professionalization and secularization* for the field. Social work as a profession promoted scientific and professional values above history, tradition, and meaning making. For example, in 1952, the American Association of Schools of Social Work (now the Council for Social Work Education [CSWE]) issued its first Curriculum Policy Statement. It contained no mention of spirituality or religion. Additionally, the involvement of federal and state governments in social work brought increasing concerns about the separation of church and state.

Recently, there has been resurging interest in the role of religion and spirituality in social work, especially in the concentrations of substance use and health care. However, there has been very little research on the role of religion in child welfare. This is concerning because the perception of religion held by practitioners, policy makers, and researchers is limited to personal experiences or what they see reported in the media. Without research or education, “religion” often becomes equated with Christianity (and often with a subset of Christianity, such as Protestant or fundamentalist), which people judge as good or bad. Child welfare has been “belief-blind” or “religion-blind.” This is similar to issues of race, where “whiteness” was once treated as normative. Even though social work has not focused on religion in child welfare, issues of religion in child welfare do exist, as is evidenced by the recent legal cases.

#### ***The Wilder Case***



The most famous lawsuit addressing concerns about religion in child welfare has been *Wilder v. Bernstein*, a landmark case that lasted decades and combined issues of race and religion. Marcia Lowry brought a case against the State of New York's foster care system in 1973 on behalf of Shirley Wilder. At the time New York relied primarily on private—but publicly funded—Jewish and Catholic agencies that prioritized “their own” religious clients, which left the Protestant (which also meant black) clients predominantly in a substandard system. Lowry claimed that the reliance on religious agencies violated the First Amendment's separation of church and state and the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee to equal protection and due process.

The case lasted for 26 years and three generations of Wilders. In spite of the lawsuit's initial focus on religion, the conflation of religion and race is evidenced by the final verdict. By the end of the case, the critics argued that since nearly all children in the foster system were black and Protestant that discrimination could not be proven. Nina Bernstein, an investigative journalist who carefully and thoroughly documented the case in *The Lost Children of Wilder* (2001), summarized the country's status quo: “The child welfare system . . . [is] a political battleground for abiding national conflicts over race, religion, gender and inequality” (p. xii).

Religious issues related to child welfare continue to be addressed primarily in the legal arena, as is evidenced by several recent news stories. As this article was being written, a number of stories appeared addressing societal concerns about Christian religion in child welfare. The *Columbus Dispatch* in Ohio and the *Press and Guide* in Michigan have both reported stories about Muslim parents who fought the state systems for the right of their children to be in Muslim foster homes rather than Christian homes (Pepper, 2011; Price, 2011). In Illinois, the Department of Children and Family Services was deciding if it will fund Christian agencies that refuse gay foster parents based on the agency's religious beliefs (Nair, 2011). The *Philadelphia Inquirer* brought to public attention an informal arrangement between incarcerated mothers and Mennonites (Christians) who cared for imprisoned women's babies without the supervision of any government agency (Davis, 2011). As these news stories illustrate, tension between Christian values and secular child welfare services is real and important.

### **Conclusion**

The story of Christianity's role in American child welfare is typically summarized with something of a patronizing tone: religious charities of inconsistent quality were replaced by a more uniform and scientifically based child welfare system. Although there is truth to this (over)simplified tale, it skims over the influence of Christianity on parental norms across several centuries and its continuing influence on child welfare practices today.

Christianity has been and still is integral to determining parental norms. This was the case in early America, when Protestant Christianity was the cultural norm, and remains still true today, when there is more diversity of religiosity, including a growing segment of people without any (Chaves, 2011). Christian parenting norms were explicit during Post-Colonial America. However, even a cursory review of history shows that the Christian influence has not always been consistent with what we today believe to be good parenting. Christian theology has been used to justify harsh physical punishment, the rights of fathers above mothers or children, and discrimination based on religious affiliation. Although a small segment of Christians may still follow these beliefs, most would not.

Do these changes reflect the church's influence on culture, or vice versa? Christian theology and cultural parenting norms evolve together, although causality is not always clear. The issues have changed (to divorce, nontraditional families, and religious heteronomy, among

others), but there remains a challenge for the church to faithfully and continually engage with cultural norms for parenting.

Changes in Christian theology have also corresponded with changes in child welfare. Today, religious catechism for children is no longer required of parents. A parental right to corporal punishment has been not eliminated, but it has been constrained. Poverty remains an issue in child welfare, but it is not a sign of unfavored status or a reason for removal from a family, as was once true. Some religiously based child welfare policies, however, have not changed. Exceptions to child welfare laws with respect to medical or educational neglect are examples of the value of religious freedom above child rights. America's first child welfare services were administered locally and were often sectarian. The supervision of the child welfare system has become more public and more centralized over time. Today services are largely secular, predominantly publicly funded, and administered at a state or national level. However, vestiges of the earlier sectarian systems are apparent in the plethora of faith-based subcontractors for child welfare services (Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Social Services, Jewish Social Services, and many others). These religious organizations often get the majority of their funding from government sources, which require following government oversight. For example, faith-based organizations must not discriminate against clients on the basis of religion. The balance between private (usually religious) and public systems of child welfare has continuously shifted in favor of larger public oversight. What has remained constant is opposing perceptions of the two systems as complementary or competitive.

Christianity has been and continues to be engaged in child welfare in America. Historically, it has influenced parenting norms and supported children whose parents were unable to meet those norms. Although this role is less palpable today, Christianity still influences many individuals who either provide or receive child welfare services. Also, many child welfare agencies are explicitly Christian. It is time for both research and educators to acknowledge the place of religion, both its strengths and weaknesses, in child welfare.

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# Faith as a Protective Factor against Social Misconceptions of Black Girls: A Historical Perspective

*Tanya Smith Brice*

*Women played a major role in the development of the social work profession. Our professional beginning was largely influenced by evangelical ideology.*

*This article seeks to examine the evangelical roots of African American women in the development of services for African American girls deemed delinquent in Progressive Era North Carolina. Furthermore, this article introduces the Efland Home for Girls as an evangelical effort of the North Carolina Federation of Negro Women, an affiliate of the National Association of Colored Women. Through spiritual development, as a component of the Efland Home curriculum, these women sought to encourage faith development as a protective factor against the social misconceptions of Black girls deemed delinquent.*

**Women played a significant role in the development of** the social work profession. The social work curriculum acknowledges these women and the courageous efforts they made to professionalize benevolence. However, the women most familiar in the social work curriculum are White, upper-middle class women in the geographic Northeast and Midwest regions of the United States. There may be, at best, a cursory mention of the efforts of African American women who were contemporaries to their White counterparts in the development of the profession (Carlton-Laney, 2001). And even rarer in the curriculum is the careful examination of the influence of evangelicalism on the formation of the profession (Scales & Huguen, 2002). This article explores the efforts of African American women engaged in social work in Progressive era North Carolina and the impact of their faith on their efforts to address the needs of African American girls deemed delinquent.

## **The Cult of True Womanhood**

The early 20th century is characterized by Victorian standards of morality (Carlson, 1992; Morantz, 1974; Peterson, 1984). Females were considered the “fairer sex” and were expected to be chaste until marriage (Cott, 1978). Any violation of this expectation of chastity threatened legally punitive consequences (Brice, 2005). It was not uncommon for girls to be charged with crimes of morality, that is, crimes that were a threat to the Victorian ideals of womanhood. These crimes included “vagrancy, beggary, stubbornness, deceitfulness, idle and vicious behavior, wanton and lewd conduct, and running away”(Brenzel, 1975). It is this concern for moral crimes and sexual delinquency that served as an impetus for the professionalization of social work (Abrams & Curran, 2000; Kunzel, 1995). There were homes established all across the United States, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest, for “wayward” young girls, but rarely did any of these homes accept African American girls (Abrams & Curran, 2000; Brenzel, 1975; Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, 1995; Sedlak, 1983).

Victorian standards of moral conduct were intended for White, middle class women (Brice, 2007; Groneman, 1994). African American women were often viewed, by White society, as innately promiscuous, animal-like, and sexually unrestrained (Brice, 2005; D'Emilio & Freedman, 1998; Gilman, 1985; Oppenheim, 1991; Russett, 1989; Weeks, 1986). A journalist wrote of African American women, in the March 17, 1904 issue of *The Independent*, a popular Northern and liberal periodical of this era:

They are so nearly lacking in virtue that the color of a Negro woman's skin is generally taken (and quite correctly) as a guarantee of her immorality...I sometimes read of a virtuous Negro woman, hear of them, but the idea is absolutely inconceivable to me...I cannot imagine such a creation as a virtuous [B]lack woman (Anonymous, 1902).

African American women, most often upper middle class, would have argued that they adhered strictly to the Victorian standards of womanhood, but there are subtle differences in the manifestations of those standards (Carlson, 1992; Hines, 1989; Welter, 1966). African American women upheld the standard of virtue, modesty, altruism, and piety, and maintained the expectation of "true womanhood" (Carlson, 1992), but they had additional expectations specific to the African American community:

First and foremost, she was intelligent and well-educated. She displayed a strong community and racial consciousness, often revealed in her work—whether paid or unpaid—within the black community. Self-confident and out-spoken, she was highly esteemed by her community which frequently applauded her as a "race woman" and role model for young people. In these areas, the black community's expectations of the ideal woman differed from those of the larger society (Carlson, 1992, p. 62). It is within this context that African American women, individually and through organizations, saw the need for an alternative system for young African American girls. The national African American clubwomen movement has roots in benevolent societies formed during the institution of slavery (Billingsley, 1968; Martin & Martin, 1985). These benevolent societies established schools, churches, orphanages, and old-age homes. W. E. B. DuBois wrote, in the conference proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference for the Study of the Negro Problem, held in Atlanta, Georgia, of the significance of the efforts of African American clubwomen:

The Conference is pleased to call the attention of the country to the fact that much of the real work of social uplift and moral awakening is being carried on by Negro women in their clubs and institutions. No group of women in the world have amid studied insult and race discrimination made so brave a fight for social betterment or accomplisht [sic] so much of actual, tangible good (DuBois, 1913, p. 8).

### **Delinquency in Black and White**

There were differing approaches to addressing the needs of delinquent girls by African American and White women. Both groups of women identified sexual immorality as a key characteristic of delinquency. However, White women tended to believe that sexual offenses were as a result of overt or passive actions of the girl (Tice, 1998). In addition, White women

believed that one's appearance was an important indicator of morality, as is expressed in the following social worker's case notes:

Hazel was admonished by the social worker for "improper conduct such as staying out late, going out with boys, or 'wearing overalls, a red shirt, and a red bandanna,' attire that would put her 'in the way of receiving insults from men'" (Tice, 1998).

This quote further demonstrates the notion that inappropriate sexual advances towards women are instigated by the women. African American women tended to believe that sexual offenses were a result of social norms, outside of the control of the young girl (Anonymous, 1902; Brice, 2007). African American girls were particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, with no protection from the law. An African American mother expressed her frustrations and fears for her daughters in the following statement:

It is commonly said that no girl or woman receives a certain kind of insult unless she invites it. That does not apply to a colored girl and woman in the South. The color of her face alone is sufficient invitation to the Southern white man... Few colored girls reach the age of sixteen without receiving advances from them—maybe from a young "upstart", and often from a man old enough to be their father, a white haired veteran of sin... I have had a clerk in a store hold my hand as I gave him the money for some purchase and utter some vile request; a shoe man to take liberties, a man in a crowd to place his hands on my person, others to follow me to my very door, a school director to assure me a position if I did his bidding.... Where the white girl has one temptation, mine will have many... mine will have few opportunities and no protection. It does not matter how good or wise my children may be, they are colored. When I have said that, all is said. Everything is forgiven in the South but color (A Southern Colored Woman, 1904).

White social workers commonly deemed victims of sexual abuse as evidence of "sexual weakness" (Tice, 1998), that is, unable to resist rape or incest. While African American women were often objects of unsolicited sexual advances, to White women, this is further evidence of their inherent immorality.

Because of these different views as to the causes of female delinquency, there were different approaches to social reform of young African American girls. The treatment focus of African American women was to provide strategies for protection of these young girls against the inevitable threat of sexual exploitation. Moral education, as gained through religious education, was seen as a strategy to protect these young girls. In addition, social class, not appearance, was seen as an indicator of morality. For instance, girls of the lower social economic class were more likely to be deemed delinquent than those of the higher class (DuBois, 1913; Frumkin & Brandyburg, 1954; Hazen, 1937). Consequently, African American women sought to treat girls of the lower classes by teaching middle class values in an attempt to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation. These middle class values included mandatory religious instruction.

## **Saving Negro Womanhood**

The National Association of Colored Women (NACW), founded in 1896, formalized a system of care for African American females that protected them from the punitive penitentiary system. This group, representing African American women in 40 states, was a reflection of the national trend of clubwomen's groups that developed in response to growing social welfare concerns (Salem, 1994). The NACW exemplified the theme of social uplift through the motto "Lifting as We Climb".

The NACW was an intentional effort by African American women to protect the cult of true Black womanhood (duCille, 1994). They did not separate these efforts from their religious convictions. There was a "distinct religious, ethical tradition" in the efforts of the NACW (Collier-Thomas, 2010; Keller, Ruether, & Cantlon, 2006; McArthur, 1998).

This tradition is characterized as an understanding of an interrelationship between religious belief and vocation or social activism; (2) the belief in the justice of God or justice for African Americans as a command of God; (3) a claim that Jesus' mandate to love our neighbor is a sociopolitical mandate to reform society in the context of God's providence; and (4) a call for communal authenticity and integrity in the quest for liberation (Riggs, 2006, p. 869). It is with this spirit that the women of NACW engaged in child-saving efforts across the country.

The North Carolina Federation of Colored Women (NCFCW), an affiliate of the NACW, was founded in 1909. This organization was instrumental in developing programs and services for African American girls, through the founding of the North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, also known as Efland Home. Through program development and service provision, these women demonstrated their ability to clearly identify problems that affected their community. In North Carolina, there was no state institution for African American girls who were deemed delinquent until 1943. However, between 1919 and 1939 North Carolina's juvenile courts handled approximately 192 cases involving African American girls annually. These girls were placed on probation or returned to their communities "without benefit of any form of vocational training and rehabilitation" (Bost, n.d). For serious crimes, other than moral crimes, African American girls were often sent to adult penitentiaries.

In August 1922, the NC Federation of Colored Women purchased 142 acres of land approximately two miles from Efland, NC, for the purpose of building a facility to house delinquent African American girls. Efland Home was a frame cottage with nine rooms, including a fully equipped kitchen. Due to fiscal restraints, the cottage was sparsely decorated, "except for the bright and cheery atmosphere a touch of colored creton here and there gives". The reception room furniture was purchased by the Durham chapter of the NCFCW. Although bare necessities were in the home, the clubwomen were concerned that the cottage and its furnishings "reflect the taste, in a measure, of the women who fostered this movement". The bedrooms were initially "perfectly bare except for seven cots, seven mattresses and seven pillows". However, the inmates regularly decorated the bedrooms with fresh flowers from outdoors. As the number of inmates increased, the number of cots increased. Each inmate was supplied with her own toiletry items and clothing. The home was electric powered, and heated with a "hot air furnace" and the yard was decorated with seasonal flowers (North Carolina Board of Public Welfare-Institutions and Corrections, 1939).

Efland Home began accepting African American girls as inmates in October 1925. The philosophy of Efland Home was "to save the young Negro girl who is on the verge of wasting her life". Efland Home served as a mechanism by which "to give her a second chance". The underlying mission of Efland Home was to "save Negro womanhood and we shall hope to



surround these girls with the spirit of Jesus whose memorable words were ‘Go in peace and sin no more’”(North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1925). Efland Home accepted African American girls under the age of 16 on referral from the North Carolina Board of Public Welfare (NCBPW) and the county juvenile courts. In addition to those referral sources, Efland Home’s board and the local community also participated in the admission process. The NCBPW identified a potential candidate for Efland Home, and would make a written presentation of the candidate to the home’s board of trustees. ‘Potential candidates’ were those who were identified as ‘problems’ in the community, and who generally exhibited what were deemed “immoral characteristics”. Consequently, many of these girls were put out of their homes, with no placement alternatives. The board’s admissions subcommittee would determine if the candidate was suitable for Efland Home. If deemed suitable, NCBPW would petition the juvenile courts for commitment orders to Efland Home. Upon admission, the young girl was paroled to the custody of Efland Home (Benton, 1931).

### **Life at Efland Home**

The goal of Efland Home was to “enable the inmate to prepare themselves for efficient service in obtaining a livelihood [sic]” (Efland Home Charter, 1925). The curriculum provided the inmates with elementary school courses and industrial courses. They received 261 days of instruction annually. The academic instruction took place in the morning hours, and the industrial instruction took place in the afternoons. A number of individuals, organizations, and local Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were instrumental in providing consultation to Efland Home, particularly in curriculum development.

Like many early training schools, Efland Home had a working farm. The inmates were expected to participate in all aspects of growing and preparing food. For instance, in 1928, the inmates consumed 580 gallons of “fresh cow’s milk,” having produced 478 gallons at the Home’s dairy. Of the 149 acres of land purchased for Efland Home, the inmates cultivated ten acres, producing vegetables and fruit for sustenance. The inmates also prepared and canned vegetables and fruit for future consumption.

The inmates were provided with recreation activities such as swing ball, croquet, jumping rope, and basketball, as well as other games. Recreation activities were provided under the direct supervision of the teacher or matron.

Religious instruction was believed to be a strategy of protection from delinquency. Consequently, it was a fundamental aspect of services provided at Efland Home. The inmates were required to attend church services every Sunday afternoon at the home. They were required to participate in morning and evening prayers, and to attend weekly prayer meetings. In a fundraising pamphlet, the clubwomen provided additional explanation of the motivation for their work. They wrote:

In His name we are launching this effort to save Negro womanhood, and we hope to surround these girls with the spirit of Jesus whose memorable words were, “Go in peace and sin no more” (North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1925).

The young inmates of Efland Home were provided an elementary education as well as industrial instruction, which met the clubwomen’s goal to “enable the inmate to prepare themselves for efficient service in obtaining a livelihood [sic]” (“Efland Home Charter,” 1925). This curriculum was undergirded by modeled “faith practice”. These clubwomen believed

that “faith practice” was a middle class value. Furthermore, middle class values were viewed as desired values by the women of NCFNW of these girls, who came from lower social class families.

Efland Home was usually filled beyond capacity. Approximately 22 girls were admitted to Efland Home annually, although the intended capacity was 15 annually. The board of trustees decided that “it is better to start with a small group and make a success of the work than to take so many that criticisms will arise as to methods of treatment” (“Suggested plan for organization of Efland School for Girls,” n.d). The home accepted girls as young as six years old; however, the majority of the inmates were between the ages of 14 and 16. These girls were often discharged to working homes, parents or relatives, or to hospitals. Girls who ran away from the home were often consequently discharged.

Efland Home operated with a staff of three to four people, a matron, superintendent, teacher, and farm supervisor. Each of these staff members lived at the home. The Board of Trustees agreed that the superintendent meet the following qualifications:

1. A woman who has had some training in social work;
2. She should have had experience in handling girls who are problem cases;
3. She should have executive ability and be resourceful and energetic; and,
4. She should have a sense of financial values and be able to make proper and just expenditures of money (“Suggested plan for organization of Efland School for Girls,” n.d.).

The requirement for social work training is extraordinary, as there were only thirteen African American social workers in the state of North Carolina during this time (Crow, Escott, & Hatley, 1992), and there were very few opportunities for African Americans to receive formal social work training (Carlton-LaNey, 1994). The matron, who often served as the superintendent, supervised the daily operations. Due to budgetary constraints, the matron sometimes provided classroom instruction to the girls.

The matrons at Efland Home participated in a training program after being hired, but before working at the home. Janie Porter Barrett, a founding member and first president of the Virginia State Federation of Colored Women, founded the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls in 1908 (Barrett, 1926; W. Peebles-Wilkins, 1995). This school served as a model for the development of Efland Home. Consequently, the matrons trained at Barrett’s facility for eight weeks to several years prior to coming to Efland Home. This ensured fidelity to the intended program model patterned after the Virginia school.

There were one to two teachers employed at Efland Home, at any given time, nearly all of whom were certified and formally trained to teach. Efland Home teachers received training primarily from the following institutions: the Teachers College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina A&T in Greensboro, or from various other teacher training schools around the state. Teachers often served as residential advisors, assisting the matron in providing daily care to the inmates. The farm supervisor oversaw the industrial operations of the home and provided instruction in agricultural techniques. He was also usually the spouse of the home’s matron and served as a father figure to many of the inmates.

### **Sending up Their Timber**

African American clubwomen believed that they owed a spiritual and social debt to the less fortunate. This sentiment is typical of African Americans who achieve economic and educational success (Carlton- LaNey, 1999; Durant & Loudon, 1986). They operated under the principle that support and aid is owed to the less fortunate, so that the race

as a whole is uplifted. This may explain their ability to view these young girls as “redeemable.” In addition, it was as if these women believed that they were “sending up their timber,” which is a reference to the notion expressed in the gospel hymn of the same name, describing every good deed as a piece of timber needed to build one’s heavenly mansion. They paid their debt by establishing this home for a neglected segment of the population, African American girls. They taught these young girls how to be contributing members of society, who “live their lives beyond reproach; their hands and their hearts are clean...[and] are the equals in intelligence and character of the women of any race” (Brown, 1926).

It is because of this debt that prominent African Americans volunteered time and efforts to ensure the success of the home. Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown was a pioneer of African American preparatory education. She founded the Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina, which was a classical boarding school for upper middle class African Americans from across the country. Brown is credited with “transforming the rural community of Sedalia, NC, into an educational oasis” (Smith, 1982, p. 1). As president of the NCFCW, Brown spearheaded the effort to establish Efland Home. In a speech at the Negro Young People’s Christian and Educational (NYPCE) Conference held August 6-11, 1902, in Atlanta, Georgia, Brown made the following comments:

The Negro teacher who is working for the betterment of the race must work from a principle, to install a principle, to build a character whom the nation will adore. These teachers, patient, loving, whose lives are instruments in God’s hands, are they, upon whom depend the destiny of the Negro race. The race needs and must have Christian young men and women who are willing to throw the energy of their young lives into the service for the race. The race needs men and women who are not looking for monied rewards only, but who are working for the good that may be accomplished in elevating the race. They must put on the whole armour of God. It is not sufficient to wear the uniform to ward off the imposition, but the breast-plate, the shield and the sword, each has its specific duty (Hawkins, 1902, p. 429).

It is important to note that there was major discourse about the role of African Americans in U. S. society during the historical nadir of post- Civil War through the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. These discussions were often characterized as the Negro Problem (Bruce, 1891; Johnsen, 1921; Meier, Rudwick, & Lewis, 2002; Washington, 2003; Washington & Bois, 1907). The NYPCE was an annual conference that explored the Negro Problem as requiring a spiritual solution. This conference was sponsored by African American religious thinkers who identified the Negro Problem as one of structural oppression combined with individual behaviors (I. G. Penn & Bowen, 1902). This kind of conference is representative of the think tanks that developed to address issues of oppression among African Americans.

The NACW saw the issue of wayward girls with the same spiritual lens. One of the founding members of the NACW, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a prominent journalist most noted for her investigative work that exposed lynchings in the U. S. South, said in a speech at the American Association of Educators of Colored Youth, Nashville, TN, December 1891, of the spirit by which work with youth should be approached:

The world has never witnessed a sublimer example of love for humanity than that of our blessed Savior whose life on earth was spent in doing good. We cannot hope to equal the infinite love, tenderness and patience with which He taught and served fallen humanity, but we can approximate it. Only in proportion as we do so is our leadership true (Riggs, 1997, p. 62).

Mary Church Terrell, the first president and founding member of the NACW, wrote of the motivation for engaging in these child saving efforts:

But in connection with such work, let us not neglect, let us not forget, the children, remembering that when we love and protect the little ones, we follow in the footsteps of Him, who when He wished to paint the most beautiful picture of Beulah land it is possible for the human mind to conceive, pointed to the children and said—"Of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Terrell, 1900, p. 343).

It was their love for Jesus, and their courage to follow Him, that motivated these women to engage in child saving efforts. They relied on their faith, and attempted to build faith in wayward girls. One clubwoman declared the following:

Boys are drifting into bar-rooms and other places of sin and degradation; girls are being met on the highways of sin and led into sorrows yet untold. I entreat you this afternoon to build a strong wall of Godly defense around your homes, and have them well guarded by the ever-watchful eye of our Heavenly Father, who knows the trials and temptations that come to us (Penn, 1902, p. 438).

Saving wayward girls was the premier focus of the African American clubwomen's movement. While these efforts were seen as an effort to save "the cult of true Black womanhood," it was simultaneously an effort to demonstrate God's love. The holistic services provided at Efland Home, focused on saving "the womanhood of the race" (Brown, 1930), by developing the whole person, through its focus on the physical, social, and spiritual aspects of womanhood. The women of the NCFNW intended to provide each inmate with a basic education, job skill development, and a spiritual centeredness necessary to live a productive life outside of Efland Home.

The clubwomen were confident that increased spiritual centeredness, as a result of faith practice, would protect these young girls from further sexual delinquency. In fact, the Efland Home inmates were trained to work as domestics in the homes of southern Whites. There appeared to be a belief that they would be protected from sexual victimization because of their increased spiritual centeredness. It was as though the clubwomen threw these young girls into a "lion's den of sexual danger" to test their theory that faith practice is an effective antidote to sexual victimization.

There is no evidence that these young girls were more protected after their tenure at Efland Home, however, the administration of the home boasted of a low recidivism rate, stating that "... girls sent to the school have shown a great improvement and those who have left are employed and making good" (Bickett, 1929). Furthermore, it was reported that "many were

giving satisfactory service in a number of homes” (North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1939). Efland Home for Girls was forced to close its doors in 1934. It was the only facility for delinquent Black girls in the state of North Carolina. It was not until 1943 that the state of North Carolina saw the need to address the needs of this population in a facility other than prisons and jails. Efland Home was a haven for the development and nurturing of its inmates by providing a second chance at womanhood for Black girls.

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# “Accepting a Trust So Responsible”: Christians Caring for Children at Buckner Orphan’s Home, Dallas, Texas, 1879-1909

*T. Laine Scales*

*The Buckner Orphan’s Home, established in 1879 in Dallas, Texas, provides an example of early church-related institutions serving children. In 1909, as the new social work profession emerged and the nation turned toward a modern foster care system, the Buckner Home experienced important changes that would divide its work from that of professional social workers. Using primary and archival sources, the author documents the early work of the Buckner Home, and calls on social workers to accept responsibility for telling the stories of church-related agencies and their contributions to social welfare.*

**On a winter day in 1908, a thirty seven year old mother,** Mrs. Beatrice Dixon, traveled with her four children from Letto, Texas to the Buckner Orphan’s Home in Dallas. She carried her 2-year-old son, little Jimmy, along with three daughters, 10-year-old Flora, 8-year-old Nellie, and six-year-old Grace. She would be traveling back to Letto without her family. She intended to leave her children in the care of the Buckner Home “on account of abandonment” of her 37-year-old husband, Thomas Dixon, a “railroad man” from Texas. Filling out the simple admission form, Beatrice reported that all of her children were in good health and of legitimate birth, that both parents were of good moral character, and that the family had a relationship with a Baptist church. Beatrice abdicated her parental rights by signing a fixed statement presented to her by the Buckner Home. She agreed to

...transfer to the Buckner Orphan’s Home all authority and control over (child) during (her) minority, agreeing not to interfere in any way whatever. This I do of my own accord and preference, feeling grateful to the Institution for accepting a trust so responsible” (Buckner Admissions Form, 1908; Buckner Registry, n.d. p. 321).

At a later time, perhaps when she had secured the financial means to care for one child, she returned for her “baby,” presumably Jimmy, her 2-year-old son. She signed another form, indicating that she was reclaiming possession of the child (Buckner Transfer Blank; n.d.). The Dixon children would be absorbed along with over 600 other children into the daily routine of the Buckner Home (Bullock, 1993).

Though many children, like the Dixon’s, had one or two living parents, some children, like the Warrens, came from families in which both parents were deceased. Just before Christmas in 1907, 17-year-old Mary Warren made her way from Allison, Oklahoma, bringing her sister and five brothers (ages 6 to 15) to the Buckner Home, six months after the death of their mother. The children’s mother had died at age 42 of “inflammation of the bowel.” Mrs. Warren had been a widow for five years, since her husband, a farmer from Mississippi, died of pneumonia. The father had sustained no church relations, but was reported to have good moral character. Mrs. Warren and all but the youngest children were reported to be affiliated with the Baptist church. Her dying request was that the younger children be left in the care of their eldest sister,

Mary. This was an awesome responsibility for a young girl.

Mary's five younger brothers were admitted to the Buckner Home, but her 15-year-old sister, Suzie, was not admitted due to a physical disability. Presumably, Reverend R. C. Buckner would help Suzie find an institution considered more suitable for "incurables and permanent cripples." Five months later, perhaps after attempting to make a living on her own, Mary traveled back to the Buckner Home to gain admission for herself, writing on her application form, "I beg a home." Her request was approved and she joined her brothers as a resident (Buckner Admission Form, 1908).

The Dixon children, the Warren children, and many other orphans and "half-orphans" came to the Buckner Orphan's Home during a time when orphanages were seen as the solution for helping poor children (Smith, E. P. (1995). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, parents who were deceased or in poverty often left a child in the care of an institution, which was operated from private and charitable funds donated by church members, primarily Baptists (Bullock, 1993). However, the turn of the twentieth century and the rise of professional social work brought a change in philosophies and practices of child care, favoring private homes, rather than institutions as the proper setting to raise a child in poverty.

These two important changes, the professionalization of social work and the turn toward what would become our modern-day foster care system, led social workers to dismiss and even attempt to dismantle the important work of religiously-motivated workers providing care for homeless and orphaned children. The story of the Buckner Orphan's Home illustrates how institutions might have become a casualty of social work's professionalization. However, Buckner stayed true to its mission while making important adjustments and grew to be one of the largest and most well-respected orphanages of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The enormous contribution of the Buckner agency continues into the 21st century as the agency itself responds to our society's recognition of what we now call "faith based agencies." The Buckner agency of today hires professional social workers in key positions as the religiously motivated volunteer of yesterday has more opportunities to become the well-educated and licensed social worker of today. Christian social workers must keep these stories alive as we battle the tendency within the social work profession to ignore or demean the important work of church-related agencies like the Buckner Home.

### **For the Comfort and Education of Orphan Children**

Robert Cooke Buckner, founder of the orphanage, was born in 1833 in Tennessee and moved as a young boy with his family to Kentucky. There he became a Baptist preacher and married Vienna Long. In 1859, after a serious illness he moved to the dry, healthy climate of Northeast Texas. Over the next two decades, Buckner established himself in Paris, Texas as a well-known pastor, leader in the Southern Baptist denomination, and owner and editor of *The Texas Baptist*, a denominational newspaper circulated to about 4,000 subscribers in the state. During these years Buckner, Vienna, and their children moved to Dallas, which provided a more practical setting for publishing and mailing his newspapers (Bullock, 1993, pp. 32-9).

In 1876, shortly after moving to Dallas, Buckner began articulating in *The Texas Baptist* his ideas for a plan to establish an orphanage. He hoped to form a convention of Baptist deacons from around the state to oversee and support financially the enterprise. In the October 26 issue of 1876, he wrote: "What should the Baptists of Texas do for the comfort and education of orphan children? Let us have an orphan's asylum" (Buckner, cited in Bullock, 1993, p. 41). The Deacons Convention was organized July 18, 1877 and selected fifteen representatives from across Texas to serve as an Executive Board. R. C. Buckner was appointed

General Superintendent and was charged with raising funds, promoting the cause, and managing correspondence. Two years later, on April 9, 1879, the first charter was filed in the Department of State in Austin.

The Executive Board had named the institution “Buckner Orphans’ Home” and appointed Buckner as the General Manager. The home was to receive “any and all dependent white orphan children without regard to section or sectarian bounds.” The bylaws also permitted that in some instances, “half-orphans”, or children with one parent living might also be accepted (Buckner Orphan’s Home, 1879).

### **Humble Beginnings**

Buckner took the money that had been raised, adding his own large contribution, and rented a temporary home in Dallas for the children until a more permanent home in the country could be secured. The Buckner Home opened December 2, 1879 in a three-room cottage on two acres of land. It housed three children, John and Alice Cruse from McKinney and John Jones from Ellis County. Deacon L. H. Tilman and his wife served as the first superintendent and matron (Bullock, 1993; Cranfill & Walker, 1915). By September 1880, Buckner had secured an offer from J. T. Pinson for forty-four acres eight miles east of Dallas. Though the land was worth \$1,216, Pinson sold it to Buckner for \$500 cash, donating the remainder.

A two-story dormitory was completed and in April of 1881, eight children, along with a new superintendent and matron, T. J. and Sara Reese, moved into the new home (Deacons Convention Minutes, 1881). Children attended school for a half-day at the orphanage and were assigned chores on the farm and in the home for the remainder of the day. On Sundays, all children were required to attend church services in which Buckner presided as pastor (Bullock, 1993). Through the daily activities at school, church and work, the Buckner Home ensured that children were developing in “mind, morals, and industry” (Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 260).

By 1883, the Buckner Home was caring for fifty children. Baptists continued to send support, often in the form of food and dry goods such as sugar, coffee, tea, and dried fruits. Clothing and shoes were also donated, as well as cash (Cranfill & Walker, 1915). The gifts of Baptists allowed for the provision of a new school-and-chapel building, completed in June of 1883 (Bullock, 1993). The completion of such a building reflected Buckner’s priorities of intellectual, moral, and religious instruction for children. Such instruction was considered imperative by Southern Baptist supporters. Buckner noted the children’s progress in his latest newspaper, *The Good Samaritan*, a monthly publication addressing social issues with the motto “Good Will, Good Words, Good Works.” When enough money was raised to build it, the new school-and-chapel building occupied the center of the campus, reminding children, staff, and visitors of the central place of formal schooling and religious training for orphaned children (Bullock, 1993).

### **The Buckner Orphan’s Home School**

In 1883, when the new school and chapel building opened, *The Good Samaritan* reported that “for the first time [the children] are now under a teacher, in regular school.” Buckner urged supporters to send more contributions, as earnings from the children’s farm labor decreased, while expenditures for school clothing and books increased. Children from the near-by community of Reinhardt were also invited to attend the Buckner school, a precious gift in the days before every community had a state-supported school (Bullock, 1993). Buckner placed a great deal of importance on education, noting:

No public school or charitable institution should be satisfied with less than the very best of teachers: and

certainly, where an individual or society is entrusted with the education of those who have no parents to look after their welfare, the greatest of care should be exercised to put them under the most skillful and approved teachers, not only competent to teach, but kind and faithful to control (Buckner, 1883, p. 6).

The teacher in charge in 1884 was described by a visitor to the Buckner Home as “a sweet Christian young lady.” Miss Carrie Smith, a reporter from Dallas, had high praise for her: A faithful and competent teacher has clearly proved herself, judging from the practical demonstrations of her pupils. She seems to know how to make the children love and obey her, at the same time take an interest in their books (V.C.H., 1884, p. 68).

The teacher lived in the institution as a member of the Buckner Home family. She found opportunities for teaching the children outside of the classroom. She described to readers of *The Good Samaritan* the musical interests of a young boy, Oscar.

Music has a most wonderful effect on him... He will sit around the house all day until he hears the organ... often, when I sit down to the instrument and begin running my fingers over the keys, he is instantly by my side, moving to and fro with the sound of the music, drinking it all in as if he were perfectly charmed (Sister Carrie, 1884, p. 28).

The Buckner Home relied on donations from interested Baptists to provide school supplies and advertised for what was needed in *The Buckner Orphan's Home Magazine*, printed by the children as part of their vocational training. The magazine listed specific items for donors to send such as tablets, slates, pencils, pens, wall maps, charts and other school furnishings (*Magazine*, 1896). Soon a complete library was established with newspapers and other periodicals donated by publishers (Bullock, 1993).

As the Buckner Home grew, the school made slow improvements. By 1908, a larger school and chapel building had been built “of reinforced monolithic concrete and brick.” to accommodate the 550 children in school and kindergarten (Buckner Orphan's Home, *Annual Report*, 1888-1918). The school only offered elementary grades at this time and utilized six classrooms, with half the students meeting four hours in the morning, and the other half meeting in the afternoon session. Children did chores or played, according to their age and abilities, when they were not in school (*Annual Report*, 1906-7).

The school employed a principal and “five excellent graduated teachers” to serve in its nine-month program. The salaries and other school expenses were paid for by the State of Texas and run from the public free school fund (*Annual Report*, 1908-09, 1909-10). Buckner Home paid the salary of the kindergarten teacher, and provided a furnished teachers' cottage for the state employees. In addition to the traditional “three R's,” the curriculum was designed to teach skills such as stenography, typewriting, and music, both vocal and instrumental. Since these courses fell outside of the standard curriculum paid for by the State, Buckner Home paid the teacher's salaries for these courses and instruments were donated (Bullock, 1991).

## **Religious Education**

For R. C. Buckner, the clearest path to building a moral character was through Christian teachings. He often emphasized that the orphanage was open to children from all religions or no religion and he stated that the Buckner Home never forced children to make religious commitments. However, religious teachings were woven into the fabric of very day living, and attendance in Sunday School and church was an expected part of the Buckner Home routine (Bullock, 1993).

Three short years after opening, The Home established its own church, with Buckner as its pastor. In its earliest years, the Home transported the children in wagons, three hours round trip, to attend the Live Oak Baptist Church. On July 15, 1883, the Home Baptist Church was organized, allowing for stability and convenience of providing formal religious education at the Buckner Home site. On opening day, the church baptized five persons, presumably children (Bullock, 1993). Like all Southern Baptist churches, the Home Church became part of a local association of churches, the Elm Fork Association. Operating in a similar manner to other small churches of the region, preaching services were held once each month on Saturday and Sunday, with prayer meeting and Sunday school meeting weekly. By 1903, preaching services were held each Sunday (Bullock, 1993; Cranfill & Walker, 1915).

From the earliest days of the Buckner Home, visitors commented upon the strong religious flavor of the daily routine. No child ate a meal without first thanking the Lord for the food. Each morning, family worship “was conducted in a serious and impressive manner by Papa Reese...every effort is made to instruct the children in the fear of the Lord,” reported a visitor (C.P.S., 1884, p. 43). Occasionally, Baptist leaders would visit the Buckner Home and provide additional sermons or religious teachings. They would also assure Southern Baptist donors that the children were being provided with a proper religious education. This description of the visit in 1885 by V. G. Cunningham, a traveling Sunday school worker, reveals the flavor of such lessons:

These dear children have the benefit of Sunday school training, and of what—would it to God it were otherwise—many children with fathers and mothers are not blessed, that is, family worship. It did my soul good to tell the precious lambs about the tender Shepherd, and in solemn prayer to commend them to Him who hath said: “When my father and mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up.” Whoever hears their childish voices sing, “I have a father—a mother—in the promised land,” will have abundant use for his handkerchief (*The Texas Baptist*, 1885, p. 64).

Although a thorough religious training was provided, Buckner adamantly declared that the children were not coerced to make religious confessions: “No constraint, rewards, penalties, favoritism, or improper means of any kind are resorted to influence their faith or practice in religious matters” (*Annual Report*, 1888, p. 4). Buckner was aware of the vulnerability of children to the pressures of some revivalists and traveling evangelists who used emotional appeals to win converts. He was opposed to such practices and did not allow protracted revivals in the home. Nevertheless, the number of Home Church memberships continued to grow.

In the Southern Baptist denomination, church membership was attained by making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and the commitment was symbolized by baptism. During his

Reunion Sermon of 1903, Buckner described how the daily life of the Buckner Home led to many baptisms:

The other day more than 40 of these [children] were baptized, within three weeks more than 60. They came to me at different times and places and told of their conversion. No revival meeting, no evangelist, nothing but songs, Sunday school and a sermon each Sunday morning. No death bed stories, no appeal to sympathy, only heart repentance for sin, simple faith in Christ and a desire to walk in the truth (Buckner as cited in Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 308).

While Buckner insisted that coercion was never used in religious matters, it is clear that making a confession of faith leading to baptism was the norm for children in his institution. On August 30, 1914, he baptized 87 children within 35 minutes (Cranfill and Walker, 1915).

In 1908 a new chapel and school building was built to accommodate the growing church. In that year the Home cared for more than 650 orphans, almost 300 of whom were Buckner Home Church members. The Sunday School averaged 380 for the year. In 1910 the Sunday School attendance averaged 500 with a total church membership of 412 (Bullock, 1991, p. 75).

Sunday was a busy day for Reverend Buckner and for the children. After an early breakfast, they all assembled in the chapel for a Family Talk, in which “orderly conduct of the past week is mentioned and commended” by Reverend Buckner. Sunday School was taught in agegraded classes, followed by preaching services with all assembled. After lunch, Bible study was taught in smaller groups, followed by an evening service for all, which included a sermon and sometimes, baptism of many children (Cranfill & Walker, 1915).

### **Lessons in Morality**

In addition to formal religious training on Sundays, lessons of morality were woven into the everyday life of children at the Buckner Home. At meal times, children might have been scolded for wrongdoing, or they might have been given a little rhyme about right living. Buckner biographer Karen Bullock (1991) notes his “manner with the children was a mixture of solemnity and laughter” (p. 124). As the children described: “Father Buckner makes talks from the music stand, sometimes he makes some of us feel bad because we are bad. Sometimes he makes us feel glad. Sometimes he makes funny rhymes just to tickle us” (Buckner Orphan’s Home, 1907, p. 11).

Buckner often used stories of disobedient children to provide moral instruction. On one occasion he instructed his audience:

I remember one of our dear boys, sitting years ago on the gravel walk near the well, with dejected look and fallen countenance. He had no words at command. He had gone into the path of disobedience to his matron, and tried to cover it with a falsehood. But I approached him kindly, persuaded him that truth was better than falsehood and he soon told me all, looking me in the eye and feeling better and stronger. It was his last falsehood so far as I have learned. He is now a man, a Christian man, and has a Christian wife.... he is successful in business...has selfrespect and self confidence, and does not think of failure (Buckner as quoted in Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 303).

One little girl demonstrated that she was learning lessons of morality when she wrote the following report of Father Buckner's visit to the children at the Baptist Orphanage at Thomasville, North Carolina:

He told us that some of his boys and girls were not always good, and had to be punished. He said one little boy was sent to look for a cow and climbed up a tree. Then he asked the boys if they would go cow-hunting up a tree. And we had a laugh. But there was a sad ending to his story. The little fellow lost his hold and fell to the ground, breaking both his arms, which was caused by disobedience (Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 159).

### **Rules and Regulations**

Reverend Buckner had strict rules for teenagers, particularly concerning courtship. Orphans dated one another and sometimes married. Young men and women also dated teenagers from the nearby community of Reinhardt, or from Dallas, but young people had to follow strict decorum required by Father Buckner. He explained to supporters that young women were more properly supervised in the orphanage than if they were living with a private family: "Custom in many private families where orphans are placed, permits them to go buggy-riding or walking in single couples; from this institution never! Nor is it permitted by other institutions that are properly conducted." Instead, young women received gentleman callers in the parlors of the institution, just like in a middle class home (*Annual Report*, 1907-08, pp. 23-4).

Father Buckner assumed the role of vigilant patriarch for the young women at the Home. In 1912 he wrote this curt letter to a potential suitor from Dallas:

Dear Sir,  
Referring to your proposition to my ward, Miss XX, to call on her tomorrow, also to bring your "pal" with a desire that another of my young lady wards be about so he can meet her, I beg to request that the visit be not made, either of yourself or your "pal". I have just talked with both the girls and have read your last two letters. If you should desire to cultivate the acquaintance of the young lady or any of the young ladies in B. O. Home, it is requisite that with proper recommendations you first seek my acquaintance and permission. (Buckner, R. C. to E. A. Sellars, July 1912).

Buckner expected that children would behave in a manner considered appropriate and that they would create among themselves a norm of obedience. One young boy who ran away requested to come back to the Home. He was asked to acknowledge in writing his wrongdoing and then to promise "to be a truthful, obedient, and honest boy, [and] to tell on any boy in the Home who may not be honest and truthful." (Buckner, R. C., to Master Paul Reed, June 26, 1899).

As was common in those days, corporal punishment was sometimes used to discipline children, though Buckner insisted it was used sparingly, "only in extreme cases, and then only in a mild and judicious way" (Buckner, 1886). In the following letter he provides moral instruction

to a boy who ran away because he had been whipped by a staff member. The child asked to re-enter the Buckner Home “because I knew I did wrong and wanted to go to school and do my duty.” In his response to the boy, Buckner justifies the whipping, but also shows his openness to receive any reports of abuse from the children.

I well know that many boys need the rod sometimes, and at the Home it is often spared when it should be used. In that fit of anger you did what in cooler moments you regret. You ought always to cool off before doing such a serious thing. I forgive the past and restore to you the privileges and advantages of the Home. If you should ever believe you are seriously mistreated come to me about it and tell the whole truth whether it is hard on yourself or any body else. The past is forgiven... (Buckner, R. C. to “Eugene,” Archives, BBB, 1902).

### **Buckner’s View of Character Education**

Buckner often spoke of his institution’s emphasis on moral and religious development: “It is a character builder, and husbands the material... Orphan children are as good and worthy as anybody’s children. They are not responsible for their sad condition” (*Annual Report*, 1909-10, n.p.). Buckner’s emphasis on the teaching of good character reveals his philosophy of human development. He viewed children as innocent victims of their parents and of society. “What is prettier than a child?”, he asked those listening to him preach in 1903, “What more innocent? Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Buckner, 1903 as quoted in Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 307).

Like most evangelicals of his day, Buckner believed that philanthropic motivations to help others were not sufficient; rather Christian soul-winning was the goal. He wrote in the *Good Samaritan*: “The motives of the philanthropist are good and commendable, as he endeavors to reclaim any who are in any of the whirlpools [of sin such as alcohol, gambling, brothels, crime] or drifting in any way. But the motives of the Christian are equally so, and then they reach further, desiring poor, drifting souls to be saved in Christ...” (Buckner, 1884 as cited in Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 298).

Buckner’s firm belief that good or bad character was learned led him to lobby for reformatories for young boys in trouble. He believed the reformatory could save the young boy and urged Dallas leaders to create a system “for proper restraint and training for these crooked young sprouts, for after awhile it would be impossible to straighten them out” (*Reformatory for boys*, 1903). Presumably, Buckner also wanted to insure that delinquent boys would not be sent to the Buckner Home to live with the orphans and teach the Buckner boys behaviors considered immoral.

Buckner believed that good or bad character could be taught, and he proudly took credit for the moral training of the children. According to Buckner, some of the children arrived at the Home having formed undesirable characters through improper learning. “Some have come who had not heard the name of God except as used in profanity. They had seen the inside of the saloon and almost every or any kind of place but the inside of school and church buildings (*Annual Report*, 1912-13, p. 11). Buckner described these children as “ignorant, untidy, immoral, and with other evidences of having been under the influences of vicious, degrading environments,” but under the Buckner Home influence, they quickly “take on better ways, the use of better language and cherish higher ideals” (*Annual Report*, 1915-16, p. 12).



Former wards of the Buckner Home were held up as examples of good character in hopes that children would be inspired to emulate them. In the following letter that Buckner received from an employer, the feminine qualities of a former ward are described, and Buckner is given the credit for cultivating her good character. He published the letter under the heading “A Sample Training”:

Yes, Dr. Buckner, Miss Wagon is a jewel, a most charming young lady, kind, industrious, and full of sunshine. Few people will ever meet her without admiring her goodness of nature and disposition. She surely reflects great credit upon your noble work in staging the habits and disposition of a Godly and queenly type (*Annual Report*, 1918, pp. 8-9).

Children were taught patriotism and devotion to the United States and many young men joined the military once they left the home. *The Annual Report* noted, “They love the flag of their country and the Banner of the Cross. Hear them sing “my Country ‘Tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty” and your patriotic hearts would swell with pride...” (1912-13, p. 3).

In the same way that children learned “good” character, they could also learn “bad” character, in Buckner’s view. A child could be trained for immorality so that he or she may never be able to walk the proper moral path (Cranfill & Walker, 1915). Relatives and others who visited the Home were expected to set an example for the children. They were instructed not to use tobacco in any form in the presence of children and not to indulge in “ardent spirits” nor profane language. Violators would be asked to vacate the premises (*Buckner Orphan’s Home Magazine*, Oct. 1896).

### **Labor and Industrial Training**

R. C. Buckner expected children to work in the Home and learn “habits of industry.” The daily routine included chores supervised by matrons or workmen:

4:00am kitchen girls rise to prepare breakfast  
5:00am rising bell  
5:30am first bell, prepare dining room tables  
6:00am breakfast; “at the ringing of this last bell the boys and girls form into lines in their respective corridors, the smallest in the lead, and march in single file to organ music, and fill nine tables.”  
7:00am various household chores  
8:30am half to school, half to chores  
11:30am prepare for dinner  
12 noon Dinner  
1:30pm second half day of school  
4:30pm school is dismissed  
5:30pm prepare for supper  
6:00pm supper  
7:00pm some are engaged in study, some promenading the walks, others talking or singing or swinging.  
9:00pm bedtime (Cranfill & Walker, 1915, p. 181)

The daily example was reinforced by lessons and sermons emphasizing the value of work. Buckner often repeated this reminder: “Without work it is impossible to please God” (*Annual Report*, 1910-11, p. 19).

One of Buckner's sermonettes, printed in the *Baptist Standard* and perhaps preached to the children, demonstrates the value of work. Buckner quoted from Ecclesiastes: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Buckner went on to emphasize the importance of all tasks "Whatsoever, whether it be great or small, hard or easy, pleasant or disagreeable" (Cranfill & Walker, 1915, pp. 287).

Lessons about the value of work were reinforced by experiences. Children at the Buckner Home performed daily chores in order to learn the value of hard work for all. In addition, the children's labor functioned to support the Home financially. In keeping with an ethic that disparages "a free hand out," the children of the Buckner Home were not receiving charity but were, through their labor, contributing something for the care they received (Bullock, 1993). Each child attended school for a half-day and for the rest of the day all children were busy in industry. Assigned chores reflected popular notions of gendered division of labor. The boys worked in farming: plowing, planting, harvesting, and dairy operations. Girls stayed busy with the cooking, sewing, laundry and ironing. On Sundays, there was no laboring, and all children were required to attend church services (Bullock, 1993).

Though not often engaged in manual labor himself, Buckner certainly was industrious. Buckner's reputation for being a hard worker was legendary, and it was said that he could do the work of six men (Bullock, 1991). Reporting on his writing and correspondence for 1907, he notes that in addition to writing many newspaper articles, sermons, and other addresses and traveling in connection with the Home, he wrote about forty letters a day, amounting to 14,600 for the year. This work was in addition to the management and oversight of the orphanage, as well as other charitable operations he managed, such as the Cottage Homes for the Aged, the Children's Hospital, the city Annex, and the farming operation (*Annual Report*, 1906-07, p. 20).

Through his publications, Buckner assured supporters that their money was not being used to support lazy children. When Mrs. K. E. Hewett visited the Home, she assured readers that Southern Baptist dollars were being well spent: "Now to the question I have been asked: Are these children supported in idleness? Let me say that industry is the life of the Home; the larger ones serving alternately in the house and in school" (Hewett, 1884, p. 42). However, Buckner also stated clearly that the children's labor was not enough to support the Buckner Home.

Some expenses were reduced, and the value of industry was taught, but no profits were realized. In the 1907 *Picturebook*, the young narrator notes: "Father Buckner says the shops do not really make money, but they help to make useful men out of what might be idle boys. But by handling the water and fans, lights and laundry they do save very much money as well as time" (p. 20).

In the earliest days of the Buckner Home, before a regulated ninemonth school year, children sometimes had opportunities to earn their own money by laboring for neighbors. A teacher at the Buckner Home reported in 1884:

The boys feel about three inches higher, on account of the new boots they bought with their "cotton money" i.e. what they made by picking cotton for some of the neighbors. It makes them quite proud to get some shiny dimes of their own.... (Sister Carrie, 1884, p. 28).

Buckner made it clear that the orphanage did not send children to families that would exploit their labor. He described a well-to-do family intending to exploit a boy, requiring him to do farm work "and do other things for a man who wants to send his own boy off to school, or

wants cheap labor that he can control....” (Buckner Orphan’s Home, 1906-07, p. 25). Buckner would not supply labor for such a family in the form of an orphan child. Nor would he send a girl to care for children and perform other housekeeping duties and “do such things as the own daughter “must not do” (Buckner Orphan’s Home, 1906-07, p. 25). Buckner did not mind children working, but he did mind them being exploited and particularly in the face of other children in the family who did not have to work. This fear of favoritism was perhaps the reason he established a policy of only giving children to adoption by couples that were childless (Buckner Orphan’s Home, 1906-07, p. 25). Buckner was aware that some adoptive parents were motivated to take children in to provide needed labor. In his publications, he warned prospective parents that his orphanage was “not a labor bureau.... It trains for independent citizenship in the best government on earth. It is meant that young men and women shall go out as farmers, teachers, mechanics, preachers and into the various industries and professions” (*Annual Report*, 1909-10, p. 22).

The Buckner Home was not considered transitional or temporary placement for orphan children; rather it was rare that children were adopted. Buckner said:

During thirty years of experience in orphan work, and close observation, I have formed, and been thoroughly confirmed in the opinion that at least nineteen of every twenty who seek to get possession of an orphan child, or children, are actuated by selfish motives; that not one in a hundred mean it simply for the good of the child... Those without children of their own seldom know how to treat a child; adopting or indenturing one from an orphanage, they are likely to spoil it by overindulgence, or to break its spirit by being too exacting and severe... Then they want to be rid of the child and it is left without home; and some such drift into shame and ruin.... (*Annual Report*, 1906-7, pp. 25-6).

### **Twentieth Century Changes**

Two important trends intersected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to bring changes to the Buckner Home. On the national scene, as the new profession of social work emerged, professionals with social work education and credentials would differentiate themselves from clergy or volunteers, at times devaluing the contributions of those who had served faithfully. At the same time, the nation’s child welfare advisors, led by social workers, expressed preference to place orphaned children in family homes, rather than in institutions like the Buckner Home.

#### **The Rise of Professional Social Work**

By the late nineteenth century, social workers began searching for a way to explain their own contributions and to gain respect from other professionals and the public. In the early twentieth century this became a preoccupation, especially after 1915 when the landmark speech of Abraham Flexner entitled “Is Social Work a Profession?” caused a flurry of activity to professionalize (Bledstein, 1976; Lubove, 1972). The rise of new schools of social work, beginning with the New York School of Philanthropy, provided credentials to create a sharp separation between educated professionals and the proto-social workers who had served faithfully in agencies. (Klein, 1968).

While professionalization brought important gains to social work,

some losses were sustained. For example, social work historian David Austin argued that social work's obsession with one speech, Flexner's speech in 1915, prevented social workers from creating their own criteria for becoming a profession. While attempting to fulfill Flexner's recommendation, based on his experience with medicine, rather than social work, the new profession became distracted from its own work (Austin, 1983).

Another loss to social work came when the new professionals embraced scientism and a more efficient and rational approach (Lubove, 1972; Kunzel (1988) argues that the move toward scientism was launched to gain prestige for the profession by identifying with the more "masculine" professions such as medicine. Whatever the mixture of motives, it is clear that by the twentieth century the new social work profession had launched on to the values of "efficiency, objectivity, and expertise. (Kunzel, p. 25).

While the Flexner speech and the trend toward scientism are often noted in social work histories an additional story that is seldom told, but is one of the most important for Christian social worker to understand recounts the devaluing of church-related volunteers, board members, and paid workers. Diana Garland describes this decline in her book, *Church Agencies: Caring for Children and Families in Crisis*:

Social workers, anxious to guard their claim to professional knowledge and skill, questioned the ability of laypeople to set policies. That required professional expertise. They hoarded information about their work and their clients, excluding board members from meaningful roles in what had been their institutions (1994 pp. 77-78).

Garland points out that the professionalization of social work certainly made services more effective and more efficient for some clients. But what was "lost in the shift," she argues, was the personal relationship between religiously motivated workers and their clients (Garland, 1994 pp. 77-78).

### **The Rise of Modern Foster Care**

In addition to the trend toward professionalization, the nation's decision to abandon institutional care as a viable option for dependent children shaped the future of the Buckner Home. On January 25, 1909, at the White House Conference on Dependent Children, a notable change in the methods of caring for dependent children would transform child welfare strategies for the rest of the twentieth century. Soon thereafter, Congress passed The Children's Bureau Bill to advance the emerging movement advocating the placement of orphaned children in families rather than in institutions (Lundberg, 1947). The Bill passed without the votes of the Texas senators. They had been persuaded by their familiarity with the advantages of the Buckner Home, as well as by the arguments of R. C. Buckner and other Texas supporters, to vote against the bill (Cranfill and Walker, 1915).

As the modern foster care system emerged, institutions like the Buckner Orphan's Home were dismissed by members of the emerging social work profession as outmoded, cold, and sterile. At the 1909 Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, called by Theodore Roosevelt, the consensus of child welfare workers, which included the new professional social workers, was expressed in these words: "Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Surely poverty alone should not disrupt the home." Leaders in child welfare proposed

that widows and women who had been deserted “should be given such aid as may be necessary to enable them to maintain suitable homes for rearing their children.... Children from unfit homes and children who have no homes, who must be cared for by charitable agencies, should, so far as practicable, be cared for in families” (Proceedings, 1909).

This shift in philosophy brought about important benefits for children. It created a foster care system, as well as supplemental income or “welfare” for poor mothers, first known as Mother’s Pensions in 1911 and, in 1935, known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children. These changes contributed to the professionalization of social workers in child welfare, a positive step indeed. However, the contributions of faith-based agencies like the Buckner Home were not recognized by the new profession of social work as the important contributors they were (Garland, 1994; Keith-Lucas, 1962).

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, national changes in the child welfare scene set in motion by the Children’s Bureau set the course for a new system of foster care and adoption. In addition, the emerging profession of social work claimed child welfare and “home finding” as its turf. This shift was symbolized when the social workers, preparing the list for the 1909 conference, omitted most of the leaders of church-related institutions. Buckner and other leaders of church-related institutions had for years attended the National Convention of Charities and Corrections along with Jane Addams, Mary Richmond, and others that today’s social workers claim as founders of the profession. However, when he did not receive an invitation to the table, Buckner and other leaders of institutions caring for children recognized what was about to happen (Cranfill and Walker, 1915).

#### **Forging ahead**

So what happened to institutions like the Buckner Home? In spite of the new bill, institutional care did not disappear immediately and, particularly church-related institutions would house children through the first half of the twentieth century (Garland 1994). However, the new system of foster care and adoption, growing alongside the emerging profession of social work, was firmly set in motion by the bill. It would be over 30 years before the number of children in orphanages began to decline nationally (Jones, 1989). By the 1930s, there were more foster homes than ever. However, due to the Great Depression, which displaced many children, both foster families and orphanages were needed to care for more children who were staying longer in care (Jones 1989).

The new Social Security Act of 1935 placed the care of foster children and poverty-stricken children living with their parents in the hands of governmental agencies. The government provided very little institutional care in orphanages, leaving that task to church agencies. According to Alan Keith-Lucas, social worker, Christian, and pioneer in training workers in church institutions, the divisions were made along the lines of church vs. government. Child welfare professionals supported or attacked a system of care, not based on its intrinsic strengths and limitations, but rather because they were pro-church or anti-church. (Keith-Lucas, 1962).

Although the Children’s Bureau Bill aimed to put professionally trained social workers in the new child welfare system, by the turn of the twenty-first century, state agencies employed fewer and fewer social workers on the front lines. Scarce resources and high turn-over led to the employment of case workers and child welfare workers without social work degrees or licensure. Church-related institutions like Buckner continued caring for children, but their purposes shifted over time to providing residential treatment for troubled children and facilitating adoption and foster care for non-residential children (Garland, 1994). By the end of the twentieth

century, critics of the modern foster care system called for a revival of orphanages, arguing that institutions would address some of the flaws of foster care including expense, abuses, and too few homes ready for placement (“Minnesota Brings,” 1998; “Social Workers Condemn,” 1994); While orphanages have not reappeared on the American scene, a new appreciation of faith-based social welfare emerged in the twenty-first century with the creation of the White House Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (now called the White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships) (Travers, 2009).

Today’s Buckner International, thriving in Dallas, maintains the vision of its founder: addressing the church’s mandate to care for our most vulnerable members of society—populations we used to call “orphans and widows.” Expanding beyond Texas, the Buckner agency continues to provide a wide array of programs and services for children, families and older adults, both in the US and abroad. (“Who We Are,” 2011). Some faith-based institutions, like Buckner, have increased their hiring of professional social workers. Determined to hire MSW-level graduates with strong Christian commitments, the Buckner agency of the 21st century is addressing the divide between church agencies and professional social workers. Buckner partners with undergraduate and graduate social work programs located in Christian universities, such as Baylor University in its home state of Texas, to hire the very best professionals who combine Christian faith with a sound social work professional training (“About Us,” 2011). Rather than being excluded, as R. C. Buckner was in 1909, today’s Buckner social workers disseminate their knowledge and experience by presenting at social work conferences such as National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter, and North American Association of Christians in Social Work.

#### **“Accepting a trust so responsible”—Reclaiming our stories**

The Buckner Home adopted, nurtured, and reared the infant child welfare system by raising money, discovering best practices, and saving children lost or abandoned after the Civil War. When the child welfare enterprise was adopted by the U. S. Government in 1909 for oversight and regulation, the now “adolescent” system operated by social workers showed contempt for its church-related roots, as teenagers often do. The 1909 White House meeting, as well as the 1935 Social Security Act, increased government roles. But without the early care and nurturing of institutions like the Buckner Orphan’s Home, the child welfare system as we know it today could not have survived its childhood years. As Mother Dixon felt gratitude in 1908 to the Buckner Home for “accepting a trust so responsible,” the profession of social work must also recognize and appreciate the important work of institutions like the Buckner Home who nurtured the fledgling child welfare system.

The stories of early child welfare agencies like the Buckner Orphan’s Home must be told, not only to Christian social workers, but to all social workers. Unfortunately, authors of social work text books often distill the complex and variegated story of our profession’s roots into a page or two of text for students. Social work authors sometimes report a distorted version of the profession’s entire history as resting on the shoulders of two venerated figures—Mary Richmond and Jane Addams—with no mention of the contributions of early church-related agencies like the Buckner Orphan’s Home (Scales & Kelly, 2011). If church-affiliated agencies are mentioned at all, they may be portrayed as over-zealous or incompetent meddlers operating poorly-run agencies.

Christian scholars must continue to study, record, and publish stories of the dedicated and competent faith-based agencies and their leaders who cared for vulnerable children. Moreover, we must report and celebrate the cooperative spirit of the past that brought Reverend Buckner

yearly to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections to work with and learn from other social welfare agencies. We must resist adopting our profession's tendency to emphasize divisions between professional and volunteer and social worker and clergy when recounting our profession's history. Christians in social work can lead the way by making an intentional effort to move forward in celebrating both our Christian and "secular" roots together. My hope is that the Buckner Home story has inspired you, readers exploring the history of social welfare, to seek out and publish stories of early social welfare services from your own faith traditions.

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# “To Give Christ to the Neighborhood”: A Corrective Look at the Settlement Movement and Early Christian Social Workers

*T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly*

*Two case studies of early settlement house (SH) work in Louisville and Chicago are described and analyzed in this historical article. Using primary historical documents, the authors offer new perspectives on the tension between Christian missionary work in American urban centers and the burgeoning field of supposedly “secular” social work in the late 19th century. This article shows that early American urban social work practice was begun in a context where many early practitioners didn’t separate their religious motivation from secular professional goals. Implications for social work education and practice are offered with an eye towards deepening the discussion between secular and Christian social work practitioners.*

**The history of Christianity and social work is long-standing**, dense, complicated, contested, and ever-evolving, all the way up to the present day. This article will certainly not settle all the myriad debates about the proper role of Christian belief in social work practice, nor will it attempt to comprehensively survey this nearly 130- year old history of Christianity and social work in the United States.

Rather, by focusing on the early history of social work in the United States in two cities (Louisville and Chicago) we hope to show just how long-standing and complicated the relationship between Christian missionary work and social work practice has been, from the outset of social work’s early attempts to identify its own professional identity. In addition to discussing the efforts to address the needs of the poor in Louisville and Chicago, these diverse approaches to Christian and secular social work practice show how hard it was in those early years to draw strong distinctions between Christian and secular social workers in what they did, why they did it, and how they explained their work to others. Indeed these distinctions, while not unimportant to Charity Organization Society and settlement house workers in the late 19th century to be sure, have only become more sharply drawn in the last century, as our profession writes its own history into a reality that may not resemble much of what actually was happening in those early years.

We start this article with two brief overviews of the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement and settlement house (SH) movement; then move into a discussion of two Christian settlement houses: a Protestant example in Louisville, Kentucky, and a Catholic example in Chicago. Finally, we consider what these histories (largely unwritten or marginalized in social work scholarship and textbooks) tell us about the role(s) of Christians in social work practice.

## **Overview of Early U.S. Social Welfare History 1870-1920**

Most introductory social work courses address some facet of our profession’s early history, usually by discussing two early movements that largely predate what we consider now to be “professional” social work practice: the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement and the settlement house (SH) movement. Our recent content analysis of seven commonly-used introductory social work textbooks found that without exception, these two movements were addressed separately and often used to draw distinctions between the two different ways that

early social workers were involved in helping the poor and changing society. Indicative of the need for the kind of corrective emphasis we undertake in this article, none of the textbooks characterized the Christian roots of social work history in its actual complexity, preferring to identify COS workers as religiously-motivated and SH workers as secular change agents. While the focus of this article will be on settlement houses, a brief overview of the two movements will provide an important context for our claim that the story of our development as a profession is more complex than what is typically reported.

### **The Charity Organization Movement**

The charity organization movement that emerged in the United States in the late nineteenth century was inspired by a similar movement in Great Britain, in reaction to a perceived proliferation of charities that practiced almsgiving without investigating the circumstances of recipients. The movement's followers sought changes in the way charities responded to need based on three key assumptions: that urban poverty was caused by the moral deficiencies of the poor, that poverty could only be eliminated by the correction of these deficiencies in individuals, and that various charity organizations would need to cooperate to bring about this change (Ginzberg, 1990).

The COS movement flourished in the United States. In fact, by the 1890s, over a hundred American cities had charity organization societies. Journals like *Lend-a-Hand* (Boston) and *Charities Review* (New York) were created to promote ideas and annual meetings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (one of the ancestors of today's National Association of Social Workers) provided opportunities for leaders to discuss common concerns (Boyer, 1978). Fearing misuse of resources, Charity Organization Societies typically did not give money to the poor; rather they coordinated various charitable resources and kept records of those who had received charity in order to prevent "duplicity and duplication" by "having the wealthy keep an eye on the poor" (Ginzberg, 1990, pp. 196-97).

Privileged women from the middle and upper classes (precursors of professional social workers) volunteered to establish relationships as well as investigate the circumstances of families in need. They employed the technique of "friendly visiting" which stemmed from their conviction that individuals in poverty could be uplifted through association with middle and upper class volunteers. Friendly visitors were primarily Protestant women and their emphasis on the moral uplift of individuals was reinforced in Protestant churches by regarding the value of work to the soul and a focus on individual rather than communal relationship to God (Ginzberg, 1990).

As the movement grew, an insufficient number of volunteers led COS agencies to employ "agents," trained staff members who were the predecessors of professional social workers. Leaders like Mary Richmond of the Boston COS and Edward T. Devine of the New York COS led the movement to train workers, which led to the professionalization of social work in the early twentieth century. In 1898, Devine established and directed the New York School of Philanthropy, the first formal training for workers, which eventually became Columbia School of Social Work. The case method, later used by the social work profession, is rooted in charity organization philosophies which were taught by Devine and his colleagues and focused on the individual, change through relationship, and investigation (Connaway & Gentry, 1988).

### **Charity Organizations and Christianity**

Many leaders in the COS movement were Christians and some were clergy. In spite of their commitment to Christianity, leaders cautioned against mixing evangelism with charity. Stephen Humphreys Gurteen, a clergyman and COS leader, warned workers in his *Handbook of*

*Charity Organization* (1882), not to use their position for “proselytism or spiritual instruction.” Edward T. Devine, leader of the New York City Charity Organization Society was willing to include church-related organizations in charity work although he insisted that “friendly visiting should be done strictly for the sake of the family rather than as a means of winning converts, however desirable that also may be” (Devine, 1901, p. 99).

### **The Settlement House Movement**

Social work introductory textbooks often oversimplify descriptions of COS and SH movements as completely separate and opposing movements. In reality, Christian workers were involved in both the COS and SH movements, often at the same time, and leaders were not as opposed to one another’s philosophies as is often described in social work textbooks. In fact, some leaders, like Devine, carried out both COS and SH activities. While supporters of the charity organization movement emphasized changing individuals, the settlement movement stressed societal reform and attempted to help those in need by changing institutions. Like the COS movement, the SH movement spread to the United States from England in the late 1800s in the midst of immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. Leaders of the movement like Stanton Coit, Robert Woods, and Jane Addams created settlements after visits to London’s first and most important settlement, Toynbee Hall, located in East London. Toynbee and some of the first American settlements relied on collaboration with local universities. Students lived among the poor while professors visited to offer lectures and stimulating discussions.

Although the movement in England was largely masculine, settlement leadership in the United States included both men and women. In 1889, a group of women, many of them graduates of Smith College, founded the College Settlement Association in New York City. In that same year, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr opened Hull House in a poverty-stricken area of Chicago.

Like charity organizations, settlement houses were established in urban areas, and particularly immigrant neighborhoods. The primary purpose of a settlement was to establish communication and relationships between the well-to-do and the working class. At the forefront of the SH philosophy was a democratic ideal or, as Jane Addams expressed it, settlements were based “on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal” (Davis, 1984, p. 19). Settlements focused their energies not exclusively on reforming individuals but on addressing urban problems. Residents researched economic and social conditions that informed social action to improve the neighborhood. In fact, settlements carried out the first systematic attempts to study immigrant communities, using their insights to initiate reforms in the area of child labor, sanitation, and women’s working conditions. Education and recreation were important activities of the settlement, including college extension courses, English language classes, vocational training, demonstrations of domestic skills, kindergartens, and playgrounds, all designed to improve the lives of neighbors (Davis, 1984).

### **Settlements vs. Missions in the early 20th Century: How Different Were They, Really?**

One of the first notions imparted in most social work introductory courses is that the COS movement focused on changing individuals (and maybe saving their souls too) and refused to engage with the larger macro-forces in society that might have made these individuals poor in the first place. While some of the COS literature bears this out, there is often a leap to assuming that all religiously-motivated missionbased work with the poor at this time was rooted in this view of the poor’s problems. Likewise, SH workers are identified so strongly with the secular focus of Addams and Starr at Hull House, that it becomes hard to believe that many SH workers were themselves motivated by a desire to serve the poor based on a religious calling

(Davis, 1984). This dichotomy, while helpful in identifying macro- and micro-practice distinctions that persist to this day (Specht & Courtney, 1993; Pryce, Kelly, Reiland and Wilk, 2010), is ultimately too limiting in characterizing what was happening in social work, Christianity, and urban America at this time in our history.

If we take, for example, one city, New York City, and examine the landscape of settlements around the first decade of the twentieth century, we see the religious influence on SH at its earliest point in the U. S. There were approximately 82 settlement houses in New York, with several maintaining a religious focus. For example, East Side House was headed by Clarence Gordon, who wrote *The Relation of the Church to the Settlement*. He argued, “Humanitarians, socialists, philanthropists, may do settlement work and do it well.... but only on the foundation of Christ... and His example, and grace to inspire and direct, can the settlement realize its highest possibilities. (Gordon quoted in Davis, *Spearheads for Reform* p 14).

In order to exemplify how settlement houses may embody Christian values, we now offer short case sketches of two settlements to illuminate the complex relationship between Christians in social work and SHs at this formative time in our profession’s history. We will describe two important sites of social work innovation—Louisville, Kentucky, a river city with large immigrant populations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish immigrants, and Chicago, Illinois, home to a largely Catholic immigrant neighborhood.

### **Louisville, Kentucky: the Baptist Training School Settlement**

By the early twentieth century, Louisville was home to several settlement houses, including Neighborhood House, established in 1896, and the Baptist Settlement House. The Baptist house, later named Good Will Center, was opened in 1912 and will be the focus of our case study (Scales, 2000). It was established by a school opened in 1907 for Southern Baptist women studying social work and missions: The Woman’s Missionary Training School for Christian Workers. The school’s purpose was to train Baptist women as missionaries to serve overseas or in the United States, as well as social workers and Sunday School workers. Students studied missionary methods, social work, fine arts, and domestic sciences, while also completing theological studies at the all-male Southern Baptist Theological Seminary a few blocks away (Scales, 2000). In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the school would narrow its focus to social work and in 1984 emerge as the Carver School of Church Social Work, the first school of social work located in a seminary to be accredited by Council on Social Work Education.

The school survived 12 years before being closed in 1997 in the midst of conflicts among Southern Baptists. (Garland, 1999). From the school’s beginning, the first principal, Maude McLure, had a vision for reaching out to Louisville’s immigrant and poor populations. In 1912, she set aside a summer to study in New York City with the famous Edward Devine in the New York School of Philanthropy (now the School of Social Work at Columbia University) and to live in a New York settlement house. Maude McLure brought back to Louisville a basic understanding of the settlement movement and ideas about activities and services that such an establishment might provide.

The settlement house she established in Louisville combined the typical methods of a settlement house, but did not emphasize the call for societal reform that undergirded many settlements. Instead, it became a site for students to practice a variety of missionary methods, including evangelism so important to Southern Baptist practices. The students and faculty of the Woman’s Missionary Union Training School (WMUTS) worked to evangelize the neighborhood and, like Hull House and other settlements, to socialize Louisville immigrants into American

life. Undergirded by a Protestant ethic emphasizing hard work, and a Southern Baptist emphasis on salvation of the individual, women of Louisville's Training School worked to change society, but also aimed to reform the individual. The phrase used by WMUTS faculty to describe their program of social welfare was "personal service," a term reflecting the focus on individual persons.

The Personal Service program preceded professional social work, and served as the Baptist Woman's Missionary Union's (WMU) response to social need. The program was launched by WMU in 1909, just three years before the Baptist Settlement was established in Louisville and called on women to invest in "the Christian up-building of their own communities, acknowledging a spiritual duty to the poor, neglected, and outcast of their own neighborhood" (Allen, 1987, p. 215). Personal Service included an evangelistic dimension and had "the gospel as its motive and conversion as its aim" (Allen, 1987, p. 216).

The Louisville women joined others in the settlement movement to "rebuild the diseased social climate" but, in contrast to Jane Addams and others, they focused on reforming individuals while drawing on settlement house methods. WMU women were warned against placing "the ministry to the body before or apart from the ministry to the soul" (Allen, 1987, p. 215). In these ways, they viewed the neighbors as whole persons with spiritual as well as physical and social needs. The emphasis of WMU on dual purposes of conversion of the individual and societal uplift was in line with the thinking of most Southern Baptists of the early twentieth century. However, a few Southern Baptists embraced the Social Gospel movement, clearly operating in the activities in and around Hull House in Chicago. The Social Gospel movement promoted the general improvement of society through church action. The minority of Southern Baptist leaders who believed that societal reform goals were proper religious concerns envisioned social improvement as a method of advancing the kingdom of God on earth (Sumners, 1975).

These leaders, both men and women, became involved in social reform groups such as the Southern Sociological Congress. Created in 1912, the Southern Sociological Congress brought together Southern leaders in education, social work, religion, and government. Its social program called for prison reform, the abolition of child labor, compulsory education, and solving of the race problem. In the 1913 Congress meeting, Walter Rauschenbusch, the best-known theologian of the Social Gospel movement, and a Baptist, urged Southern leaders to involve churches in reform efforts. A few Southern Baptist women leaders, including Maude McLure, founder of the Baptist Settlement in Louisville, attended congress meetings and may have been influenced by the drive to balance secular social reform efforts with decidedly evangelical aims (Allen, 1987). As we will see, this particular Southern Baptist theological stance contrasted with the Catholic theology of Madonna House in Chicago.

Although WMU did not embrace the aims of progressive social reform, leaders used the methods developed by reformers, social scientists, and settlement house workers in striving for evangelistic goals. Agencies in which WMUTS students did field work were typically missionary in purpose. Organizations such as the Hope Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army provided students with experience in personal evangelism to people in poverty. While local agencies provided some opportunities for field work, Training School faculty and the school's board of managers wanted the school to have an agency of its own. Therefore, after her summer of study in New York, McLure created the Baptist Training School Settlement in 1912. Its purpose was twofold: to provide service to the community through the settlement house, while training students in missionary and social work methods (McLure, 1913). It is interesting to

note that the Training School chose the term settlement to describe the new enterprise, thus aligning itself with the SH movement. However, the evangelical purposes of the new venture also echoed the purposes of the charity organization movement—reform of the individual.

For these reasons, we chose the Baptist Settlement to exemplify how problematic the dichotomized descriptions of the SH and CO movements in current social work textbooks can be. These narrow descriptions deny the reality of organizations like the Baptist Settlement that combined the two philosophies of SH and COS along with a dose of their own theological understandings. The Baptist Settlement emerged as a hybrid, using the methods of the settlement movement to reach objectives that were commonly held by charity organization supporters. In 1913 McClure described the aims of the Baptist Settlement:

1. To reach the little children that their tiny feet may be started in the upward path.
2. To inspire the older boys and girls with ideals that shall help them to improve their environment and shall give them strength against the awful temptations that sweep over them.
3. To interest the young people in sane and wholesome pleasures that their energies may be rightly directed
4. To help the women to be better home makers, more careful wives and mothers, better Christians
5. To give Christ to the neighborhood.

To attain such ends, the settlement house, even without resident workers, remained open every day of the week and several nights. McClure (1913, p. 2) wrote that the settlement was “opened in the belief that, with Christianity as a foundation, a settlement may be a feeder to the church and a mighty force in the coming of the Kingdom.”

### **The Training School: A Settlement or a Mission**

Southern Baptist women were not the only workers to form a settlement with clear missionary aims. Other groups, including Methodist women’s missionary societies, were inspired by religious motives to create similar neighborhood centers, making it difficult to distinguish between a religious settlement and a mission. This is also clear from the activity going on at various religious settlements around the famed Hull House, including Madonna Center a few blocks away. Allen Davis notes that the majority of settlement workers in the nation were religious persons. In 1905, a poll of 339 settlement workers showed that eighty-eight percent were active church members and nearly all stated that religion had been a major influence on their lives (McClure, 1913). Therefore, the discussion about the relation of the settlement work to religion was kept alive in the settlement literature. (Davis, 1984). In the early 1920s, Mary Simkovitch argued from the Christian perspective that a settlement cannot be a mission because its purpose is not to pass on a particular conviction to others, as missions do, but to work out its own common conviction: a faith in democracy (Simkovitch, 1950). In a discussion entitled “Problems of Religion,” Arthur Holden (1922) advised that settlements did not need to talk about religion or attempt to teach it. He argued that by simply living a life in service to others, the settlement worker embodied Christian principles.

Graham Taylor (1950), Congregationalist minister and founder of a Chicago settlement, noted that while religious individuals may be involved in settlements, the church and the settlement have two very different purposes. Taylor believed that a church must press the tenets

of its faith, and if it does not, it ceases to be a church of that faith. A settlement, on the other hand, may not embrace any cult or creed lest it forfeit its place as being a common ground for all. But what about a settlement that attempted to be both a spiritual home and a source of social and political support? Did these settlements “count” as actual settlement houses in this new era of secular social settlement house activity, or were they somehow assigned a different and possibly lower status? It’s clear from the historical record that nearly 120 years later, social work history has emphasized the secular quality of SH activism over any spiritual and religious activity and has perhaps set up an over-determined dichotomy between a SH like Hull House and the religious missionary work going on in Louisville and Chicago. Embedded in Taylor’s idea that settlements should be “common ground for all” is an assumption that this is the only way to effectively reach and serve the disadvantaged. While it is certainly arguable that religious organizations could proselytize or even coerce people while providing social services and support, it is unclear that this was going on in Louisville or Chicago in our case examples. Rather, it appears that in both cities the religious social workers had assumed an ethical commitment to their clients that resembled in many ways the efforts being adopted by Addams and her colleagues, to be sure emphasizing spiritual uplift but also civic engagement and social progress (Davis, 1984; Dobschuetz, 2004).

Still, some important differences in theology and behavior can be noted in looking at the Madonna Center in Chicago. In contrast to the work going on in Louisville and other SH related to Protestant denominations, Catholic SH workers in Chicago perceived the population they served as fellow believers who simply needed the same Catholic sacraments and services that they were already enjoying in their parish community. This theological/service distinction was crucial in understanding the diverse SH activity going on in the area around Hull House. It is also helpful in explaining why Jane Addams’ team was able to coexist so peacefully with the Catholic SH workers around her: the heavily Catholic area was in no need of evangelizing to find more Catholic souls, and Addams herself was clear that part of Hull House’s mission was to avoid any proselytizing of their neighbors (Addams, 1912). If anything, as we shall see, the Madonna Center was founded to minister to and protect the Catholic traditions of the Hull House area immigrant population, in part as a reaction to the Hull House presence (Skok, 2004).

### **The Catholics of Chicago’s Nineteenth Ward: Setting a Context for Madonna 1889-1898**

In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened the social settlement Hull House on Halsted Street in the midst of one of Chicago’s most dense and diverse neighborhoods. Their neighborhood, the nineteenth ward located on Chicago’s near west side, was home to a wide array of recently-arrived European immigrants, including Poles, Italians, Russians, Jews from Eastern Europe, Germans, and Irish. Most, though not all, of these new immigrants were Catholic (Skerret 2001). Many of these immigrants arrived poor and found their American urban circumstances to be marked by severe economic and health hardships (Linn, 1935). The social settlement Hull House went on to earn worldwide attention for its efforts with the poor of the Hull House neighborhood. Jane Addams, in her tireless advocacy for immigrant rights, social justice, and labor, established herself as one of the preeminent social activists of her time.

She was also an accomplished writer and used her skills as an essayist to argue for the plight of the poor in Chicago. In 1931, the cumulative efforts of Addams’ life work were recognized by the Nobel organization, and she won the Nobel Peace Prize (Elshtain, 2002). By 1898, the top five ethnic groups noted in Addams’ 19th Ward by the Chicago school census were:

Irish 13, 065 (27%)

German 6,721 (14%)  
American (Native-born citizens) 6,184 (13%)  
Italian 5,784 (12.5%)  
Russian (including Russian Jews) 4,980 (10.5%)  
Other (Bohemian, English, Canadian,  
African-American, Greek, etc.)  
11,400 (23%)  
(Chicago Tribune, 1898)

With the exception of most of the Germans, the Americans, and some of the Irish, the majority of the 19th Ward were recent immigrants and most did not speak English (Chicago Tribune, 1898; Linn, 1935). This attracted Addams and her colleagues, as they were eager to use their Italian (Starr and Addams were both fluent in Italian from all their trips abroad) and they also wanted to focus their energies on helping these new Americans adapt to American urban life (Brown, 2004).

By 1890, the parish community of Holy Family near Hull House numbered 20,000 parishioners, leading James Sanders to call it “the single great Irish workingmans’ parish” (quoted in Meagher, 1986). The parish hosted numerous social and cultural events, and provided social services and education through numerous Catholic schools and settlement houses like the Madonna Center, housed nearby at the Guardian Angel Mission on Forquer Street (Lord, 1914). The economic, cultural, and political power of Irish Catholicism only increased with the arrival of new Catholic immigrants from Italy, Germany, and other parts of Europe. Irish Catholics, who, because of immigration patterns and facility with English were the dominant clerical class in Chicago, saw an opportunity to reach out to fellow Catholics and share their Irish Catholic culture with these new Americans. As Dobschuetz (2004) writes about the sisters and laywomen of the Madonna Center (a Catholic Settlement House) in the 19th Ward:

Chicago Catholics, however, saw the world differently from Addams and the Hull-House community. The settlement, for Addams, was a social experiment that did not foreground the religious dimension... Catholic settlements sought to sustain a Catholic identity and affiliation that was more than a response to the social, physical, and educational needs of the poor. Catholic settlements would be a location for the exercise of a vigorous lay spirituality (Dobschuetz, 2004).

As we shall see, this strand of lay-Catholic social justice ministry formed one of several competing ideas about what it meant to be American in Chicago in the late 19th century.

### **Madonna Center Settlement House 1898-1962: A Competing (and Complementary) Vision Blocks Away from Hull House**

In 1898, Agnes Ward Amberg was attending a church retreat at the Academy of the Sacred Heart on Taylor Street, in the 19th Ward of Chicago, roughly half a mile away from Hull House (Skok, 2001; Amberg, 1976). A prominent German-Irish Catholic social activist, Amberg heard the Jesuit priest J. R. Rosswinkle exhort her and the other well-heeled Catholics at the retreat that to assure their own salvation in heaven, wealthy Catholics had to do more than pray and take care of their own families; they must recognize that “prayer must result in spiritually productive action” (Amberg, 1976, p. 40). After that day, in collaboration with her husband (who supplied financial backing) a new lay apostolate was born to minister to the poor Italian Catholic



immigrants living among the more populous (and prosperous) Irish Catholics in the 19th ward. Fellow Jesuit Daniel Lord recounts the scene as Father Rosswinkle spoke:

If these ladies could be interested in the poor neglected strangers, of whose existence they hardly knew, if they could bring into the lives of these poor Italians something of the spirit of Catholicity that made peaceful their own lives; if they could teach the immigrants home-making, health-protection, true Americanism, a great stride would have been taken toward the solution of a mighty social problem. It was worth a trial. He (Rosswinkle) spoke to them, and they responded generously... That was fifteen years ago. A small group of these ladies, diffident, uncertain of themselves and of their strange protegeses [sic], entered the heart of the Italian district and gathered the first class of forty dirty, unkempt little youngsters for Catechism. To-day, the Guardian Angels' Mission [717 W. Forquer Street], with its flourishing clubs and Sodalities and catechism classes, counts two thousand Italian children as its members... (Lord, 1914, 285-86).

The success of the mission in offering Catholic education and other social services had an immediate impact on the Chicago Catholic hierarchy; just as they had done 40 years earlier with Holy Family, a church was constructed by 1899 (Holy Guardian Angel Church) to become the first church in the community ministering to Italian Catholic immigrants.

### **Jane Addams's Hull House and Its Response to a Neighboring Catholic Settlement**

As we have argued, social work textbooks have ignored settlements like the Madonna Center and emphasized secular SHs such as Hull House. With these two SHs located within a half mile of one another, we might wonder what interactions these two SHs may have had with one another. For her part, Amberg thought that Madonna Center and Hull House coexisted peacefully. Amberg and her mother both reported knowing Addams and her colleagues well, and that they had a friendly sense of spirit and competition with Hull House: "All of us had looked upon Hull House as a challenge, but we never experienced anything but kindness and cooperation from Jane Addams (Amberg, 1976, p.83)."

This distinction between the secular thrust of Hull House activities and religious sites like Guardian Angels/Madonna Center could be tracked not just in what they did with their time, but with what they built. While Hull House wanted to build a "Cathedral of Humanity," (Addams, 1912, p. 35) clearly Amberg and her colleagues were interested in building actual churches and bringing a heightened sense of Catholic identity to their immigrant clients. It appears that many of the initial residents and lay leaders of the Guardian Angels Mission (later renamed the Madonna Center) were, like Addams, women of privilege. The first head resident of the Mission certainly was: she was Mary Agnes Amberg, the young adult daughter of the Ambergs (Amberg, 1976). Amberg lived and worked at the Mission most of her adult life, living there with her friend Catherine Jordan from 1913-1962 (Skok, 2004). Again, unlike the Training School Settlement in Louisville, most of the activities conducted at Guardian Angels were led by (mostly female) teachers who lived at the mission and/or who attended the parish in the community. Additionally, it's clear from the writings and works of Amberg that the Catholic social justice teachings embedded in Pope Leo's 1891 Encyclical *RerumNovarum* resonated

through the work that she and her colleagues did:

The ideas of *Rerum Novarum* were appropriated by Catholic laywomen as a basis for expanded activity through the creation of lay apostolates. The 1891 papal encyclical made the ideal of “stewardship” or consecrated benevolence a part of the League’s focus and contributed to the desire on the part of middle-class Catholic women to express their faith and maintain loyalty to the church through their ministering to the poor (Dobschuetz, 2004, para. 9).

Amberg writes repeatedly in her autobiography about the urgency of physical, spiritual, and citizenship needs of the immigrants she served. Indeed, it can be said that her efforts to “Americanize” her immigrant neighbors had as much to do with establishing Catholics as a legitimate group in American life as it did about helping them survive their rough new surroundings. Again and again in her autobiography, she strikes a chord of solidarity with the Italian-American Catholic immigrants she is serving, viewing them as needing social and religious support to avoid unwittingly selling out their “Roman Catholic birthright for a mess of proselytizers and humanists’ pottage” (Amberg, 1976, p. 39).

She writes of the many established and prosperous Chicagoans (Catholic and non-Catholic alike) that came to serve at the mission:

In another way the influx of such assistants from all walks of life... and many from the higher strata of the city’s social and business life was a blessing for the mission. Mother often said that these people helped Father Dunne [the clergyman who helped lead the mission] impress upon our Italian Americans that Roman Catholics were as American as any of the social workers in the Protestant or secular social settlements hard by the mission (Amberg, 1976, p. 54)

Clearly it was not enough for Madonna Center to minister to the needs of Italian immigrants through Catechism and building a church where they could worship; the offering of citizenship courses, athletic teams, and scouting programs was all part of a concerted effort to help Madonna Center clients become more fully American while still retaining their Catholic identity in a place that a local Catholic writer characterized as one of “the parts of Chicago that are not Chicago” (Prindiville, 1903, p. 452). In this way, Madonna Center was similar to the Baptist Settlement and many secular settings. Americanization was an important objective.

### **Why isn’t Madonna House more Recognized as a Pioneer Settlement House?**

The Irish-American priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley has devoted a large part of his career to documenting the gradual assimilation of the Irish and other immigrant Catholic groups into American life. He writes about the late 19th century battles between reformers like Addams and Irish politicians like the corrupt Irish politician John Powers:

From the Irish point of view, reform was merely an attempt on the part of native-born Protestants to take what they had lost to the Irish in a fair fight. Laments of reformers like Jane Addams in Chicago merely amused the Irish. The native-born reformers were at least as corrupt

as the Irish and, in addition, they were hypocrites. All they were interested in were jobs for their own people, which meant taking back the jobs which the Irish had won in the polling place (Greeley, 1981, p. 110).

The Irish of the 19th Ward and the reformers of Hull House had a relationship that cannot be described fully, as it remains largely undocumented. However, we do have some facts. We know that over 13,000 Irish lived within the boundaries of the neighborhood that Jane Addams and her ambitious group of social reformers documented in 1895, but thanks to Addams and her colleagues, we know little about what the Irish population of the 19th Ward needed from Hull House at the time. As Skerrett (2001) has pointed out, it's entirely possible that we don't know much about how Hull House viewed their Irish neighbors because Addams decided that the Irish didn't "need" them (Skerrett, 2001). And while far from a prosperous neighborhood, it appears that at least for the Irish of the 19th Ward, life wasn't constantly marked by the same poverty and oppression that they had fled from in Ireland in the 1840s. (Skerrett, 2001).

The same could not be said for the Italian immigrants around Hull House, most of whom had recently immigrated, and many of whom suffered from extreme poverty and in the words of Amberg: Here was a harvest [Italians in Chicago] that cried aloud for some practical Christians. But except for some devoted clerics and lay people, few cared to listen (Amberg, 1976, p. 29)

Interestingly, Amberg's writing is not complimentary of all Catholic lay and clergy leadership in their efforts to build parishes and minister to immigrant Catholics, and levies a strong critique that Catholic hierarchy missed a crucial opportunity to become more involved in Catholic SH work. Just as Addams did in criticizing the corrupt ward bosses in Chicago, Amberg writes about how social settlements were needed for Italian immigrants to fend off the undue influence of the "padrone" who would exploit Italian immigrants. She says that:

the social settlement could have been a valuable adjunct of Catholic immigrant Communities everywhere in America had there been fewer social intransigents among our clergy and laity and more pastors like Fathers Rosswinkle and Ponziglione [Clergy who led the first Madonna Center efforts] (Amberg, 1976, p. 45).

In some important ways, Addams may have struck a largely unspoken and unofficial "deal" with Amberg and the other Catholic lay leaders of SH and missions in the Hull House community: she would "minister" to the perceived social needs of the same poor Italians, Irish, and Germans they served, while those groups could also attend to the spiritual and material needs of this population. While there is no written record of their working together (or even meeting), it's clear that these two incredible women brought much-needed assistance to their community, and lived less than a mile from each other for most of their adult lives.

### **Reclaiming the History of Christians in Social Work**

In all of the major textbooks used in Social Work Policy courses, history like what we have recounted here is completely absent. This raises some important questions: 1) why is early Christian social work history so marginalized? and 2) why does there appear to be so much effort by writers of social work textbooks to draw sharp distinctions between COS mission social work and the secular social work of Jane Addams, even though serious SH scholars acknowledge the religious motivations of many SH workers (Davis, 1984)? Unpacking these questions helps us identify some implications for Christian social workers today.

As indicated by the historical case studies in this chapter, the early history of social work is deeply rooted in religious belief and social action. The very real and important tension created by the potential of social work being used to convert or proselytize has also always been with us. Rather than exploring (and to some extent, embracing) these tensions and celebrating our historical roots in Christian social work, the whole topic has been usually confined to the COS movement and then quickly shuffled off to the margins. This is neither historically accurate or particularly helpful for our present day, as social work students continue to report being motivated by religious calling in serving their clients (Canda & Furman, 2009; Graff, 2007) and as of 2011, there are approximately 675 MSW and BSW programs in the U. S., and many of them are housed in religiously-affiliated colleges and universities. This history is an important part of social work's overall history and it needs to be reclaimed.

Secondly, the distinctions that have often been sharply drawn between the secular focus of proto-social workers like Addams and COS workers has often been overstated and discussed without the historical context we've attempted to provide here. While Addams herself eschewed religious teaching at Hull House, she was herself religious (Knight, 2005) and cared deeply about integrating the cultural traditions of the people she served into the larger American mosaic (Elshtain, 2002). And while the Baptist workers at their Settlement House were openly religious, they modeled their work after early secular SHs in New York in terms of their activities and programs. While it will always be important to note the excesses and potential ethical violations of Christian social workers working with vulnerable clients, it's important to also note that the Italian Catholic immigrants at Madonna Center wanted services from "professionals" who brought a religious lens to their work together.

The tension between secular and Christian social workers working together has never been completely resolved, even to this day. When social work authors and teachers set up sharp distinctions that were neither historically accurate nor very important to the clients they served, it is counterproductive to the need for Christian social workers and secular social workers to continue struggling through the many challenges they may experience in their work together. One thing is clear from this corrective look at early social work history: without Christian social workers and their efforts to "give Christ to the neighborhood," it is hard to imagine our "professional" identity being as strong as it is today.

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