



# Faith, Politics, and Power

*The Politics of Faith-Based Initiatives*

REBECCA SAGER

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2010



# Contents

Abbreviations, xiii

1. An Introduction to the Faith-Based Initiatives, 3
  2. The Historical Role of Religion in Government Social Services and the Development of the Faith-Based Initiatives, 29
  3. Faith-Based Liaisons  
Finding Faith in the Faith-Based Initiatives, 51
  4. Making the Initiatives the Law of the Land, 93
  5. Calling All the Faithful  
Faith-Based Conferences and Liaison Choices as Symbolic Politics, 115
  6. Here, There, but Not Quite Everywhere  
Why Are There Faith-Based Initiatives? 133
  7. Religion, Policy, and Politics  
Institutionalizing Religion within State Government, 165
  8. Conclusion  
What Is Success? 189
- Appendix A: Data and Methods, 193
- Appendix B: Faith-Based Liaison Interview Schedule, 201
- Appendix C: Raw Data Collected from Faith-Based Liaisons (2004–2005), 205
- Notes, 221
- References, 227
- Index, 241



# I

## An Introduction to the Faith-Based Initiatives

I believe it is in the national interest that government stand side by side with people of faith. . . . I understand in the past, some in government have said government cannot stand side by side with people of faith. I viewed this as not only bad social policy—I viewed it as discrimination.

—George Bush, speech, June 2004

Mass publics respond to currently conspicuous political symbols: not to facts . . . [but] to the gestures and the speeches that make up the drama of the state.

—Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*

In the summer of 2004, I attended my first conference on the faith-based initiatives in Washington, D.C. The room was filled to capacity, and there was a palpable air of excitement and anticipation about the promises held out by the initiatives. The conference began with a prayer by Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church and author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, a very popular account of how to turn conservative Christian identity into social service activism. He told the audience that it was time to start a revolution in the name of faith. At this, the audience came to its feet in applause.

Several hours—and several speeches about the power of faith to heal—later, President George W. Bush arrived. As he often had when he was governor of Texas, the president started his speech with a story. In this case, the story was about addiction and the ability of faith to save one from addiction; he spoke of how his own belief in the Bible and

Jesus saved him from alcoholism. But this was not the only story he told. He also related stories about welfare mothers saved by their neighborhood churches, about prisoners “brought to the light” by Chuck Colson’s Prison Ministries, and about children helped out of drug addiction by Teen Challenge. He told the audience that he could not think of a better place for a prisoner to go than to church. He said that change really happened only when loving people told those in need that they loved them and that God loved them; he emphatically argued that it was only through experiences such as his and those that they had heard about earlier, all stressing the importance of spiritual change, that real cultural and spiritual rejuvenation could happen. Along with these stories about the importance of faith in helping the addicted, the poor, and the needy, he made promises: the faith-based initiatives would offer help to the helpless and hope to the hopeless, bringing in new money and new organizations to provide new and better social services. He was speaking the language of the evangelical faith, and almost everyone in the room was moved by the idea that if faith-based groups were just given money, the social ills we had suffered in the past would be remedied.

This was the first federal conference sponsored by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Although excitement at that gathering was high, little of the new money that was promised to supporters to fight poverty and addiction has materialized. The main exception has been the Compassion Capital Fund (CCF), established in 2001 through the Department of Health and Human Services. While a substantial amount—almost \$200 million dollars—has been distributed to various faith- and community-based organizations (Office of Community Services 2008), this is a far cry from the \$8 billion that Bush promised (Cooperman and VandeHei 2005). Instead, the faith-based initiative has become primarily a series of policies, practices, and promises that seem to be more about changing culture and politics by altering the relationship between religion and government than about bringing substantial sums of money to religious and community groups to deliver social services. Through these policy changes, faith-based initiatives at the state level assure religious groups that their religion is protected and encourage state actors to partner and incorporate these groups in new ways. However, in the place of bringing the promised new funds to support new faith-based efforts to provide social services, the initiatives have become a series of actions that are bringing religion into the public sphere in a new—and fundamentally different—way (Kuo and Dilulio 2008; Wineburg 2007).

### A Series of Initiatives

Instead of one initiative that has gained traction at the state level, many states are part of what Jay Hein, former director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, has called the “quiet revolution” (Farris

2008). In this quiet revolution state and federal institutions have been creating myriad faith-based practices, policies, and promises with very little notice or oversight. These state faith-based initiatives vary in depth and breadth, creating a complex and dynamic environment that is constantly changing over time and space. Some states have created no faith-based policies or practices, whereas others have actively sought out religious organizations and enacted laws and adopted policies that have attempted to change the cultural dynamics between religious groups and the state.

There is no one way to create state faith-based initiatives; however, there has been one common outcome: rather than money or material change, the “goods” of faith-based initiatives can be seen as the cultural changes they have created. Instead of the once-prominent norm of church-state separation, some states are part of a larger social process that is generating a new perspective on the way church and state should interact, one that relies on accommodation, cooperation, and collaboration (Flowers 2005). Regardless of how one measures state faith-based activity over time—by money spent, legislation passed, or other bureaucratic implementation—it is clear that many states are marching toward creating an ever greater and more complex faith-based landscape.

### Faith-Based Initiatives as Symbolic Policy

In this book, I examine the stories of those most intimately involved with these faith-based initiatives—their own personal stories of faith and stories of hope about the promise of the initiative. By examining both the stories of those involved and the policies that states have created through administrative and legislative efforts, we can begin to see a full picture of faith-based implementation. As a society, we tell stories about the world—or how we think the world should be—through our government policies. Policies are not just pieces of paper but ideas about larger meanings, recounted to the public with the stamp of authority upon them. Faith-based initiatives are no exception to this. By examining these faith-based initiatives as they become policy and by looking at the stories about faith-based policies and their creation, we can begin to see how these initiatives came about and how their implementation tells a larger story about the role religion should or should not be playing in the public square.

State implementation of the faith-based initiatives has created a largely unnoticed system in which church-state boundaries have been blurred in some states in hopes of creating a political system that relies more heavily on religious organizations and partnerships with them (Singer and Friel 2007). Of course, these processes of implementation and adoption vary over time and space (Winston, Person, and Clary 2008), but the overarching cultural effect of the initiatives has been to create a new process of interaction between secular and faith-based groups. These changes and the alterations of the cultural

landscape on which religion and public life rest should cause us to ask larger normative questions about the relationship between the secular and the religious, and what it should or should not look like in the future.

In his examination of the role of social policy in politics and social life, Murray Edelman (1964:6) argued that it is not so much the material consequences of policies that are important, but rather what the policies represent: “Every symbol stands for something other than itself” and evokes responses that are not based only or primarily on facts and evidence, but on beliefs that are central to a person’s idea of the world. He argued that many public policies amount to a series of symbols that appeal to certain groups, representing ideas and values that they hold deeply, and thus reassuring group members. These symbols may also appeal to a wider array of groups and thus change the culture in which they are embedded by becoming part of the larger social structure.

Expanding on this work, Roger Cobb and Charles Elder (1972:1) argue that symbolic politics are important because “decision-makers actively engage in the manipulation of symbols and rationalize their action through them.” Specifically concerned with symbols in the political world, Cobb and Elder attempt to provide a synthesized understanding of symbolic politics:

Political symbols are simultaneously elements of a political culture and stimulus objects for the individuals of a system, they provide a linkage between the macro and micro levels of behavior. . . . Their potency as instruments of arousal and reassurance arises then not so much from any commonality of meaning attributed to them, as from the scope and intensity of sentiment attached to them and the common perception that they are in some way important to the system. (1972:4)

In other words, a policy need not mean the same thing to everyone. Rather, it needs to appeal to a variety of deeply held beliefs or meaning systems in either an affective or instrumental way. Cobb and Elder argue that the linkage of levels of behavior through the use of symbols is done by appealing both to people’s emotions and to their instrumental needs. Symbols are a reflection of culture and, at the same time, a creation of new cultural dynamics.

Deborah Stone (1988), following the work of Edelman and Cobb and Elder, argued that symbols create a way for politicians to argue that they have done something, since taking action of some sort, even if it is merely symbolic action, is sometimes more important than the details of the policies. Thus, by creating amorphous political symbols, politicians can create a perceived sense of accomplishment and bring more constituents to their side. This duality and malleability of political symbols is readily evident in the multiple constituencies working to realize the faith-based initiatives—and in the tension that is created among various supporters of a policy once the practices are in place. Faith-based initiatives potentially appeal to various constituencies,

creating a system of support around the initiatives that is based on a variety of very different reasons. This system of support is both the result of change and the stimulus for greater change to come.

### *Symbolic Policy and Cultural Change*

According to Cobb and Elder, instrumental and affective concerns can appeal to multiple constituencies because the policies and practices of symbolic politics stand for something much greater than themselves. When examined through the lens of symbolic policy, state faith-based policies can be seen as a result of a cultural change that was begun by evangelical movement actors and furthered by groups that also viewed the faith-based initiatives as important, but often for different reasons.

Using data collected from those most closely involved with the initiative and statistical analyses of relevant state factors, I have found that there are two main reasons faith-based practices and policies have been supported at the state level. First, because of the devolution of the welfare system created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act in 1996—the law in which the first of the faith-based initiatives were embedded—some states had to seek alternatives to avert the fiscal crisis this act threatened to precipitate. One of those options was the original formulation of the faith-based initiative, with its promise of having religious groups help deliver social services. Second, in addition to those instrumental political concerns, some political activists and government officials found the language of the initiatives appealing, with its emphasis on reintegrating religion into the public square and then relying on faith-based groups for much-needed social services.

For those who find the faith-based initiatives appealing in an instrumental way, the initiatives are symbolic of how help can be given to others even though the government is moving out of the social services business. Thus, implementing these policies seems a promising way to fill a void in social insurance. For others, the appeal of the policy is less instrumental and more affective. The appeal of faith-based initiatives then comes from their role in creating deeper connections between the faith-based world and the secular world of government. The belief in making these bonds stronger is often coupled with the feeling that by making these bonds stronger, more FBOs would become part of the social services sector and would offer something different and better to those in need. These policies then come to symbolize something much larger than their actual words; the rhetoric within which they are embedded becomes part of a meaning system that taps into powerful feelings, yielding an overall impact on culture and politics that is greater than the individual policies (Lindsay 2008).

According to scholars of political symbolism, symbols represent the parts of culture that are often intangible and create meaning for people in a world that is turbulent and uncertain. Faith-based policies are like other symbolic politics in

this way: their primary importance is not that they add a new member to a board or create a new office, but that they attempt to evoke responses based on deeply held notions of right and wrong. For the affective supporter, they represent something much greater than their actual form—they represent a hope that social ills can be remedied by the church. The stories, anecdotes, and words of social movement actors are transformed into real policies that legitimize the goals of the social movement. As theorists in political science argue, the importance of symbolic politics is the change it effects in narratives and norms (Brysk 1995). Although many who support the initiatives truly believe in helping others and fighting to give religious groups the money to do so, in most instances the reality does not match the rhetoric of the initiatives' political supporters. Whatever may be the *intent* of individuals working with the faith-based initiatives, the *effect* of the initiatives seems to be symbolic to a great degree—beliefs, not money.

### *Symbolic Politics: Creating a New Norm of Church-State Relations*

The initiatives, as they stand, increase the importance of religion in the public sphere through policies and practices that appeal to cultural norms that would enhance the presence of religion in the public square, rather than meeting the original promises made to the faith community about new money for social services. These new policies also may assure these groups of something crucially important to them: that the government will not interfere in their activities. Political proponents of the faith-based initiatives have reframed the debate about church-state separation to suggest that such separation creates discrimination against religious groups; they then propose that to remedy this, government must actively reach out to religion in a spirit of cooperation and integration, rather than separation. Thus these measures, which show accommodation rather than separation, work to alleviate these fears.

### *Two Goals*

My research has shown that state faith-based practices are for the most part a series of symbolic policies and practices that work to reshape the relationship between church and state in the United States while simultaneously offering states a way of partially offsetting the loss of federal assistance in social services administration. The symbolic policies discussed here illustrate this in two ways. First, state faith-based policies are part of larger legal and cultural processes that are reframing the Jeffersonian notion of a wall separating church and state. While some may disagree with the interpretation that there is a wall of separation, it had been the legal norm for much of the twentieth century, and the faith-based initiative is one way in which this is being redefined.<sup>2</sup> Second, because these policies and practices reframe the question of the ideal church-state relationship, an idea attractive to many, they appeal to



several important political constituencies that have not traditionally worked together, thereby creating the potential to forge new alliances (Lindsay 2008).

## A Brief History of Faith-Based Initiatives

Although religious groups have received government money to provide social services for much of American history, faith-based initiatives largely represent a new effort by both state and federal governments to encourage even greater participation. This drive to get FBOs to take on more responsibility in the social services sector has created a growing debate, not only about the role that religion should play in social services delivery, but also about deeper normative questions regarding the relationship between church and state.

### *Why the Initiatives?*

As originally conceptualized in conservative evangelical intellectual circles, the philosophy behind the faith-based initiatives was twofold. First, by “removing unnecessary barriers” to participation, small faith-based groups would compete in large numbers for federal and state money without having to give up their inherently religious character (Chaves 1999; Formicola, Segers, and Weber 2003; Wineburg 2001). Some conservative evangelical activists have argued that the current view of church-state relations in the United States has led to an unreasonable burden on religious organizations and discrimination against them by government agencies. For example, in *Renewing American Compassion*, Marvin Olasky (1996:162) argued that “the federal government’s gradual entrenchment in America’s public service sector has created an increasingly inhospitable environment for charity’s religious elements.” According to this view, it is only by fundamentally altering how church and state are seen that religious groups will be treated fairly and given the opportunity to compete with secular organizations for government funding. George W. Bush read Olasky’s book when he was the governor of Texas, and it inspired his way of thinking about the initiatives and the potential for faith-based groups to change the social services sector (Aronson 2004). Texas was actively involved in pursuing these practices at the time that the first federal faith-based initiative, Charitable Choice, was being attached to welfare reform legislation by conservative evangelical movement leader John Ashcroft.

Second, supporters such as Ashcroft and Bush argued that religious groups would offer holistic services different from—and better than—traditional nonprofit and government social services. The hope was that after this legislation was passed, the “armies of compassion”<sup>3</sup> would be unleashed, and small religious groups would work side by side with government social services agencies in helping the addicted, the poor, and the needy (Colson and Percy

1999; Green and Sherman 2002; Loconte 2002, 2004; Olasky 1996; Sherman 1999). Supporters argued that the main goal of the faith-based initiatives was to give churches and other FBOs access to federal money so that they could offer these better, more caring social services (Ashcroft 1999; Olasky 1996).

While religious organizations had been providing social services all along, the goal here was something new. Large religious organizations, such as the Catholic Church and Lutheran churches, have traditionally provided services through separate nonprofit agencies e.g. Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services. Such agencies are religiously influenced and are separate nonprofit organizations largely disentangled from their churches' explicitly religious activities. This means that even though faith-based groups were always allowed to provide social services, the feeling among some in evangelical circles was that these separating mechanisms were too arduous for smaller groups to overcome. With the implementation of state and federal faith-based initiatives, the hope was that new organizations would become involved in contracting for social services; a further hope was that these new providers would be smaller and more sectarian in character. The initiatives also promised that these organizations would not need to "leave religion at the door" to obtain government money to provide social services—although faith-based groups that were already getting federal money were not required to completely remove religion from the equation, but had to disentangle their hiring practices and finances in specific and concrete ways (Monsma 1996). Charitable Choice blurred these boundaries; rightly or wrongly, policies were put in place to help alleviate the fears of some that these boundaries were too restrictive.

What these changes mean for religious groups is still uncertain. The proposed "new" idea was that "faith-saturated" groups should be able get federal money without giving up their inherently religious character, if they made sure that the religious aspects of the program took place either before or after the social services section or were otherwise made entirely optional. Additionally, in these cases the government would have to provide a secular social services option. In reality, neither of these stipulations is systematically regulated, and recent research has found that states accepting help from faith-based groups overlook religious activities that significantly blur these lines (Allard 2008). There is debate about how new this idea was, or how much change it could make. What tended to happen was that religious groups were allowed to believe religion could be integral to the services that they provide, usually with just a mention that groups could not proselytize or use the funds provided to buy bibles; the rules, however, are far more complex. This situation led to sanctions against some groups for integrating religion into their services. When this occurred, the federal government did not come to their rescue, even though some in the federal government had argued that religion would improve the character and quality of the services provided.

The rhetoric of supporters of the initiatives has often been taken as fact; however, some of the most crucial assumptions behind the arguments for the faith-based initiatives have not been verified. For example, faith-based groups have not been excluded from the social services sector: some of them have long been providing much-needed services (Chaves 2004; Wineburg 2007; Wuthnow, Hackett, and Hsu 2004). Further, there is no evidence that religious groups were ever discriminated against (Chaves 2001, 2004). Nor is there any evidence that FBOs are uniformly better at providing social services (Bielefeld and Seuss-Kennedy 2003; Sager and Stephens 2005; Seuss-Kennedy and Bielefeld 2006; Wineburg 2001).

Nonetheless, regardless of whether religious groups offer better—or even different—services, the overall impact of the faith-based initiatives is important in one critical area: Through their symbolic policies and practices, faith-based initiatives have the potential to reshape political alliances. Perhaps just as crucial, these faith-based initiatives are part of a larger cultural process involving Supreme Court decisions that are increasingly accommodationist (Flowers 2005), as well as federal and state policy changes that blur boundaries between religion and the public square.<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, a process that is dynamic and evolutionary, and one that is currently shifting toward increased interaction between religion and government.

### *From Federal to State Policies*

These changes began at the federal government and in the state of Texas; from there, faith-based initiatives have spread widely among states, with 41 enacting some sort of faith-based provision into law or administrative policy and 39 creating faith-based liaison (FBL) positions to integrate religious groups into the social services sector. Enacted as part of the 1996 welfare reform bill, called the Personal Work and Responsibility Act (PWORA), Charitable Choice was intended to guarantee that small religious groups were not discriminated against in government funding decisions (Center for Public Justice 2006). States were not required to implement any part of the initiative other than to honor this guarantee. However, while some states have done very little or nothing to implement the initiative, most states have adopted faith-based practices that go well above and beyond this minimum federal requirement. States that act tend to rely on three common means of implementation. They may appoint the actors known as FBLs or create state Offices of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCIs), or both; they may pass legislation; or they may present state-sponsored policy conferences. This new activity in the states exists despite the fact that all 50 states already worked with religious organizations to provide social services. One might expect that since working with religious organizations was really nothing new, states would not have had any impetus to add new and potentially costly policies to their agendas. That a

majority of states have taken action in this situation suggests that there must be benefits that outweigh the costs of new policies. What those benefits might be and why they are being pursued at a growing rate are questions worth exploring.

### *A Child of Many Parents*

While supporters argue that the faith-based initiatives are about solving problems of poverty and an overburdened welfare system—and I found that those I spoke with came to the table with nothing but good intentions—the reality of the initiatives is that their promises of substantial new help to the poor and needy have not been kept. The paucity of new help for the poor is ascribable partly to the complex and varied motivations for implementation of the initiatives; further, various constituencies hold multiple—and sometimes conflicting—goals, which dilutes the possibility of actually increasing aid for the needy. While the initiatives have their roots in the evangelical tradition, their appeal is much more far-reaching. They appeal not just to evangelical religious sentiments but also to the religious sentiments of a wider audience; further, they have instrumental appeal for those who want to create new avenues for help to the needy (especially since the advent of welfare reform). In addition, those with purely political motives see the initiatives as a possible way to attract some portion of the black religious population to the Republican Party. Finally, the initiatives appeal to conservatives who want to decrease the size of government and see the initiatives as providing an inexpensive alternative to government-sponsored social services.

Such multiple motivations and constituencies create a broader base of support, but they also create tension among supporters; in this case, those hoping for more money, rather than just less government (and, perhaps, more religion), are losing out. The result is an environment in which acting on the initiatives is often done in part from fiscal necessity, in part from true belief in faith-based social services and the power of religion, and in part because of politics and a desire to change cultural norms. In the latter case, the initiatives are part of a movement, reflecting the desire of some in power to reduce government by shifting the social services burden away from government and toward the nonprofit and private sector. For many, this wave of devolution made the initiatives a necessity—the best response possible in a time of fiscal crisis and uncertainty in the system after welfare reform; for others, it was also part of a call to change the world based on faith.

Many of those who helped found the initiatives and many of their earliest supporters are now those most bitterly disappointed by their shortcomings. Much research on the initiatives highlights the tension between those on the ground who want to do good works but need money to do them and those at the top who may have goals of a more political nature (Wineburg 2007). By

examining the politics, practices, and policies of state faith-based implementation, a picture begins to emerge of initiatives that promised much but delivered very little. The continued presence of the initiatives in our political life suggests, however, that hope still persists—or that some other goals of politicians or constituencies are being met. In many cases, fiscal need created the opportunity for success in passing faith-based policies, while belief in the fundamental importance of religion as part of the social sector created the original motivation and political ties necessary to adopt early policies.

In examining faith-based politics at the state level, three steps in the policy process became clear. First, rhetoric surrounding the initiatives was developed; then there were responses to the rhetoric through implementation; and finally, there was reaction to the implementation. Although this is simple in outline, state implementation of the initiatives has been a complex interplay between those at the top creating rhetoric about faith-based practices and those on the ground trying to respond to this rhetoric. Faith-based policy implementation was then a result of multiple constituencies: the believers, the fiscally concerned, and the conservative political ideologues.

## Current Understanding of the Faith-Based Initiatives

### *Is Faith Better?*

Although the role and importance of religious organizations in providing social services has been long established (Cnaan, Wineburg, and Boddie 1999; Cosgrove 2001; Monsma 1996; O'Neill 1989), the debate regarding whether their spiritual elements are advantageous to those in need has become more critical because of the faith-based initiatives. While the notion that religious groups offer services that are both different from and superior to those offered by traditional nonprofits and secular social service agencies has been a crucial part of promoting the faith-based initiatives, these claims are still being debated. The question of which types of organizations are best suited to help the poor and needy is an important one, addressed by numerous researchers (Bielefeld and Seuss-Kennedy 2003; Seuss-Kennedy and Bielefeld 2006; Wuthnow, Hackett, and Hsu 2004). So far, asking whether faith-based groups are better than secular ones at providing this help has yielded various answers, and the debate has not found a clear winner.

On one hand, Wuthnow and his colleagues showed that clients of FBOs found their workers more trustworthy (Wuthnow, Hackett, and Hsu 2004). Studies related to health care and patient relationships have also found clients more satisfied with the religious alternative (University of Missouri-Columbia 2007). Others have argued that collaborative relationships between government and faith-based groups nurture civic engagement and highlight the

benefits of recruiting efforts from the faith-based sector (Lichterman 2005; Wood 2002). On the other hand, however, some who have been studying these groups for years, including Robert Wineburg and Mark Chaves, have argued that while there are a great many benefits to engaging the religious sector, it is unrealistic and untenable to suggest that most religious groups (or even a significant minority) will be able to offer the types of long-term social services provided by the government (Chaves 1999, 2001; Chaves and Wineburg 2008; Wineburg 2001, 2007). They have both argued that the initiatives are less about changing the social services sector to bring in these groups and give them substantial money to carry out their work than about politics and religious ideology.

In addition, studies have found some FBOs to be less effective than their secular counterparts. This was the case in a multistate study of faith-based versus secular service providers by Wolfgang Bielefeld and Sheila Seuss-Kennedy (2003, 2006). In comparing job training programs, they found that faith-based job-training programs resulted in the same numbers of jobs, but the jobs had lower wages and fewer benefits than those found through secular programs. In another study, Laura Stephens and I found that the clients—both religious and secular—of faith-based services disliked the religious elements of a social service if they felt the religion was forced upon them (Sager and Stephens 2005). These results have led most in the field to conclude that sometimes faith-based groups are better at providing services and that at other times secular social services are preferable.

### *Do Faith-Based Initiatives Work?*

In addition to questions about whether faith-based services are more effective than other types of services, there are questions about whether faith-based initiatives, designed to enhance participation of religious groups in social service delivery, have actually enlarged the pool of faith-based social service providers. In the most recent study of the willingness and ability of faith-based groups to offer social services, Chaves and Wineburg (2008) found that although those groups that were already active in providing such services may be doing some more work than before, the number of churches that are active providers has not increased at all since the initiatives were introduced in 1996. Additionally, John Green found that most congregations were unlikely to be able to become active players in the social services sector. Like Chaves (2004), Green found that many congregations did not have the capacity or the desire to get involved in the long-term provision of social services. In his survey results, Green noted:

Relatively few congregations are applying for government funds to provide those services, or know about changes in federal law over the

last 10 years meant to ease the way for them to do so. Of those congregations that have competed for government funds, almost 80 percent report difficulty in applying for and managing the grants. Those that did not apply listed concern about external control and a lack of space for new grant-funded activities as their key reasons. The congregations surveyed represent the very types of religious groups targeted by the Initiative—smaller, grassroots organizations, as opposed to longstanding faith-based social service providers with established national reach. (2007)

As Richard P. Nathan, codirector of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, parent to the Roundtable, noted, “For many congregational leaders, the government contracting process remains daunting. And few have the organizational structure in place to manage such contracts. If government is to increasingly partner with such groups, there remains a lot of work to do” (quoted in Hughes 2007a). For example, Green (2007) found that the largest administrative challenges facing congregations that provide services were program evaluation, volunteer recruitment and retention, and new client recruitment; only about half of the congregations surveyed reported having in place the administrative practices (such as audited financial statements) that would be needed to receive and manage public money. Other essential practices were even less common, with only 24 percent having an evaluation of program outcomes and 19.5 percent reporting formal policies for overhead charges.

In addition to arguments about whether the original premise of the initiatives is tenable, critics have argued that current federal implementation of faith-based practices can be said to “ring hollow” (Singer and Friel 2007). The most prominent critic of the initiatives is probably David Kuo, once a strong supporter. While not an academic account, his recent analysis of the initiatives, *Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction* (2006b), is a comprehensive and critical insider’s view. Kuo argues that the initiatives once had great promise, and that many of the early supporters, including John Dilulio (the first head of the White House OFBCI) and himself, had felt that the role of religious groups in the social services sector could be increased and that the religious groups would, indeed, have been able to offer improved services. Instead, Kuo found a world in which the initiatives did not live up to their promises: adoption of faith-based practices was a political tool used to get votes, and it promoted only the appearance that new religious groups were filling social needs.

Although there are many critics of the initiatives, the initiatives still have strong support from many at the federal and state levels. In his 2008 State of the Union address, President Bush reiterated the importance of the initiatives, arguing that the changes that Congress had failed to make in the previous

eight years needed to be made now. In addition, state offices and laws keep springing up, and supporters of the initiatives, including Stanley Carlson-Thies and Stephen Monsma, argue that they have been beneficial insofar as they brought the faith-based voice back into the public square. Indeed, this is what I, too, argue has been the clearest accomplishment of the initiative: although it has not brought substantial new money or created sustained social service efforts or improved services for the needy, the initiatives have been successful in changing the laws, policies, and practices that define the relationship between church and state.

### *What Is Happening in the States?*

Most research on the faith-based initiatives has focused on three main issues. In addition to the question of whether secular or religious groups are better providers of social services, as discussed above, research has also examined the implementation of the initiatives at the federal level (Bielefeld and Seuss-Kennedy 2003; Farris, Nathan, and Wright 2004; Formicola, Segers, and Weber 2003; Seuss-Kennedy and Bielefeld 2006) and studied questions about the relationship between church and state (Lupu and Tuttle 2003).

This leaves a significant facet of faith-based policy unexplored: namely, the role of state governments in creating faith-based policies and practices. While there has been a great deal of attention paid to changes at the federal level, little attention has been paid to how and why states are adopting the initiatives. The limited research thus far has focused on descriptive accounts of actions at the state level, nationwide, or within a single state. The most complete research on state implementation has been conducted by Mark Ragan, Lisa Monteil, and David Wright (2003) of the Roundtable for Research on Religion and Social Welfare Policy.<sup>5</sup> They found that states have been engaging in a variety of relevant activities, including creating advisory boards to research faith-based state social services and enacting legislation that includes faith-based language. Still, these studies have not accounted for many aspects of the initiative. Among the areas left unexplored are a detailed account of FBLs and their role in the implementation of the initiative, an account of legislative activity over time, and descriptions of various state practices. No research has gathered comprehensive data for all states in an attempt to understand and evaluate the various reasons underlying adoption of faith-based policies by states or to describe the on-the-ground reality of their implementation.

### *Why Are States Adopting the Faith-Based Initiatives?*

States' adoption of the faith-based initiatives has increased greatly since the initiative's inception in 1996. For example, in 1996 there was no state



legislation specifically related to the initiatives, and in 1997 there were only seven such laws, but by 2007, 271 laws had been enacted. In addition, state bureaucracies have grown: as I write, 39 states<sup>6</sup> have FBLs, and 22 states have an OFBCI from which the liaison works. Why the increase in interest? The extensive interviews, fieldwork, and data analysis I have conducted over the past few years can begin to explain what has happened, and why. While these data cannot show all the answers, they do begin to hint at a process of social movement access, bringing success by creating ties to others using large-scale meaning systems to attract attention (Lindsay 2008). The results also indicate that part of the initiatives' appeal for politicians has been the promise that the initiatives would help alleviate the burden on strained welfare systems. My study and others have shown this financial benefit has largely not occurred.

### *Desecularization and Devolution: A Hollow State*

This increase in implementation of state faith-based policies reflects two larger battles in American politics: the growing devolution of government social services to the nonprofit and private sectors (Milward and Provan 2002) and the increasingly prominent role of religion in politics and policy (Gushee 2008; Hudson 2008). The first faith-based initiatives were part of the 1996 Welfare Reform Bill, which worked to shift the burden of social services to the religious sector of the nonprofit community, and was a mechanism by which the presence of religion in the public sector has been increased.

The twin processes of government desecularization and devolution—most prominent in conservative political philosophy—have significantly altered culture and politics in the United States. “Desecularization” can be defined as the increasing role of religious authority in aspects of society. Most American political institutions are largely secular in nature, and this has angered conservative political and religious leaders from William F. Buckley to Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. The movement to alter this secularization of the public square has led to inroads in creating a greater role for religious organizations within secular institutions (Belluck 2006; Henriques 2006). The promotion of faith-based initiatives is one of the ways that this is happening. In addition, conservative political advocates have been increasingly privatizing the government sector, effectively ending government as it has been since the New Deal, and resulting in the devolution of power away from government and toward the private and nonprofit sectors. The phrase “hollow state,” or one in which the government plays an increasingly less active role in favor of private and nonprofit organizations, was first coined by Brinton Milward and Keith Provan (2002:1) after the welfare reform of 1996. They have defined the hollow state as “a metaphor for the increasing use of third parties, often nonprofits, to deliver social services and generally act in the name of the state.” One aspect of this hollow state is that faith-based groups provide social services, either with

or without public money. It is, in fact, welfare reform that creates both the supply and demand for the faith-based initiatives: welfare reform creates the mechanism by which religion can become part of the public sphere, while also driving the need for these social services to take up where government left off (whether the religious groups are willing and able to do so, or not).

*Desecularization and the Role of the Evangelical Movement  
and Faith Constituencies*

In the literature on public policy and social movements, changing the political landscape by creating new symbols and frames of understanding is considered a crucial way for movements to gain political power (Benford and Snow 2000; Brysk 1995; Edelman 1964, 1971; McVeigh, Myers, and Sikkink 2004; Miceli 2005; Pedriana 2006; Williams and Blackburn 1996; Wysong, Aniskeiwicz, and Wright 1994). Symbolic politics are important to social movement success because of the changes that those policies represent and the political alliances they create; and they also reassure anxious groups. In fact, the conservative evangelical movement is not the only religious constituency to believe in the initiatives or support their goals and the initiative has been able to reach other audiences. However, it was the first religious movement to back the initiatives. Furthermore, the conservative evangelical movement counts among its members a man who has been the initiatives' most important political supporter, George W. Bush.

The faith-based initiatives meet the instrumental political goals of the resurgent evangelical movement in at least several ways. They create a new role for religion in government, using symbols to change political culture in a way that brings religion into government through collaboration and cooperation; regardless of whether the actors have any real power or whether significant amounts of money are involved, the creation of new legislation and administrative positions signals support to the evangelical movement base and legitimizes a new role for religion within politics (Lindsay 2008). Of course the evangelical movement is not a monolithic set of people and organizations (Gushee 2008, Smith 2000); there has been much research and writing on the evangelical center and progressive evangelical movement, which is in many ways very different from the older generation of Christian Right activists who held power for so long, especially within the Republican Party (Conger 2008a, 2008b; Gushee 2008). However, the goals articulated in much of the research on the conservative evangelical movement and many actions the movement has taken in both politics and public policy are specifically geared to creating a larger space for religion within the public sphere (Green 2007).

THE GOD STRATEGY. This movement to create a larger space for religion in the public square is documented in several new books including David Domke and Kevin Coe's *The God Strategy* (2007). Domke and Coe chronicle how the original

goal of the evangelical movement—to create a large role for religion in public life—has turned into politicians relying on what they call a “God strategy,” or a strategy of using the language of faith to win support. When looking at the role of the faith-based initiatives, one can see that although they are part of a political strategy, they are also creating a cultural shift through the implementation of symbolic policies and practices that reframe the debate surrounding church and state to one about cooperation, collaboration, and institutionalization rather than one about separation. Even if politicians do not believe in the goals of the evangelical movement, they can benefit from using the policies the movement has created for their own benefit. Faith-based policies are not just about the tangible effects of legislation and administration; they are symbols that some people respond to, mechanisms that alter how the culture of government operates.

In addition, because of these symbols, the initiatives also have the potential to generate support within other religious communities including among some Catholics and, most significantly, many in the black religious community. In his research on evangelical elites, Michael Lindsay (2006, 2008) argues that the involvement of the evangelical movement elite was successful because they were able to make bridges to other organizations through activities that reach out to people with similar meaning systems. Although the evangelical and black religious communities have many differences in outlook, both among themselves and with each other, and have not traditionally worked closely together, they tend to have similar feelings regarding the role of religion in government. Seeing members of black religious groups as potential allies, supporters of faith-based policies and practices have focused on wooing them in two ways. First, a large proportion of those appointed as FBLs are black clergy members, who clearly have connections with their religious communities. Second, state-sponsored faith-based conferences have specifically targeted the black religious community, using tools found in black churches to promote social action based on the faith-based initiatives. As is explored in Chapter 5, these attempts at creating new political alliances with the black community have not always succeeded.

THE SHIFTING TIDE OF CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION. Over the last 50 years, evangelicals have moved away from the traditional understanding of the relationship between religious groups and politics. Instead of taking an entirely otherworldly perspective that some thought to be the perspective of conservative religious groups,<sup>7</sup> the resurgent conservative evangelical movement has now focused on bringing religion into *this* world by entering the realm of politics and government in an attempt to confront what they see as the collapse of traditional values and mores in society (Lindsay 2008, Monsma 2006, Olasky 1996, C. Smith et al. 1998). Some in the movement believe that the absence of religion—in this case, conservative Christian religion—in public life is creating a social downfall, and that religion should return to the forefront of American life through the reshaping of church-state relations. Further, some

evangelicals believe that the secularization of the public sphere—for example, by means of court cases that made prayer in school illegal, allowed the teaching of evolution, and made abortion legal—must be stopped. As Randall Terry, a controversial, conservative evangelical movement activist and the head of Operation Rescue (a conservative pro-life organization), said, “Our goal is a Christian nation. We have a Biblical duty and we are called by God to conquer this country. We don’t want equal time. We don’t want pluralism” (1993, quoted in Boehlert and Foser 2005). While there are many evangelicals who would not see Terry as representing their goals, his statement reflects a more subtle sentiment that they would agree with: that the relationship between church and state has become too separate and that religion has for too long been banished from the public square. Faith-based initiatives are seen as a means of changing this situation.

REFRAMING THE QUESTION. As Edelman (1971:7) argues, “Political actions chiefly arouse or satisfy people not by granting or withholding their stable substantive demands, but rather by changing the demands and expectations.” One part of the strategy of the conservative evangelical movement has been to increase the role of religion in all aspects of state government, including social services. And one of the ways of doing this has been to create a new metaphor or story about church-state separation and how it affects social services and government. Instead of separation, the movement’s argument goes, government should seek collaboration and cooperation between faith-based groups and government-funded social services. This new relationship would bring new and better help to the poor and needy; further, such collaboration would help the poor and needy more cost-effectively than the government working alone can. In short, everyone would win in this new, cooperative atmosphere.

Unfortunately, there has been no oversight or review to ensure that these new policies are fulfilling their promise, and, as I said above, there is little evidence to indicate that the initiatives have made anything but modest gains in this battle (Green 2007, Kuo and Dilulio 2008). Instead, the data show that the main success of the initiatives has been in creating institutions and policies, a new “faith-based bureaucracy,” that links state governments and religious organizations and potentially creates new political alliances.

## Sociological Importance of the Faith-Based Initiatives

### *Symbolic Politics as Cultural Goods*

In his work on the role of evangelical elites in changing culture and social structure, Lindsay (2008) argued that by articulating a vision for the future, then fueling that vision through individual agency leaders and collaboration of

overlapping networks, this vision for the future could be realized in cultural goods. When examining the faith-based initiatives, one can see how the articulated vision for society was transmitted through its specific goals of bringing religion closer to the state. While the collaboration among various groups for its implementation was almost certainly not done in a colluding manner, the result was the same as if it had been: states have increasingly created faith-based policies and practices that confirm the original vision for the initiative and potentially influence society through laws, offices, and practices. These practices are the “goods” produced by the rhetoric and leadership begun by the evangelical movement. That it has appealed to other constituencies is certainly a reason for its success, but it is important to understand how these processes occur and how this cultural production that is their end result enables further movement action—even if that is not the goal of most of the supporters of the initiatives (Lindsay 2008). Again, what these policies do in concrete fiscal terms is not necessarily important; that they *exist* in a framework that appeals to the values of their constituencies—and, it is hoped, new allies—is what is important. The faith-based initiatives, when looked at through the lens of symbolic politics, cater to the ideological concerns of the evangelical movement; they act as a political tool to reach out to new groups who view the world similarly, and they become part of the hoped-for larger cultural change.

Social movement theorists have argued that by gaining access within the political system, social movements can begin to implement their goals through policy changes (Zald 2000). Through inside access to state politics, evangelical movement actors are able to gain legitimacy within state government, and they are thus better able to pursue their various goals. In their study of evangelical movement access to government, Green, Guth, and Wilcox (1998) argued that the movement can gain much from its influence in state Republican parties: legitimacy, access to organizational resources, and a key role in nomination and platform politics. I have found that faith-based policies and practices were more likely to be created in states where this evangelical presence was greater. While this may not be the only motivator of state action regarding the initiatives, it is undoubtedly a significant one.<sup>8</sup>

### *A Path Previously Traveled*

The evangelical movement is not the first movement to begin to gain political access by making inroads through largely symbolic policies. Other movements have gained slow but steady access to government by taking small steps that eventually led to stronger and more concrete legislation. One of the best examples of this is the Civil Rights movement. The original policy implementation of the Civil Rights movement began with the appointment of directors who worked from offices similar to OFBCIs. Although the directors worked

without support staff or any real funding or organizational structure, those appointments were the first steps in the implementation of policies destined to meet the goals of the Civil Rights movement (Bullock and Lamb 1984; Lockard 1968). From those largely symbolic displays of agreement with the movement's efforts, real policy changes at the state level, such as the creation of Equal Employment Opportunity councils and Affirmative Action programs, soon followed. Such policy measures were able to succeed because of the groundwork laid by their predecessors, the state civil rights directors.

By examining this increase in the legitimization of the Civil Rights movement in state politics over time and the increase in the strength of social policy supporting it, we can enhance understanding of the evangelical movement's tactics and the symbolic policies that begin to meet its goals. While present faith-based policies act mainly to weaken the separation of church and state without necessarily offering direct material change or resources to faith-based groups, some evidence indicates that future policies may be more concrete. For example, the number of states that are funding OFBCIs has increased over the years. While no state OFBCIs or faith-based efforts received faith-based appropriations in 1997, now 16 states have faith-based appropriations. In addition, the number of state laws pertaining to FBOs and other aspects of the initiatives now numbers over 270. Thus, FBLs, like civil rights directors, may have been the first step in the policy process—a process that increases in substance over time. Even so, the future direct material results of these policies are not necessarily the only important facet of these practices. The crucial and simple fact is that these policies, positions, and practices exist in a framework that changes the political, institutional, and social culture in ways that alter the relationship between church and state that was the norm for much of the twentieth century.

### *New Understandings, New Allies: The Creation of a Faith-Based Movement Political Platform*

Research in public policy has found that policy creates politics, with new social policies altering the political landscape (Lowi 1964, 1969; Mooney and Lee 1995; Stone 2005). Policies based on beliefs and ideas shared with other groups can also create new allegiances and political allies. Green, Rozell, and Wilcox (2003) found that the evangelical movement's access to state Republican parties was important for several reasons, but they also argued that to move beyond their base and gain influence in other states, the movement would have to access black churches. Faith-based initiatives are a means by which these allies might be sought.

I have found three ways in which faith-based initiatives are creating new politics. First, FBLs operating as policy brokers bring a new understanding of church-state separation and the new language of the faith-based initiatives to both religious groups and to state government, expanding the means of

communication among them. Second, state faith-based policy and institutional changes are creating new state bureaucracies that appeal to the fiscal needs of states and to political allies that see this as a greater part of a much-needed devolution of government to the private sector. Finally, two faith-based practices appear to be specifically aimed at creating new allegiances with black religious communities—the recruitment of members of black churches as liaisons and the creation of faith-based conferences that rely heavily on symbolic cues from black churches. The role of faith-based liaisons as policy brokers, faith-based legislation as symbolic politics, and faith-based conferences as political rallying grounds are discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

### A Triangulated Approach to Research

How have states implemented the faith-based initiatives? Why have states implemented these practices? These questions have driven my research, and I compiled data by three means to begin to answer them.<sup>9</sup> Using LexisNexis, an online legislative database, I collected data on all state legislative changes related to the initiatives for the years 1996 to 2007. I also interviewed state FBLs, the main actors responsible for carrying out the faith-based initiatives at the state level, and several other key players. Together, my research sources outlined both a fairly complete historical record of policy changes made at the state level and some of the concrete details about the on-the-ground efforts and the actors who are in charge of carrying them out. Finally, I conducted field research, which gave me an unfiltered view of what some states' implementation efforts look like in actual practice. My experiences in the field also gave me the background and means needed to speculate on what their potential effect may be.

#### *LexisNexis Data on Legislation*

The LexisNexis database includes legislative activity in all states; from this I collected data on nine types of legislation passed over the last 11 years, using key words such as “faith-based” and “Charitable Choice” to determine how many such practices had become incorporated into legislation. Data for each piece of legislation included the date of passage, its sponsor, and the complete text of the bill. For purposes of analysis, I coded legislative acts by category and year of passage. LexisNexis was also a source of information on liaison positions that were created by law or an executive order from the governor. This data included the date of appointment, an official description of the position, and the means by which each FBL was appointed.<sup>10</sup> I found that states varied greatly in the number and types of laws enacted over the time period covered;

discussion of this means of implementing the faith-based initiatives is found in Chapter 4.

**IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH KEY PLAYERS.** Using data on liaisons compiled by the White House OFBCI, the Roundtable for Research on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, and the Center for Public Justice and LexisNexis data, I compiled a list of all liaisons and categorized each state's appointment of a liaison as being by legislation, by the governor, or by a state agency head. The list of state liaisons used for this research was in congruence with those of the White House and the Roundtable in late 2005.<sup>11</sup>

In-depth interviews were then conducted with liaisons in 30 of the 34 states that had an FBL; efforts to reach the remaining four states' liaisons by telephone and e-mail were unsuccessful. In their analysis of the use of interviews in studying social movements, Kathleen Blee and Verta Taylor (2002) argue that there are several distinct advantages to this methodology over other types of data collection. Interviews are important because they may offer insights that are not available from other sources. Unlike surveys or written data on legislation, interviews offer firsthand accounts of social movement actions and policy implementation. Only through interviews could I pose questions about the motivations and perspectives of the liaisons; this dialogue was crucial to my understanding of why liaisons took this position and how their own religious beliefs and ideas affect their work. Interviews also yield information about the contexts of action and the identities of participants. Through these interviews I was able to explore why these policies and positions were being created and what the liaisons themselves thought about the faith-based initiatives. Finally, it was only through interviews that an analysis of the actual power and agency that FBLs were able to exercise was possible.

For almost half of the interviews conducted, I was able to meet with the liaisons in person and spend time with them during their day-to-day activities. This kind of access to the liaisons helped me gain an understanding of the people behind the initiatives that I could never have gained otherwise. When I was not able to meet with liaisons in person, interviews were conducted by telephone. The interviews with liaisons were conducted in a confidential manner. This was to ensure that the liaisons would speak openly to me not only about their specific roles as liaisons and the exact duties of the job, but also about their feelings regarding implementation of these policies and practices. Without anonymity many of the liaisons may not have granted interviews, or would not have felt free to be as forthcoming and candid about their hopes and fears for an initiative with which many felt emotionally connected.

Whether in-person or by telephone, the formal interviews lasted between 20 minutes and two hours and were designed to elicit information on the actual practices of the liaisons, particularly those that would not show up in



the official job descriptions found in the LexisNexis data. All interviews were taped and then transcribed into Word documents for coding. The interviews were made up of two parts: closed-ended survey questions asked about specific state-level activities, such as whether the state had a Web site or e-mail listserv and whether the state offered conferences for FBOs; these questions were designed to elicit easily comparable data on exactly what state liaisons and state Offices of Faith-Based Community Initiatives were doing to incorporate faith-based practices into state policy. The other part of the survey consisted of open-ended questions regarding such things as their reasons for becoming FBLs, their relationships with religious communities, their personal religious backgrounds, and various aspects of their duties. These qualitative questions were useful for gathering information about FBLs that did not come up in quantitative data collection and were especially important in informing my work on the role of state liaisons in social movements and public policy.

I also collected information on liaisons' relationships with one another and with the White House OFBCI. Liaisons were asked how many other liaisons they knew, whether they communicated with the White House office and, if so, how much and how often. Information on this networking was designed to yield a picture of how interconnected—or disconnected—FBLs were with one another and with the White House.<sup>12</sup>

### *Supplemental Interviews*

In addition to speaking with current liaisons, interviews with eight additional state actors were conducted. These interviews used the same general format as the liaison interviews, but they also included questions about previous state activity involving the faith-based initiatives. For example, in Texas I spoke with the state's first FBL, who had worked for Governor George W. Bush and then followed Bush to Washington for his first term as president. Under President Bush, he helped create the White House Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and worked with John Dilulio, the first head of the White House OFBCI. He discussed with me not only what originally occurred in Texas regarding the faith-based initiatives but also what happened once George W. Bush became president. In several other states in which there was no one currently occupying the position of FBL, I spoke with the person who had previously filled the position. Other interviews were conducted with past liaisons and with actors who worked closely with state liaisons, such as faith-based directors in other state agencies.

In addition to these state actors, I met with two federal officials. Both were the coordinators of state activities in the White House OFBCI. During these interviews I gathered information on the role of the White House in encouraging faith-based practices by states and on its connections to state OFBCIs and

FBLs. The first of these interviews was conducted in 2004, and the second, with an interim director, in 2005.

After the qualitative data were collected and coded, I identified patterns that emerged using grounded theory. For example, I examined how many FBLs had worked with religious groups, or how many saw their job as part of their personal religious mission. These qualitative data were then used both on their own to describe in detail what is happening with the faith-based initiatives and in support of the conclusions derived from the quantitative data.

### The Bounds of My Research of This Study

Needless to say, my research thus far was unable to cover all aspects of the faith-based initiatives. Perhaps the most important omission is that I was unable to measure the impact of the policies of the faith-based initiatives on the numbers of FBOs receiving state money to provide social services—exactly that which the initiatives were supposed to do. There are several reasons for this. First, no state had any baseline measurements of the numbers of FBOs it funded for this purpose. Second, even with the policies in place, almost no states collect these data; gathering or estimating this information on state funding streams from state budget data would be a worthwhile extension to this study. Fortunately, I was able to assess whether any new funds had been created for these purposes through the FBLs or OFBCIs. Only New Jersey has created significant new funding through these organizations, and the CCF is the only new funding source in the federal government. So while money may be shifting from one group of service providers to another, the initiatives have not produced the amounts of new money promised in early rhetoric by the founders of the policies and offices.

Third, these data are limited in the time period in which they were collected, with data on liaisons ending in 2005 (see Winston, Person, and Clary 2008 for an update on eight states). Interviews with liaisons were conducted toward the beginning of the initiatives, so there is good reason to suspect that there have been and will be changes along the way, with some liaisons leaving, others coming in, and states expanding or contracting their operations. However, this study does paint a picture of the early time period of the initiatives and explains the history, complexity, and dynamic nature of faith-based policy. This is a snapshot of how the faith-based initiatives were practiced in their early years, and further study of how it progresses after this time will be a productive future avenue of study. When thinking about the initiatives and how they have changed over time, it is important to remember the great variance in original state reaction. The faith-based initiatives are not like most other policies; according to Michael Gerson, they have their roots and justification in evangelical political activities that ebb and flow over time

(quoted in Hagerty 2008), so future study on these dynamic processes can lead to a better understanding of how some states that have strong conservative political and religious traditions vary compared with those without these actors.

Although this study that forms the basis for this book is limited in several respects, the data collected and analyzed here have allowed me to examine the faith-based initiatives in enough depth to see that they represent a fundamental shift in the way some Americans would like the relationship between church and state to look. These data illustrate how states have begun to embrace faith-based practices in a way that indicates a shift away from church-state separation and toward a norm of cooperation and collaboration between church and state.

## Summary and Conclusion

As a matter of policy, faith-based initiatives are both a success and a failure. Their success—in the eyes of some—has come in the form of creating new institutions and public policies that bring church and state closer together, allowing for a new conversation and partnerships between the two to emerge. On the other hand, they have failed in that most of their promises to spur a social services revolution have not been fulfilled to a noticeable degree (Green 2007).

Faith-based practices at the state level have resulted in new laws and institutions as part of a continuing devolution of state government to the nonprofit and private sectors. While ideological concerns about religion have guided state implementation for some, state faith-based policies have also arisen in response to genuine fiscal concerns and political ideology about the overall role of government in society. The faith-based initiatives have appealed to these instrumental and affective concerns because they have promised not only to alleviate the fiscal burden on states by offering more services through the faith-based sector but also to further a hoped-for shift to a smaller role for government. Thus, the initiatives become one step in a process of moving away from government-run social services toward the creation of a system that relies more heavily on nonprofit organizations and the private sector.

This tangle of ideological reasons for backing the faith-based initiatives has resulted in myriad policies and practices stemming from the initiatives. While for some the goal was to bring novel resources and renewed hope to those in need of social services, for others it was a response to fiscal necessity; it represents hope for a revolution in some faith-based circles, while for others it is simply a matter of politics. Regardless of the reasons behind them, faith-based policies legitimize a new role for religion in the public sphere and blur the line between church and state.