ISSN 1648-2603 (print)
ISSN 2029-2872 (online)

VIEŠOJI POLITIKA IR ADMINISTRAVIMAS
PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
2022, T. 21, Nr. 4 / 2022, Vol. 21, No 4, p. 423-436.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR SOCIAL POLICY IN AMERICA IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICTING RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Eze Simpson Osuagwu*
Helms School of Government
Liberty University
1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg VA 24515
Email: eosuagwu1@liberty.edu

*International Institute for Development Studies, Wilmington DE 19805.
Email: ezeosuagwu@iidstudies.org

Phone: +1-302-666-9359

DOI: 10.13165/VPA-22-21-4-06

Abstract. *This paper discusses the way forward for social policy in America considering the conflicting religious and political ideologies that confront the polity. The paper applies Secularized Evangelical Discourse to analyze the position of the religious right, New Christian Right and mainstream evangelicals to seek answers on the way forward for the American welfare state. This paper argues that the debates between left-wing liberal Democrats and right-wing conservative Republicans have generated an ideological fulcrum that sometimes destabilizes, but often ensures stability for democratic checks and balances. The paper therefore suggests that the way forward for effective social policy implementation is to embrace a secularized notion of moral justice that admits equity, fair play and true statesmanship.*

Keywords: *New Christian Right; Secularized Evangelical Discourse; social policy; public policy; religion and politics.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *naujoji krikščionių dešinė, sekuliarizuotas evangelikų diskursas, socialinė politika, viešoji politika, religija ir politika.*

Introduction

This paper evaluates the interface between religion and politics in American society, drawing from the influence of Christian groups such as Evangelicals and the New Christian Right on the political discourse. The paper also evaluates the state of competing ideologies in the policy arena and furthers the discussion on the way forward in the light of policy interventions implemented by the government in the recent past, synthesized by a Biblical model of government and statesmanship. There is no doubt that the United States was founded on Christian principles, but what is in doubt is whether the founding fathers conceived any idea of a dominant religion (Smith 2016). The argument goes further to suggest that there is no evidence that the God of America's civil religion is the same God of the Bible.[1] However, it is important to remember that by the time "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the official national anthem in 1931, in the American consciousness the "Power that hath made and preserved us as a nation" had become a nondescript deity. A generation later, when "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance (in 1954) and "In God We Trust" became the American motto (in 1956), this bland, distant deity was more fully ensconced on the pedestal.

After his election in 1952, President Eisenhower famously remarked that "our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is." Some scholars such as Huntington (1993) and Miller (2016) consider religious belief and affiliation not as causes of political action, but rather as consequences of political or economic interests. Religion, at most, is a device that savvy elites use to hoodwink gullible masses into serving their purposes. Some American presidents who talked of a divine mission to spread liberty used such language and symbols to aggrandize themselves and their wealthy constituents (Bulmer-Thomas 2018).

This paper probes into the fundamental concepts of our social policy from the New Deal of President Franklin Roosevelt to the triumphant position of the New Christian Right to seek answers on the way forward for the American welfare state. The paper applies *Secularized Evangelical Discourse* (SED), drawing from the rhetoric and actions of the New Christian Right. Evangelical discourse in contemporary America tends to exclude nonwhites, irrespective of the shared feeling of national belonging in other socio-cultural and ethno-religious groups. Delehanty, Edgell and Stewart (2019) describe SED as political statements drawn out of religious terms with roots in Christian evangelical philosophies but politicized to serve an underlying social and political interest. There is no doubt that the New Christian Right has taken positions on a variety of social policy issues including family life, public morality, affirmative action, and education (Midgley 1990). Numerous arguments have been generated to support this stance, but generally this position is inspired by an antipathy to modernism and liberal tendencies in civil society (Bruce 1988; Falwell 1980; Gottfried 1988; Guth 1983). The New Christian Right has used various tactics to influence the political process, including well-orchestrated media campaigns, direct lobbying, the public endorsement of legislative and presidential candidates, and even civil disobedience (Jorstad 1987).

The competing positions in debates between left-wing liberal Democrats and right-wing

[1] From the time of Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, the idea of a deistic deity was deliberately at war with the earlier, Puritan vision of the Lord who would rule over the "city set on a hill." Starting in 1776, and with greater or lesser emphasis throughout American history, the lack of specificity has meant that the God who is invoked may be conceived in the mind of the patriot (or the churchgoer) as the Triune God, but not so in terms of the body politic (Noll 2015).

conservative Republicans have generated an ideological fulcrum that sometimes destabilizes, but often ensures stability for democratic checks and balances. However, the question now is: Where do we go from here; which way forward? There might be no definite answer to this, but there is no doubt that the United States is founded on democratic principles that espouse justice, morality and the fear of God.[2] This paper is presented in six sections: the second evaluates the interface between religion and politics today; the third evaluates the state of competing political ideologies; the fourth discusses the way forward based on the current trend of social policy; the fifth synthesizes the above views with a Biblical model of government and statesmanship; and the sixth section concludes.

The interface between religion and politics in SED

Discussions on religion have been inadvertently intertwined with the discussion of politics, even since medieval times (Smith 2016). There is no doubt that evangelical Christian beliefs and traditions constitute the core of American national identity. Albeit, most empirical studies in this area focus on the activities and identities of evangelical Christians, to the exclusion of others whose cultures have been shaped by evangelical beliefs but exist outside the mainstream (Delehanty et al. 2019). In the late 1970s, political conservatives collectively known as the New Right helped evangelicals establish political institutions capable of swinging elections (Shires 2007). Most of these New Right leaders, although they may have been religious, were not evangelicals. The New Right was anticommunist, anti-union, and anti-big government; it attacked the programs and the objectives of the Great Society and defended traditional individual rights, but also criticized corporate executives.

However, the protagonists of the New Right objected to the new individual rights sought by political liberals – such as abortion rights, women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights – not because they believed these positions would destroy America spiritually per se, but because they believed such changes would destabilize society (Shires 2007). Ultimately, many New Right pundits sought to establish or confirm moral behavior and business-friendly economic practices for the purpose of making the technocracy itself function more efficiently. Conservatives with strong religious convictions decided to go into politics to reestablish America's lost economic and social order. A case in point was the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*,[3] and the notion that the government had launched a war against religious life. Nonetheless, the court did not intend to infuse government with religion. By the 1970s, the traditional evangelical perspective was changing, largely because the new Christians, those born of the counterculture, and reform-minded evangelicals tended to look at these issues a little differently. Reformers and baby-boomer Christians understood that actions to help the poor, the sick, and the oppressed had important spiritual implications in and of themselves.

A Pew Research Center (2014) study shows that the average American seeks to live a strong-

[2] Thompson (1986) quotes a letter from John Adams to Thomas Jefferson in 1815: "The question before the human race is whether the God of nature shall govern the world by his own laws, or whether priests and kings shall rule it by fictitious miracles." These words captured the essence of the fear of the convergence of religion and politics.

[3] *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), was a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the Court ruled that the U.S. Constitution protects a pregnant woman's liberty to choose to have an abortion without excessive government restriction.

er religious life, anchored in acute symbolic differences with others based on religious indoctrination. In the present dispensation, according to Delehanty et al. (2019), Donald Trump's strong and persistent support among white evangelicals has renewed debate around a long-standing question: How do white evangelical Christian traditions shape prevailing understandings of national identity and belonging in the United States? In this regard, white evangelicalism is more than a religious subculture. Historically, it constitutes the primary source of the contemporary institutional mode of transmitting discourse about the religious roots of citizenship and national identity (Williams 1995) – a discourse that emanates from evangelicalism but has formed the basis for renewed clarifications and support for the understanding of national membership and identity (Braunstein 2017a). This discourse became very dominant in the sociopolitical culture of American society throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, with increasing pluralism (Jones 2016; Wuthnow 1988). The cultural gap between white evangelical Protestants, conservative Catholics and Jews was beginning to close in the postwar period. However, growing conflicts over issues became a defining feature of the civic landscape, contributing to divisions between mainline and fundamentalist Protestants and sparking the growth of a multidenominational coalition (Worthen 2013; Wuthnow 1988). This discourse is now employed not only by people in white evangelical denominations and congregations, but also by culturally conservative people in other faith traditions (Wuthnow 1988). It is not inherently politically conservative (Williams 1995), but, certainly since the twentieth century, Republicans have doled out the politics of exclusion to the American public via a culturally divisive religious rhetoric that is aimed at garnering the support of white evangelicals as a veritable political constituency (Kruse 2016; McAdam and Kloos 2014; Worthen 2013; Wuthnow 2012). Its embrace by the Republican Party extended its appeal beyond evangelicals to include others whose understandings of national belonging reflect white Christian cultural heritage, if not Christian beliefs. Politicians use profound religious rhetoric structured in SED to allay the fears and worries of evangelicals in particular and society at large. Delehanty et al. (2019) opine that conservative-leaning candidates adopt a form of religious code to pacify white evangelical voters, but others do not often take notice of the sensitive information embedded therein.

American society has witnessed a steady decline in religiosity, notwithstanding the fact that religious belief and behavior significantly impact politics and public life (Delehanty et al., 2019). In the polarized American political environment, religion persists in political speech and action (Chaves 1994; Williams 1995) and shapes the symbolic construction of the civic sphere (Alexander 2006). In mainstream America, white evangelicals exhibit a conservative culture that traditionally excludes nonwhites (Tranby and Hartmann 2008), the "undeserving" poor (Steensland 2007), atheists (Edgell et al. 2016), Muslims (Braunstein 2017a), and members of the LGBTQ+ community (Haider-Market and Taylor 2016). This means that evangelical political viewpoints are rather too narrow to be used as a yardstick for analyzing political attitudes and how Christian ideas affect politics and social order in America. Religious discourse in America has always been described in line with the divisions between the orthodox and modernist (Wuthnow 1988).

There are persistent evangelical cues from mainline Protestants, Catholics, and even Jews who have adopted evangelical practices and attitudes. Equally necessary is the need for Americans of different religious backgrounds to understand the cultural roots of many political statements and actions. There is an underlying coherence between the different shades of opinion that propel decisions and sentiments of the various extremes of political ideologies. These opinions are intertwined with the actions of party politics and social movements; starting with conservatives mobilized against the New Deal social welfare policies of the 1930s (Kruse 2016), and later move-

ments with the goal of opposing civil rights, abortion, and same-sex marriage (McAdam and Kloos 2014).[4]

Nonetheless, conservatives are not alone in this push for religious narrative as the centerpiece of political discourse – liberals sometimes adopt similar methods to create a sense of national belonging. For instance, Barack Obama employed civil religious discourse as a candidate and as president (Gorski 2011). However, there is relatively strong evidence of racial and cultural biases when right wing conservatives apply SED in their political discourse in comparison to the left's use of civil religious discourse. Mitt Romney, in a bid to assuage his conservative base with religious rhetoric in his consecutive runs for the presidency in 2008 and 2012, invoked negative feelings about his Mormon identity and raised concerns about Barack Obama's Christian faith (Crosby 2015). Donald Trump was quick to adopt conservative religious language during his campaign for the office of the president of the United States. This approach enhanced his candidacy and electability by building a strong white evangelical support base. Although Obama and other left-wing liberal democrats have adopted civil religious discourse to score political points, it has not been as critically divisive as their Republican counterparts (Braunstein 2017b; Gorski 2017b), and has featured less in country-wide political speech (Braunstein 2018). SED takes on specific meanings when deployed in political speech that are often shrouded in public opinion on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage, notwithstanding the role of religion (Hout and Fischer 2014). The myth of national belonging has been built around the narrow concept of white evangelical culture (Bail 2014; Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014; Kruse 2016; McAdam and Kloos 2014). According to Jones (2016), political actors have used the following nonsectarian phrases to appease evangelicals in political discourse: "traditional family values," "wholesome school environments," "economic self-sufficiency," and "religious freedom." Thus, Delehanty et al. (2019) opine that SED is rooted in a discourse derived from white evangelical traditions but is used politically in ways that go beyond its religious origins and that are embedded into political debates.

Delehanty et al. (2019, 1288) measured the dimensions of SED on the American body politic by asking respondents "whether one must be religious to be a good American." Respondents showed that American evangelical leaders have long constructed symbolic boundaries pertaining to religiosity and national belonging. Americans generally see the president as a beacon of moral values, and as such expect anyone occupying a political leadership position to reflect exceptional moral standards. In the view of many Americans, it is not enough for politicians to possess outstanding oratory skill or excellent intellectual and academic records – they must also demonstrate high moral standing to be trusted and accepted (Smidt 2006). To this end, evangelicals hope and always believe that the president should be in a position to defend America's Christian heritage and the surrounding narratives that promote the myth (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018; Gorski 2017a). Donald Trump's wide acceptance and subsequent downplay of his past amoral behaviors demonstrate the success of the use of strong Christian rhetoric and actions to pacify white evangel-

[4] Studies show that white evangelical discourse fuels the polarization of the American political space. The right endeavors to sustain their conservative base by appealing to white evangelicals on issues including welfare policy (Davis and Robinson 2012), consumer taste (Massengill 2013), and Islamophobia (Braunstein 2017a; Brubaker 2013). This strongly effects the attitudinal changes of not only evangelicals, but people of various religious identities. Recent research suggests that candidates and politicians have used SED in appealing for political support from religious conservatives without overtly showcasing strong religious nationalism (Albertson 2015; Djupe and Calfano 2013). Politicians apply conservative cues in order to activate evangelical support and evoke sentiments for a society unified around white Christian heritage (Campbell, Green, and Layman 2011).

ical leaders. In return, Trump has nominated judges and supported policies that white evangelicals widely approve of. Delehanty et al. (2019, 1288) argue that the steps taken by Trump to assuage the feelings and support of white evangelicals "speak to the importance that evangelical culture ascribes to personal moral leadership rooted in religious faith." Perhaps the most significant interface between religion and politics in American life in recent times is the same-sex marriage case involving Kim Davis, the Rowan County Kentucky Clerk, who refused to issue a marriage license to a same-sex couple by invoking "God's authority."[5] It is obvious that political discourse in America, often laced with Christian religious rhetoric, passes through the scrutiny of white evangelicals and goes unnoticed by the non-sectarian populace to promote certain ideological stances.

The state of competing political ideologies in the policy arena today

Murray (2015, 196) asks the question "what do we want to accomplish?" The differing political ideologies that envelop the policy arena make it difficult to accomplish much within a stipulated time. Every issue of national discourse has been dissected to reflect the viewpoints of either the left or the right, and in general terms must showcase a liberal or conservative leaning. These differing viewpoints in today's political arena have led to sequestration, government shutdown and other social policy annihilations that affect the wellbeing of individuals and the progress of American society (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Although differing political ideologies make the debate more robust and promote a political culture that is cautiously optimistic, one strongly questions the rationale for an idealistic stance that ignores the welfare and prosperity of ordinary Americans (McAdam and Kloos 2014). According to Jha, Boudreaux and Banerjee (2018), political leanings affect corporate and individual decisions, which in turn affect social capital. Social capital, on the other hand, affects corporate and individual decisions. Their study aimed to establish whether, in the current political climate, social capital tilts towards certain political ideologies. Their results indicate a double swing: on the one hand, high social capital regions show a greater inclination for the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party agenda is in essence a transfer of wealth from those that are relatively well-off to those that are relatively poor. The justification for such a transfer is that some people are not doing well financially – not because they have a poor work ethic, but because society has evolved in ways that do not favor their skills.

On the other hand, higher social capital regions might lean toward the Republican Party – a party that champions self-reliance and greater personal responsibility. The Republican Party also supports lower taxes, and rather than helping the poor through redistributive policies, it encourages them to become self-reliant. A region with high social capital could develop values that encourage people to solve their own problems rather than relying on the government (i.e., smaller government). This association can be best understood by the work of de Tocqueville (1835), who was impressed by the American values that celebrated self-interest and self-reliance. He observed that Americans often collaborated to solve problems outside the purview of the government. Because of their active participation in different nongovernment organizations, Americans developed what he called "the art of association." He argued that Americans preferred limited government intervention. Participation in nongovernment organization is a key feature of high social capital. Ultimately, whether social capital is associated with leaning toward the Democratic or Republican

[5] There is no doubt that the constitution of the United States in no way invokes Biblical principles in the protection of the rights of citizens. However, the moral standing of individuals and their Christian principles upon which the American society exists allow the expression of one's religious beliefs and opinions but not interference with others (see Williams 2017).

Party is an empirical question (Jha et al. 2018). In the contemporary political culture of American society, political biases have gained prominence, and play a large role in personal, social and government relations (Iyengar and Westwood 2015) as more people are building their communal and social identities around political labels (Brooks 2014). Iyengar and Westwood (2015) found that it is much easier for Democrats to associate the word "good" with other Democrats; they are also more likely to trust Democrats (the same is true of Republicans).

The current trend of political ideologies stems from a post-modernist worldview and philosophy that embraces a system of multiculturalism, which is embedded in a critical theory that allows culture and norms to be used as tools for the exploitation of the masses. From the events of the 1960s, society has absorbed civil rights movements in the shades of racial desegregation, feminism, environmental activism and, above all, LGBTQ+ rights. All of these competing social issues attract considerable attention from public policy analysts, who question "why" and "how" we got here in seeking answers for political stability and social cohesion. Barber and Pope (2019) ask: "Are people conservative (or liberal) because they are Republican (or Democrat)? Or is it the reverse?" The answer to this question seems very difficult to derive, and could only be produced via empirical scrutiny. Using the election of President Donald Trump as a yardstick, the study finds that many respondents are not assuaged by ideological principles, but party loyalty.[6]

The way forward based on past policy interventions

The idea that religiosity may be partly based on economic insecurity, and that such insecurity is more common in the United States than in other industrialized nations, may provide a particular structural explanation for the relatively high levels of religious involvement observed in the United States (Jelen 2007). First and most obviously, religion affects public policy (Cochran et al., 2016). The precise linkage between public opinion and public policy is elusive, but few candid observers would deny that the actions of policy-makers (especially elected officials) are influenced by public opinion. To the extent that the values and preferences of ordinary Americans are animated by religious considerations, religion will inevitably affect the content of government policy. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, religious political activism has generally been associated with the political right. Religious conservatives are considered an important voting bloc in the Republican party (Wilcox and Larson 2006), and such partisans are thought to be motivated by "social issues" (involving personal morality) such as abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and the proper role of women in society.

To the extent that democratic discourse requires diversity, religion can provide important sources of ideas to the public debate. The presence of religious diversity in the United States has obvious effects on the practice of religion in the public sphere. Neuhaus (1984) argued that the increasingly secular nature of American culture had rendered the public square "naked," or bereft of a shared moral or religious consensus within which political and social life could be conducted. Religious pluralism is an aspect of the culture of the United States with which religiously motivated political activists have had to contend. Accounts of the Christian Right in the 1980s documented the fact that the movement was fragmented, and rendered relatively ineffective, by the effects of religious particularism (Jellen 2007). Williams (2007) observed that religion helps legitimate cultural forms and in turn becomes a legitimate mode of expression within a culture. Many scholars

[6] This informs the reason why Trump's harsh campaign rhetoric and amoral posture did not affect the outcome of the 2016 presidential election.

posit the basis of these changes in what is generally known as the 1960s, where the authority of many social institutions was challenged and individual expression was given the same primacy in the moral, cultural and religious realms that it had in capitalist economic ideology and institutions (Cochran et al. 2016; Williams 2017; Owen 2019).

Capitalism may be too stiff, to the extent that it creates limited social capital for the majority who work for the upper class. In order to cushion the effects of this shortfall, the government is poised to deliver some goods free to the less privileged in the form of social welfare. In the American welfare state, criticisms are rife that the social policy may be construed as transferring from the haves to the have-nots (Murray 2015). However, one wonders: if better housing, nutrition, and medical care contribute to less misery and more happiness; so also do good parents, a loving spouse, safe streets, personal freedom and the respect of one's neighbors provide the alternative. The synthesis of this argument is that the provision of government support, if abused, breaks the family and reduces the propensity for upward mobility of recipients in the social ladder. Murray (2015) further submits that social programs in a democratic society tend to produce net harm in dealing with the most difficult problems because they inherently have enough inducements to produce bad behavior, and not enough solutions to stimulate good conduct; the more difficult the problem, the more likely it is that this relationship will prevail.

Credited with so many good things, religion and religious organizations are culturally legitimate in American society. Individuals who participate in religious organizations are thought to be good people (Noll 1985, 43). It is difficult to run for public office without being a religious participant, and religious participation makes people, at-least by some American criteria, appear: better family members; more successful participants in education and economic institutions; less likely to commit crime or other "sins of the flesh"; and more willing to help others, often through volunteering their time and donating their money. Smith (2016) proclaimed that the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt reflects so many ideas that our "Founding Fathers" would not have embraced, which includes government involvement in our lives from cradle to grave (or from womb to tomb). Smith (2016) further declared that, today, post modernism appears to be a regnant philosophy. He traced the roots of postmodernism, in part, to what has been called the quintessential American philosophy: pragmatism, which arose in the late nineteenth century. A pragmatic approach, Smith (2016) contends, in the extreme takes the position that the end justifies the means – that is, that even underhandedness and dishonesty may be employed in order to promote a desired outcome. From all indications, the way forward seems to favor a religious, God-fearing posture for one to articulate a realistic public policy that would create a social and political balance.

The Biblical model of government and statesmanship

From the scriptures, we learn that government operates under authority from God. In Romans 13:1, the scripture says "let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." A true statesman should be able to stand strong and disagree well (Fischer 1998, 13). In the same vein, statesmanship requires the individual to acknowledge the sovereignty of God; knowing full well that God is the ultimate source of authority and power. Fischer further stated that humility is a very important characteristic for a person to serve the needs of the people. A humble disposition will eschew foolish pride and lack of wisdom. Biblical injunction recognizes that even though the state derives its power from the people, absolute power resides with God. The greatest problem facing our society today, as Fischer (1998, 8) puts it, has nothing to do with the government at all. There is no such thing as absolute

truth, but the right answer to our problems could be found in God and a believer in the Christian faith. Liberty of the mind comes from acknowledging the sovereignty of God. Fischer (1998) further opines that if society and government are going to be preserved and set free from the bondage of sin and its deadly influences, then change has to occur first of all on a personal level. A study conducted by Jackson, Hester and Gray (2018) on revealing religious diversity across people and politics in America, using the perception and face visualization approach to measure God's mind in a large sample of American Christians, showed how motivations and cognitive biases shape believers' understandings of God's mind. Compared to liberals, the study found that American conservatives are more motivated to maximize social regulation, emphasizing law enforcement and authoritarian leadership. By contrast, liberals are more motivated to maximize societal tolerance, emphasizing intergroup harmony and social justice. These contrasting motivations suggest that conservatives may visualize an older, sterner and more masculine God who is better suited to safeguarding social order, whereas liberals may visualize a younger, kinder, and more feminine God who is better suited to encouraging social tolerance. This finding implies that one's view of the primacy of God in one's life and social order is influenced by one's political leaning. To this end, the spirit of statesmanship counteracts with the person's visualization of God.

However, a Biblical conception of true belief in God is bereft of one's political ideology. Fischer (1998) frantically stated that God, as sovereign, is the main reason that we know that government in general, and government officials in particular, should not have unlimited powers. The role of the Bible in public policy could be inferred from the passage selected for the swearing-in ceremony of Jimmy Carter as president – Micah 6:8 – which reads: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" This passage reflects Carter's way of relating his personal faith to his role as president. In another scenario, the passage is in sharp contrast with that which was used for the inauguration of President Reagan – Chronicles 7:14 – which reads: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." This passage suggests a public, not a private, vision. It makes a public charge to the nation as God's people. The power of statesmanship in the United States has always been to appeal to God through the Bible for public policy guidance. However, to use the Bible in public policy discussion violates the proper basis of discussion in a democratic society.

Noll's (1985, 43) opined that there were devout Christians among the founding fathers of our nation, but there were probably more who would be considered "secular humanists" by the contemporary Christian right.[7] Christianity may be the tacit religion of the U.S., but it is not the "official" religion of the country. Those who would use scriptures in public-policy discussion forget this, and improperly assume that the Bible can be used legitimately to address the nation. They forget that the Bible is neither the preamble to the U.S. Constitution nor an amendment to it. However, a true statesman must serve with the fear of God, and the government must work towards

[7] Indeed, the individual most responsible for guaranteeing religious freedom in the U.S., Thomas Jefferson, was an avowed deist. In a 1779 preamble to a bill on religious freedom introduced in the Virginia legislature, Jefferson wrote: "Our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics and geometry; therefore the proscribing of any citizen as unworthy of the public confidence by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to office of public trust . . . unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which he has a natural right."

fulfilling God's purpose on earth.

Conclusion

In this paper, we evaluated the interface between religion and politics in contemporary American society and found that, despite the fierce debate that surrounds our religious inclination, there is every tendency to imply that America's civil religion appeals to an interest group based on a specific ideological front. Although there is no accepted state religion, Americans are most likely to be sympathetic to the Christian religious faith. In recent times we have seen the impact of the New Religious Right on the body politic in changing the political landscape through a persistent demand for a Christian-like statesman to be voted for as President of the United States.

This paper reveals that the most dominant political ideology in the United States today draws from the post-modernist worldview and a critical theory of multiculturalism that promotes a culture of capitalism, where the poor work for the rich. The failure of the American welfare state to alleviate poverty and instead perpetually impoverish those involved in the scheme is now a cause of concern for scholars. There is a fervent need to restructure the social security scheme, as conceived under the New Deal and subsequent reforms, to suit the socio-economic conditions of today. Although debate on the political spectrum from both sides of the aisle is necessary for democratic stability, one should expect a common ground when there is a need to put the national interest above personal sentiments. Our democracy should begrudge the notion of winner takes all, and instead compromise for the benefit of the society.

This paper also reveals that politicians usually adopt a consistent pattern of Christian religious rhetoric and actions to assuage the feelings of white evangelicals in a bid to strengthen their sense of religiosity and national belonging. To this end, the paper finds that the use of SED in political discourse is camouflaged with religious rhetoric by politicians and social activists in order to penetrate the conscience of the traditional white evangelical and at the same time to promote a secular or humanistic public policy issue such as social welfare or civil rights. The New Christian Right and the reform-minded evangelicals of countercultural social movements adopt a blend of religion and politics in social and political discourse to reconstruct the traditional ideological viewpoints of the American 'Christian' society in the same manner as the SED.

Lastly, it is a fact that America is not a religious republic. Although founded on Biblical principles and religious persuasion, our founding fathers did not conceive a state that is governed by the tenets of a particular religion. The true order of principles would rather admit to moral justice and the respect for fundamental rights as enshrined in the constitution. Above all, a secularized notion of moral justice entails the ideas that the fear of God for statesmanship and true allegiance to the service of humanity shall be the guiding principles of our government. A humble disposition will eschew foolish pride and the lack of wisdom thereof.

References

1. Albertson, Bethany L. 2015. "Dog-Whistle Politics: Multivocal Communication and Religious Appeals." *Political Behavior* 37 (1): 3–26.
2. Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2006. *The Civil Sphere*. Oxford University Press.
3. Bail, Christopher A. 2014. *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
4. Baldassarri, Delia, and Amir Goldberg. 2014. "Neither Ideologues nor Agnostics: Alternative Voters' Belief System in an Age of Partisan Politics." *American Journal of Sociology* 120 (1): 45–95.
5. Barber, Michael, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2019. "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America." *American Political Science Review* 113 (1): 38–54.
6. Braunstein, Ruth. 2017a. "Muslims as Outsiders, Enemies, and Others: The 2016 Presidential Election and the Politics of Religious Exclusion." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5 (3): 355–72.
7. Braunstein, Ruth. 2017b. *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.
8. Braunstein, Ruth. 2018. "A (More) Perfect Union? Religion, Politics, and Competing Stories of America." *Sociology of Religion* 79 (2): 172–95.
9. Brooks, David. 2014. "Why Partyism is Wrong." *The New York Times*, October 27, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/opinion/david-brooks-why-partyism-is-wrong.html
10. Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. "In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism." *Citizenship Studies* 8(2): 115–27.
11. Bruce, Steve. 1988. *The rise and fall of the New Christian Right, 1978–1988*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.
12. Bulmer-Thomas, Victor. 2018. *Empire in Retreat: The Past, Present, and Future of the United States*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
13. Campbell, David E., John C. Green, and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2011. "The Party Faithful: Partisan Images, Candidate Religion, and the Electoral Impact of Party Identification." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (1): 42–58.
14. Chaves, Mark. 1994. "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority." *Social Forces* 72 (3): 749–74.
15. Cochran, Clarke E., Lawrence C. Mayer, T. R. Carr, N. Joseph Cayer, Mark J. McKenzie, and Laura R. Peck. 2016. *American Public Policy: An Introduction*. 11th ed. Boston MA: Cengage Learning.
16. Crosby, Richard Benjamin. 2015. "Toward a Practical, Civic Piety: Mitt Romney, Barack Obama, and the Race for National Priest." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18 (2): 301–30.
17. Davis, Nancy Jean, and Robert V. Robinson. 2012. *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare in Egypt, Israel, Italy, and the United States*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
18. Delehanty, Jack, Penny Edgell, and Evan Stewart. 2019. "Christian America? Secularized Evangelical Discourse and the Boundaries of National Belonging." *Social Forces* 97 (3): 1283–1306.
19. deTocqueville, Alexis. 1835. *Democracy in America*. London: Saunders and Otley.
20. Djupe, Paul A., and Brian R. Calfano. 2013. *God Talk: Experimenting with the Religious Cau-*

ses of Public Opinion. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
21. Edgell, Penny, Douglas Hartmann, Evan Stewart, and Joseph Gerteis. 2016. "Atheists and Other Cultural Outsiders: Moral Boundaries and the Non-Religious in the United States." *Social Forces* 95 (2): 607–38.
22. Falwell, Jerry. 1980. *Listen, America*! Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
23. Fischer, Khalib. 1998. "Biblical Principles of History & Government." *Faculty Dissertations*, 37.
24. Gorski, Philip. 2011. "Barack Obama and Civil Religion." *Political Power and Social Theory* 22: 179–214.
25. Gorski, Philip. 2017a. *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
26. Gorski, Philip. 2017b. "Why Evangelicals Voted for Trump: A Critical Cultural Sociology." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5 (3): 338–54.
27. Gottfried, Paul. 1988. *The conservative movement*. Boston, MA: Twayne.
28. Guth, James L. 1983. *The New Christian Right.* In *The New Christian Right*, edited by R. C. Liebman and R. Wuthnow, 31–45. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine.
29. Haider-Market, Donald P., and Jami Taylor. 2016. "Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Slow Forward Dance of LGBT Rights in America." In *After Marriage Equality: The Future of LGBT Rights*, edited by Carlos A. Ball, 42–72. New York: New York University Press.
30. Hout, Michael, and Claude Fischer. 2014. "Explaining Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Political Backlash and Generational Succession, 1987–2012." *Sociological Science* 1: 423–47.
31. Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 (3): 22–49.
32. Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. "Fear and loathing across party lines: new evidence on group polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 690–707.
33. Jackson, Joshua C., Neil Hester, and Kurt Gray. 2018. "The faces of God in America: Revealing religious diversity across people and politics." *PLoS ONE* 13 (6).
34. Jellen, Ted G. 2007. "Constitutional Basis of Religious Pluralism in the United States: Causes and Consequences." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 612: 26–41.
35. Jha, Anand, Christopher J. Boudreaux, and Vasabjit Banerjee. 2018. "Political leanings and social capital." *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, 72: 95–105.
36. Jones, Robert P. 2016. *The End of White Christian America*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
37. Jorstad, Erling. 1987. *The New Christian Right, 1981–1988*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
38. Kruse, Kevin. 2016. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. New York: Basic Books.
39. Massengill, Rebekkah P. 2013. *Wal-Mart Wars: Moral Populism in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: New York University Press.
40. McAdam, Doug, and Karina Kloos. 2014. *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Postwar America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
41. Miller, Paul D. 2016. *American Power and Liberal Order: A Conservative Internationalist Grand Strategy*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
42. Murray, Charles. 2015. *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980*. Basic Books, New York.

43. Neuhaus, Richard Jon. 1984. *The Naked Public Square*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
44. Noll, Mark A. 1985. "The Bible in Revolutionary America." In *The Bible in American Law, Politics, and Political Rhetoric*, edited by J. T. Johnson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
45. Noll, Mark A. 2015. *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. The University of North Carolina Press.
46. Owen, John M. 2019. "Culture, Religion, and American Power – A Review Essay." *Christian Scholars Review* 48 (3): 303–309.
47. Pew Research Center. 2014. "Public Sees Religion's Influence Waning." Accessed October 10, 2019. http://www.pewforum.org/2014/09/22/public-sees-religions-influence-waning/.
48. Smidt, Corwin E. 2006. "Evangelicals and the American Presidency." In *Religion, Race, and the American Presidency*, edited by Gaston Espinosa, 1–26. New York: Rowan and Littlefield.
49. Smith, Frank Joseph, ed. 2016. *Religion and Politics in America: An Encyclopedia of Church and State in American Life*. ABC-CLIO, LLC. ProQuest Ebook Central. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=4561823.
50. Steensland, Brian. 2007. *The Failed Welfare Revolution: America's Struggle over Guaranteed Income Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
51. Thompson, Kenneth W. 1986. "Religion and Politics in the United States: An Overview." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (January): 12–24.
52. Tranby, Eric, and Douglas Hartmann. 2008. "Critical Whiteness Theories and the Evangelical 'Race Problem': Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47 (3): 341–59.
53. Whitehead, Andrew L., Samuel L. Perry, and Joseph O. Baker. 2018. "Make America Christian Again: Christian Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election." *Sociology of Religion* 79 (2): 147–71.
54. Wilcox, Clyde, and Carin Larson. 2006. *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Christian Right in the twentieth century America*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
55. Williams, Rhys H. 1995. "Constructing the Public Good: Social Movements and Cultural Resources." *Social Problems* 42(1): 124–44.
56. Williams, Rhys H. 2007. "The Languages of the Public Sphere: Religious Pluralism, Institutional Logics, and Civil Society." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 612 (July): 42–61.
57. Williams, Howell H. 2018. "From Family Values to Religious Freedom: Conservative Discourse and the Politics of Gay Rights." *New Political Science* 40 (2): 246–63.
58. Worthen, Molly. 2013. *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
59. Wuthnow, Robert. 1988. *The Restructuring of American Religion.* Princeton University Press.
60. Wuthnow, Robert. 2012. *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America's Heartland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Eze Simpson Osuagwu

AMERIKOS SOCIALINĖS POLITIKOS ASPEKTAI PRIEŠTARINGŲ RELIGINIŲ IR POLITINIŲ IDEOLOGIJŲ KONTEKSTE

Anotacija. *Šiame straipsnyje analizuojami tam tikri Amerikos (Jungtinių Amerikos Valstijų) socialinės politikos aspektai ir atsižvelgiama į prieštaringas religines ir politines ideologijas, su kuriomis susiduria ši viešosios politikos kryptis. Siekiant pateikti tikslią informaciją apie įvairius Amerikos (JAV) gerovės valstybės raidos aspektus, tyrime analizuojami valstybės ir socialinės politikos gerovės klausimai, kurie aktualūs sekuliarizuotam evangelikų diskursui, religinės dešinės judėjimui, naujosios krikščioniškosios dešinės judėjimui ir pagrindinėms evangelikų pozicijoms. Teigiama, kad diskusijos (apie gerovės valstybę ir tai, kaip įgyvendinti socialinę politiką) tarp kairiųjų liberalų demokratų ir dešiniųjų konservatyvių respublikonų dažnai destabilizuoja, juolab ne visada užtikrina demokratinių procesų stabilumą. Todėl tegitina, kad, įgyvendinant veiksmingą socialinę politiką, reikia išryškinti sekuliarizuotą moralinio teisingumo sampratą, kuri pripažįsta teisingumą, sąžiningą politinį žaidimą ir garantuoja stabilų valstybingumą.*

Eze Simpson Osuagwu is a research fellow at Helms School of Government,
Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg VA 24515.
Email: eosuagwu1@liberty.edu
and
Resident scholar at the International Institute for Development Studies, Wilmington DE 19805, USA.
Email: ezeosuagwu@iidstudies.org

Eze Simpson Osuagwu – Liberty universiteto Helmso valdymo mokyklos mokslinis bendradarbis, Lynčburgas; Tarptautinio plėtros studijų instituto mokslininkas, Vilmingtonas, JAV.
E. paštas: eosuagwu1@liberty.edu; ezeosuagwu@iidstudies.org