

**CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE
'RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT' IN AMERICA AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF
THAT ON HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN THE U.S. AND THE THIRD WORLD**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines from a sociological perspective the involvement of what is today called "the Religious Right" in politics and the consequences of the organization's involvement on human rights within the U.S. and the international arena. It traces the history of the Religious Right from the 1940s up to the 1990s. The paper also examines the issues that galvanized the Religious Right to participate actively in politics. This is followed by an assessment of the theology and worldview that significantly influenced the political activism of White evangelical Protestants. The paper then critically analyzes the positive impact of the Religious Right on human rights at the international level. On the basis of the foregoing analysis, I attempt to explain why the Religious Right was more successful in making positive impact on human rights issues at the international level but not in the domestic front. The paper concludes by articulating the absence of social injustice in the political platform of the Religious Right, and then provides a biblical justification for the centrality of social justice in the mission of Christianity.

Christianity and Human Rights: A Sociological Assessment of the “Rise of the Religious Right in America’ and the Impact of that on Human Rights Concerns in the United States and the Third World

Human Rights: A Critical Overview

The text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is composed of thirty articles. Numerous nations in the world ratified it, even though it is only binding on the states in moral respects. "Rights are primarily a legal concept, an advantage granted under a certain legal system. As a moral term, they refer to what is fair and just" (Meijer 2001:14). Although there is no consensus on how to classify the rights, there are three major focal points of the rights. These are:

- a) The rights to life and the non-violability of a person. These rights are aimed at keeping the integrity of the individual.
- b) Civil and political rights: These rights include "freedom of expression and assembly, the right to a public hearing by an impartial tribunal and rights to take part in government and public activities.

These two categories of human rights are considered to be "classical human rights" because some of them have been in existence since in the 18th century in various European countries and the United States.

- c) Socioeconomic Rights. This category of rights ensure that the conditions exist for every person to realize “a dignified material and spiritual existence" (Meijer 2001:15).

Social, economic, and cultural rights are listed articles 22 to 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The different kinds of rights that are listed under this category of rights are: right to “employment, remuneration, social security, education, housing, legal aid and medical care.”

It also includes “rights to protection from unemployment, free and compulsory education, rest and leisure, and periodic holidays with pay” Meiji 2001:20). These rights were further discussed

and extended in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Although conditions for the realization of these rights were by far not in existence at the time they rights were elaborated, it became a commitment to which all nations that ratified the declaration are obliged to honor.

- d) The fourth and final category of rights are those that are collective in nature i.e., collective rights. The rights are vested among the members of a community and examples of such rights include: "the right to peace, development, and the use of natural resources" (Meiji 2001:15).

The Universal Declaration (article 29) asserts that it is the duty and obligation of states, organizations and individuals "to promote and observe human rights" (Meiji 2001:15). The central reasoning behind this assertion is that if individuals, organizations, and the state do not ensure that our communities as social environments nurture and guarantee human rights, we cannot as persons enjoy human rights and their benefits.

The philosophy and rationale behind the Universal Human Rights Declaration could be deduced from this brief citation from the preamble of the document:

Whereas the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..... and whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind" (Meijer 2001:17).

The conclusion of the Declaration's preamble state that "the Universal Declaration is proclaimed to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms" (Meijer 2001:17).

From the preamble for the Universal Declaration of human rights, we can draw some conclusions about the philosophical rationale for the Universal Declaration. The declaration makes the fundamental assumption that all humans have dignity and rights that cannot be taken

away from them. It also believes that humans all over the world are equal irrespective of where they come from. The Declaration also maintains that where people's rights are denied or taken away, freedom, injustice and peace are undermined. Furthermore, when human rights are ignored, neglected or denied, then conditions are created for behaviors that become barbaric by civilized scholars. The Declaration also asserts that the awareness and effective implementation of human rights require teaching and education so that respect for the rights can be widely publicized. In terms of the responsibility for the implementing, respecting, and honoring the rights, the Declaration clearly states that this falls on: states, individuals and organizations, including commercial organizations. The core of contemporary human civilization, the Declaration seems to suggest, is having and upholding human rights. The upholding of human rights is what provides dignity to human beings.

In the human rights literature, economic and social human rights are understood as follows:

Economic and social human rights are fully defined and articulated in international law. Economic rights include the right to property, the right to work, and the right to social security. Social rights include those rights necessary for an adequate standard of living, including rights to food, health, shelter, and education (Meiji 2001:15).

The economic rights treaty came into full effect on January 3, 1976 (Meiji 2001:55). Two conceptual categories that are helpful as analytical concepts that aid in the process of understanding human rights in general but particularly social and economic rights are: economic equality and the capabilities approach. These two analytical concepts are used as tools to evaluate how far a society is progressing in the realization of human rights in general but particularly social and economic rights.

With regards to economic equality, Amartya Sen asserts:

Economic equality signifies the equal provision of public goods, including nutrition, sanitation, shelter, clothing, primary and secondary education, and basic healthcare. Economic equality, as distinct from income equality, forms the foundation for achieving economic and social human rights. Economic equality is contingent on public policy to ameliorate deprivations and create equal opportunity for all. Such public policy measures would focus on health care, sanitation, unemployment insurance, job retraining programs, public education, and so on (Sen 1999, cited in Felice 2003:22-23).

Sen's analysis indicates that to evaluate a society's progress in the realization of human rights, we have to examine public policies. We need to critically evaluate the content of public policies and their distributional consequences among the different segments of a society's population. If public policies for instance inhibit some people from access to healthcare, sanitation, unemployment insurance, job retraining programs, and public education etc. then we have grounds to suspect whether there is a commitment to uphold economic and social rights.

Another way to evaluate the progress that a society is making in the upholding of economic and social human rights is evaluating the extent to which the society provides its citizens with what is necessary to make them capable of realizing economic and social human rights in their capacity as productive individuals in society.

Elaborating on the approach that underscores the capabilities approach, Amartya Sen asserts:

A way to consider real equality of opportunity is through equality of capabilities. A person's capability for adequate functioning depends on being well nourished, avoiding premature mortality, self-respect, and being able to participate in the life of the community. The capabilities approach allows us to look at the actual ways in which individuals and groups are given the freedom to achieve adequate functioning. The capabilities approach examines the differences in social conditions that affect human capabilities, including public education, crime and violence, health care and infectious disease, public facilities, and community relations (Sen 1992, cited in Felice 2003:23).

Sen's equality of capability is a critique of the popular idea of equality of opportunity which is the concept of equality that predominantly informs contemporary public policy in the United

States. There are of course several limitations of the idea and practice of equal opportunity. First, it does not take into cognizance historical injustice. It just attempts to build on that at a particular point. It is also essentially concerned about creating a legitimate unequal society, since it assumes that once given the opportunity to compete fairly, unequal results from the competition owing to success and failure in the competitive process is legitimate. Thus equal opportunity at best allows people to compete to become unequal. Yet this inequality is supposed to result in a meritocratic society where the best will rule while the misfits will be relegated. Legitimate questions have of course been raised about the viability of a purely meritocracy society, assuming the idea of equal opportunity was implemented in its details. Having elaborated on the concept of human rights, in the next section, I will explore the emergence of the Religious Right in America.

The Emergence of the Religious Right in America

Although the New Religious Right came into public prominence with the emergence of Moral Majority in 1979, one can trace the social issues and processes that have gradually mobilized conservative Christians to coalesce and formed a social movement. The Religious Right is not a monolithic group (Martin 1996; Pierard 1985:98-113). There are many strands of voices and interest within the movement. Furthermore, there are many people of faith who are not Christians that vote with the religious right which is predominately made of up of White Protestant and evangelical Christians of the right. For instance, conservative Jews align themselves with the Christian Right even though they are not Christians. Overall, it is fair to say that the Religious Right is more united and identified with what they oppose in their culture rather than a concise and coherent theological position on social issues and the social order.

Looking at the history of the involvement of the Christian Right in politics from around 1940 to 1992, one can identify several factors, issues or social processes that have contributed to the emergence of the Religious Right and sustaining its continued survival, thereby shaping it. In the early part of the movement, the following played an important role in galvanizing the movement: Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade, Billy Graham Crusade ministry, the Scopes monkey trial in Tennessee, anti-communist struggle of the postwar period, the John Birch Society, and the Presidential election of John F. Kennedy (i.e., his Catholic identity). Some other events that have shaped the movement are: anti-black civil rights struggle, anger against U.S. Supreme Court ruling against prayer and bible reading in the public schools, the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the perceived decline of moral values in America, and the Barry Goldwater presidential campaign that successfully mobilized grassroots republicans against Northeastern elites dominant in the party. Still, other events that have significantly impacted the Christian Right moment includes: the culture war in schools (Anaheim controversy on sex education in California, and Kanawha County controversy on "liberal" school text books in West Virginia), the Free Speech and anti-war movement that started at University California Berkeley, and the disappointment of the Christian Right with the performance of President Carter's tenure as president. Equally important in this respect were: Roe versus Wade Supreme Court ruling which legalized abortion, the activist role of Francis Schaeffer on abortion and the need for Christian involvement in politics, the reaction of White evangelical Christians to affirmative action and equal rights amendment (ERA); and the disappointment of White evangelical Christians with the White House Conference on the family organized by President Jimmy Carter in 1974 (Martin 1996).

Finally, other factors that were also critically in shaping and sustaining the political activism of the Religious Right include: the emergence of organizationally astute and media savvy political and moral entrepreneurs among evangelicals, the emergence of Ronald Reagan as a presidential candidate that represents the values of the evangelicals, the nomination of justice Sandra O'Connor to the U.S. Supreme Court, the creation of numerous conservative non-profit organizations (The Freedom Council, Focus on the Family, Heritage Foundation etc.) and the evangelicals' distrust of President Bush's (Senior) dedication and commitment to their values, and their absolute hatred of President Clinton, who they saw as the devil's incarnate (Smidt 2001).

One thing that does not figure out clearly among issues or factors that have galvanized and shaped the Religious Right as a social movement is a passionate fight for social and economic justice and rights on behalf of the marginalized and disadvantaged people in the United States. Much of their ability to survive was built on identifying some divisive social issues. Research indicates that as the organization started broadening its base in the 1990s by engaging in campaign for tax cuts and the passage of NAFTA, the coalition started becoming weak. We can explore this issue further by examining the main commitments of the Religious Right as a social movement (Martin 1996:334).

The Main Ideological and Value Commitments of the Religious Right¹

Although there are diverse voices within the Religious Right, yet based on their stated objectives and goals in numerous political engagements, one can deduce a few that are central because they are always recurring. One of their goals and commitment is creating an America that is built fundamentally on Christian values and beliefs. They maintain that America was

¹ I derived insight on this section of the paper from Wogaman, J. Phillip. 2000. *Christian Perspectives on Politics*. Louisville, Kentucky. (Pp.126-127).

established by the founding fathers on the platform of Christianity. To be an American and to be a Christian is to them synonymous, especially, because this was the original situation.

Consequently, they devote much time and energy to fight and reverse what they see as America's deviation from her original principles and traditions. In practice, this has made many members of the movement to react either negatively or ambivalently to any group of people whose activities represent broadening American identity beyond the narrow confines of how the Religious Right defined it. This may mean resisting the civil rights act, voting rights act, multi-cultural education and in some cases immigration. These issues have featured prominently at different points in the political activism of the Religious Right.

Another goal or theme in the commitment of the religious right is the desire to over turn the Supreme Court rulings that ended prayer and bible reading and pubic school. Related to this, they want to have the Ten Commandments explicitly displayed in schools and public places. Along the same line, they want to see more explicit and preponderant use of biblical passages in school text books. They also dislike the teaching of evolution as an explanation of how humans came into existence. Instead of that, they want “creation” only to be taught, or at worst be taught side by side with evolution. The Religious Right as a movement believes that secular humanism is a religion that is gaining significant influence among American elites and mainstream public institutions. But they detest it because instead of making God the focus of human society, human beings became the center.

The Religious Right is also fundamentally opposed to abortion. If the organization would have its way, it would want to reverse Roe versus Wade either through the U.S. Supreme Court or a constitutional amendment that will criminalize abortion. Thus, they want it banned and made illegal although some members of the organization are willing to make concession for

abortions that are aimed at saving the mother's life. At worst, the Religious Right intends to make abortion extremely difficult in society.

Homosexuality is another area of passionate political involvement by the Religious Right. The group opposes anyone making homosexual marriage or union legitimate or become legally and morally acceptable in society. They also do not want homosexual relationship to be recognized as a legitimate topic of discussion in public education. The Religious Right vehemently maintains that the church and society at large should come out and categorically condemn homosexuality, homosexual marriage and unions because all these contradict the teachings of the bible on human sexuality. They also believe that homosexuality and homosexual behavior is a choice by the individual, and therefore can easily be cured through salvation in Christ Jesus.

The Religious Right does not want pornography to be made available to people in the mass media especially the theatre, internet, or published books. In particular, the Religious Right is committed to ensuring that children in public schools should be sheltered from pornography.

In the realm of holding position of authority in the public sphere, the Religious Right is uncomfortable with a situation where a "liberal" or a "secular humanist" is holding a public office. The group's preference is for a conservative evangelical Christian to be in position of public authority; and if this first choice is not realized, then they will accept any conservative politician that shares their traditional / conservative Christian values. Sometimes this translates into almost the Religious Right wanting to create a community of the righteous only, or where only the righteous govern, and others accept their leadership because it is sanctified by God.

The Religious Right also resists the illicit use of drugs and participation in gambling. The organization prefers that the selling and consumption of drugs be never legalized or

decriminalized. As the political involvement of the Religious Right progressed and the organization became a formidable permanent player in the American political landscape, it became pragmatic and made effort to broaden its appeal. Thus the Religious Right became committed to working with all organizations including secular ones that are committed to seeing reduction in the tax rate, dismantling the welfare state or at least reducing its involvement in providing welfare services to the barest minimum. The organization is also committed to abolishing the federal department of education and if not possible, drastically shrinking the role of the federal government in education policy and its implementation across the country. The Religious Right also want to see a more liberal market economy through the deregulation of most businesses and probably abolishing some regulatory agencies e.g., environmental protection agency. The organization opposes any attempt to control the use of guns. In terms of American criminal justice system, the Religious Right is very supportive of retribution as the main philosophical rationale in the criminal justice system. The group is decisively supportive of death penalty and extremely harsh jail term for criminals.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency among the Religious Right to support unilateralism in U.S. foreign policy, delegitimizing the United Nations as a multi-lateral institution for maintaining global social order, a more belligerent U.S. foreign policy in the form of preemptive strike, attributing messianic vision to U.S. foreign policy, and conceptualizing international diplomacy in strictly cosmic warfare of good and evil.

Having examined the values and ideological / theological themes that informed the political activism of the Religious Right, I intend next to briefly examine eight themes that illustrate concrete areas of political participation by the Religious Right and the implication of such participation for human rights in the short and long run.

Empirical Examples of Concrete Involvement of the Religious Right in Partisan Politics: Implications for Public Policy and Human Rights

One example that easily illustrates the negative role played by some members of the Religious Right that amounted to either the direct violation of the human rights of some U.S. citizens or the threat of that was the witch-hunt by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin (Martin 1996, chapt.1). He used his position in a senate committee investigating Un-American activities to identify and punish communist sympathizers in the United States government, and across university campuses in the country. Senator McCarthy was formally rebuked in December 1954 during the Oxnham hearing in the U.S. Senate, for his witch-hunt. But what was quite interesting from the perspective of this paper was how Rev. Billy James Hargis, Rev. Billy Graham, and Carl McIntire gave him significant public support. Hargis and McIntire collaborated with him in his work. For instance, Billy James Hargis was very close to Senator McCarthy and even wrote some of his speeches. The McCarthy witch-hunt shows that religion can be combined with patriotism and used to strategically suppress or deny the constitutional freedom of law abiding citizens on grounds of mere suspicion.

The second example of the Religious Right's political involvement that had human rights implications was the resistance and opposition of the great majority of White evangelical Christians to the civil rights struggle led by Martin Luther King and others (Martin 1996:68-73). In Lynchburg Virginia, Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist church did not allow blacks to worship there. Beyond that, Falwell in one of his Sunday sermons made a formal theological argument attacking Martin Luther's involvement with and leadership of civil rights struggle. He insinuated that Luther was being used by the communist to destabilize the United States. Although Falwell later apologized, it is a fact that he opposed the effort on the part of the black people in America to get full civil rights by abolishing Jim Crow laws. As if this was not enough, Falwell provided

virtual support to the racist and apartheid regime in South Africa even when Nelson Mandela was in prison in Robben Island for no fault other than his fight for equality between blacks and whites so that they can all live peacefully in a free society. Rev. Falwell opposed the effort by the U.S. Congress to declare economic sanctions on the then White minority regime in South Africa, on grounds that such an action would harm the black population of the country (Time Magazine, September 2, 1985). Related to this Rev. Billy Graham's position too on the issue of civil rights for blacks was at best ambivalent. He was for instance once recorded as publicly disagreeing with Martin Luther King, when King said that he was looking forward to a time when a black and white boy will hold hands and play together in Alabama. Graham's response (which was influenced by dispensationalist pre-millenarian eschatology) to King's future hope was that what King desired will never happen until Jesus Christ return. In other instances, Graham opposed Jim Crow laws, although sometimes he was willing to go with racial segregation laws so as not to distract himself from his main role of evangelism (Emerson and Smith 200:46).

One can also cite the Kanawha County public school textbook controversy in the early 1970s as an example of religious activism that violated the civil rights of people who supported the liberalization of the school curriculum (see Martin 1996:chapt. 5). There is no doubt that the Religious Right had legitimate right to question the kind of textbooks used to teach their children. The relevant question here, however, is how far could they go and what tactics are permissible under law, especially given the fact that bomb explosions were used to intimidate the school teachers and to also destroy the school building? Other supporters of the textbooks were harassed by the KKK. One way to examine the Kanawha county textbook controversy is to see it as a symbolic resistance to multicultural education. The 1970s followed the "progressive" era

of America's history and there was an attempt to redefined American identity from its narrow White Anglo-Saxon protestant identity. What happened did not definitely represent the way of thinking or attitude of all the Religious Right, but still the violence which was committed in the name of the organization amounted to undermining the political and social rights of some people.

President Jimmy Carter's regime organized a conference on the American family titled "White House Conference on the Family." This was in 1974 (see Martin 1996: chapt.7). The conference organizers knew ahead of time that there was diversity in the American family but they hoped that the conference attendees will find common grounds and agree to work on that. For instance, some issues that were of great concern to families were economic pressures on the family, healthcare, and the need for good and subsidized day care for parents who work. The delegation of the Religious Right to the conference insisted on the fact that the family should be defined in a narrow and specific way that reflect the worldview and expectation of White middle class evangelical Christians. They did not want to come to terms with the existence of single parents' homes that were many in America. By attempting to discredit the legitimacy of the conference and the real life concerns of many American families, they were failing to help do something concrete to help suffering and marginalized people. Their action portrayed them as people always insisting on having their way and not willing to cooperate on how to tackle problems that fall within the common denominator for all Americas.

The religious roundtable which is an organization that came into existence in reaction to the poor performance of President Carter's presidency in the view of the Religious Right. The main speaker of the religious roundtable was James Robinson (Martin 1996:270). The goal of the religious Roundtable was to arrest the declining and decaying morals of America. In one of his sermons to the religious roundtable gathering, James Robinson highlighted the organization's

vision of America. Their vision is a nation and community of the righteous, the moral, the Godly, and the biblical. The threat to his nation and community of the righteous were: “liberals, leftist, and communists.” This kind of language of political discourse that not only excludes, but demonize and somewhat dehumanized the other is equally found in the language used by workers of the Freedom Council who campaigned on behalf of Pat Robertson’s 1988 presidential bid. They portrayed themselves as belonging to the kingdom of God and by implication those campaigning for President Bush senior and others (in 1988) were considered to represent the kingdom of darkness (Martin 1996:273). Although this kind of discourse in and of itself may not amount to the violation of civil rights, still it dehumanize the other and make them lose their integrity as human beings with every right and capacity to run for an office and govern constitutionally. Christians need to watch the kind of language they use to refer to their political opponents especially given the fact that the bible commands that Christians should love their enemies.

The support of the Religious Right was very essential in making it possible for President Ronald Reagan to win two terms in office. In other words they supported his political agenda. Yet it is well documented that Reagonomics has had devastating effect on the poor in America and the Third World (Todaro & Smith 2003:128-129). In America his economic policies favored the rich and well to do. He decisively cut federal spending that was traditionally identified as the role of the welfare state. Many of the safety net for the urban poor in the area of housing and healthcare was cut. Many companies were deregulated which allowed them to squeeze money out of the poor. No effort was made to alleviate the problems of American workers who lost their jobs because of deindustrialization or outsourcing for cheap labor (Kleniewski 2002:322-323)). Because of his economic policies, the budget deficits rose and this

made the interest rates to go up, which in turn denied many low income people the opportunity to own homes. The regime of President Reagan also created a chilly working environment for the operation of unions and the idea of collective bargaining. This was part of a broader agenda for supporting business to operate in an environment that experiences little regulation if any at all. The state took sides with the rich and powerful.

Internationally, through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the Reagan presidency vigorously pushed for neoliberal economic reforms in the Third World i.e., economic structural adjustment program. This reform project forced Third World governments to cut their budget for public social services e.g., healthcare and education. The agricultural market was deregulated. The effect of all this was increased poverty and widening gap between the rich and the poor (Todaro & Smith 2003:128-129).

Still in the area of international relations, President Reagan's government supported the Nicaraguan Rebel Army, which was a right wing organization that tried to illegally overthrow through armed struggle a democratically elected left-wing government: the Sandinistas. As part of the anti-communist campaign that defined his presidency, President Reagan saw the rebel army as freedom fighters, while the group was perceived as a terrorist organization that violated the human rights of many Nicaraguans. By uncritically and quietly supporting all these policies, the Religious Right have given legitimacy to the leadership of a charismatic leader whose policies violated the political, economic and social rights of people within the U.S and the Third World.

During the second term of President Ronald Reagan AIDS became a serious epidemic within and outside the United States. Although many of the people infected with HIV were homosexual, medical knowledge had clearly proved that it was not an exclusively homosexual

disease since there were heterosexuals that had acquired the virus. An evangelical physician by name C. Everett Koop was appointed Surgeon General. Though a conservative Christian and friend of Francis Schaeffer, as the Surgeon General of the country he had to educate the people on how to avoid contracting AIDS (Martin 1996:Chapt.10). The best option from a conservative Christian perspective was for people to abstain from sex outside heterosexual marriage relationship. But it was quite obvious that not every American would adhere to what for some people is a strictly religious moral precept. Consequently he determined that those who were not willing to comply with the first counsel should use condoms (i.e., protected sex) so as to reduce the risk of contracting AIDS.

Instead of understanding Koops' nuanced position on the issue, the Religious Right publicly attacked his faith commitment as a conservative evangelical. They raised question about the integrity of his beliefs in the bible because he recommended condoms. Furthermore, Rev. Falwell and Pat Robertson all asserted that AIDS was a punishment from God for people committing sin i.e., homosexuality. Furthermore, when Matthew Allen (the grand child of a minister) got infected with AIDS through blood transfusion, he hardly got a church that would accept him as a member. It was the public school, an institution that the Religious Right considered to be promoting secular humanism that accepted Matthew and gave him a feeling of belonging.

Overall, the implication of Falwell and Robertson's reaction to the AIDS epidemic illuminates how the Religious Right has a hierarchy of sin or sees sexual sin as either the only sin God is angry about or that other Christians do not commit sin except homosexuals. Furthermore, instead of pushing the regime of President Reagan to act on the epidemic, the Religious Right poisoned the social environment by attributing the problem to moral failure, moral decay, and

therefore punishment. Given that Ronald Reagan ignored the AIDS epidemic problem for sometime, this violated the political, economic and social rights of the AIDS' victims. It portrayed the Religious Right as mean, carefree, and judgmental. One cannot even remotely associate them with loving and caring behavior, or the biblical precept that you should love the sinner but hate the sin.

Operation Rescue, an anti-abortion movement headed by Randall Terry operated under the broad umbrella of the Religious Right. Operation Rescue definitely constitute an extreme Religious Right organization, but this notwithstanding, they were in agreement with the mainstream Religious Right about the need to totally eradicate abortion or at least make it difficult to access (Martin 1996:chapt. 13). Members of Operation Rescue used tactics that they said were legal but that actually amounted to intimidating or preventing persons from going to abortion clinics to see their doctors. After several warning by a judge, they were arrested on grounds of violating the law since Roe versus Wade made it legal. Moreover the permanent residents of Wichita, Kansas where the protest took place reacted angrily at Operation Rescue turning their town into a theatre of culture war. Subsequently, some members of Operation Rescue set an abortion clinic on fire and an abortion doctor too was shot dead by a member of the organization. Randall Terry regrets that some members of his organization resorted to violence but maintains that he has no apology to make. As far as he was concerned, this was God's laws. The implication of Operation Rescue's activity was that the members' firm sense of absoluteness of their beliefs and the harsh rhetoric they used led some of their members to violate the rights of others by burning their workplace or killing a doctor. Sociologically, Operation Rescue reduced Christian piety to stopping abortion. In doing this, they could elevate their sense of spirituality when the broad structure of American society remains unexamined.

This suggests there is no other Christian teaching that has prophetic implications for America (e.g., injustice), except abortion. To take position on abortion makes Christianity cheap while elevating one's ego and sense of spirituality. From a rational choice perspective, the Religious Right's choice to focus on issues such as abortion homosexuality is economical and efficient. At this point, we should examine some theologies and worldviews that influenced and shaped the political participation of the Religious Right.

Some Theologies and Worldviews that Have Influenced the Religious Right

a) Christian Reconstruction

The first influential theology and worldview that has had significant influence on the Religious Right to different degrees is called Christian Reconstruction, Dominion Theology and Theonomy. Examples of the main theologians of Reconstruction are Rousas John Rushdoony, Gary North, Gary Demar and Greg Bahsen (Martin 1996:353).

According to the theology of reconstructionism, Christians have been given authority by God to rebuild the world and reconstitute the whole of human society. Although the work of reconstruction will begin in the U.S., it is expected to proceed beyond the U.S. to the whole world. They envisioned that a reconstructed society would be established on Mosaic Law because they believe the efficacy of the ethical principles of Mosaic Law is valid across time and space.

In a reconstructed United States, the federal government will play no role in regulating businesses, public education, and welfare. They do not anticipate that in a reconstructed United States, there will be any role for the federal government. But assuming the federal government survives the reconstruction process, it will only distribute mails and provide some defense. The citizens in the reconstituted society would only be answerable to church authorities on most

matters of great concern. Armed militia will be allowed to operate at every country level and some government activity will be carried out at the county level. After assuming power, Reconstructionists will eliminate public schools from existence and instead, home schooling will be used as the method for educating the young. They intend to reconstitute the family into a strong patriarchal institution. The criteria for voting in the reconstructed society will be membership in a church defined as biblically correct by their criteria. In terms of their penal system, death penalty through stoning will be the preferred method. Potential criminals that will be stoned to death includes: homosexuals, adulterers, blasphemous people, or those that teach others false doctrine; and children that have chronic delinquent behavior.

Reconstructionists intend to exclude from the America they envisioned the following groups of people: Muslims, Hindus, atheists and Christians who do not believe in Reconstructionism. They believe in absolute truth given to them by God. Consequently, they are not willing to tolerate pluralism which they perceive as equivalent to heresy. As it can be noted, these ideas appear to be extreme. Thus most leaders of mainstream Religious Right do not openly espouse this kind of worldview, even though they read books written by reconstructionists theologians in secret and are therefore inevitably influenced by such theologians. For instance Rev. Jerry Falwell and Rev. D. James Kennedy have publicly supported and recommended reconstructionist books to people. In the case of Pat Robertson, on several occasions he invited Rousas John Rushdoony in his 700 Club Television program.

It is interesting to also note how Pat Robertson has been influenced by Dominion ideas. For instance, in his book "The Secret Kingdom", Robertson used Dominion language and made theonomic assertions. Similarly, during his presidential campaign in 1988, he promised that if elected, he will only have Christians and Jews in his cabinet. Robertson also believes that there

will never be peace in the world, if God's people are not in positions of power and leadership. Some mainstream leaders of the Religious Right do not believe all of the reconstructionist broad political agenda, but they still believe that the best way to reconstitute and reform America is making reform based on the bible. Reconstructionist ideas have also significantly influenced the worldview of Randall Terry, the leader of Operation Rescue.

b) Covenant Theology²

The second theology and worldview that has indirectly shaped the activities and political involvements of the religious right is covenant theology. Supporters of this theology call themselves the radical patriots. They see America as a "city on a hill" just as the puritans did. To them, America is the New Jerusalem. They believe that the United States has entered into a covenant with the Lord. The covenant is composed of original articles of the constitution, the first ten amendments and the Bill of Rights. They do not accept or approve of the 16th amendment which instituted federal income tax. According to them, the sixteenth amendment was not passed constitutionally. The extreme patriots refuse to recognize the constitutionality of amendments 13th, 14th, and 15th which among other things outlawed slavery, guaranteed freemen civil and political rights as full American citizens. They maintain firmly that the United States "organic constitution" was written by White men exclusively for themselves and their descendants. Subscribers to covenant theology believe that non-Caucasians in the United States are considered to be visitors in the country with no constitutional rights. The visitors are living in the country at the pleasure of Anglo-Saxon citizenry. Some believers of covenant theology would want to see the property of the non-White population in the U.S. confiscated and the people exiled to their places of origin.

Radical patriots believe that if America abides by the organic constitution, it will be blessed in the multifarious ways which will include bountiful harvest, a community that is secured, and children that are obedient to their parents. However if America deviates from the covenant and will of God, this will bring about both human-made and natural calamity. They believe that America's decline in the world today is associated with the deviation from the organic covenant. The patriots oppose the following institutions: U.S. internal revenue service; the federal reserve system; bureau of alcohol, tobacco, and firearms; forest service; the bureau of land management; social security, Medicare, and Medicaid; the environmental protection agency; housing and urban development; and civil rights enforcement agencies.

Although not all members of the Religious Right believe in covenant theology, we can safely conclude that anyone influenced by this theology is highly likely to be not passionate about issues of federal government control of society, civil rights issues, working hard to integrate immigrants, redistributive public policies, and an America that strongly cultivates multi-lateralism in foreign policy. A third factor that has influenced and shaped the political participation of the Religious Right is their worldview of free-will individualism and anti-structuralism.

Free-Will Individualism and Anti-Structuralism

The world view of White Christian evangelicals who constitute the great majority of the members of the religious right is strongly shaped by “accountable freewill individualism” and “anti-structuralism” (Emerson and Smith 200:76-91; see Roberts 2004:261-262). Most white evangelicals hold this opinion because of their theology, which emphasizes one's responsibility for personal relationship with Christ, and that individuals live independent from social structures,

² I derived insight on this section of the paper from Aho, James. 2000. “*Popular Christianity and Political Extremism in the United States*,” Pp.387-399 in **Readings: Exploring The Architecture of Everyday Life** by

or at least social structures are taken for granted. Not only do they believe this but one might say they are anti-structuralist in that accepting structuralism will fundamentally contradict their theological beliefs in individual responsibility. If humans are assumed to have the free-will to make choices, they can be held accountable for their decisions or choices. Indeed, without this assumption, the idea of judgment by God and punishment makes no sense. But because individuals have free-will and they make choices, they could be held accountable. Although American culture as a whole is very individualistic, when this individualism is combined with a religious belief system that has personal choices and responsibility at the center of its theology, the situation escalates. White evangelicals in the religious right become the most highly individualistic group of Americans. They believe that all humans are sinners and depraved but if they establish personal relationship with God through Jesus, this predicament becomes redeemed. Once redeemed, a person is able to make correct judgment and good choices; they also become accountable to God, their family and close associates. This makes personal relationship to be the foundation of any productive social relationship.

The position of the Religious Right contrasts with mainstream sociological reasoning and also progressive American worldview. Both recognize the importance of the individual but the individual is conceptualized as only able to achieve his or her best after she or he is liberated from the constraints of social structures or oppressive conditions e.g., poverty, racism, classics etc. But because of their theological reasoning and worldview, White evangelicals fail to perceive the reality of racism and institutional constraints. Any attempt to help minorities in the form of affirmative action to compensate for historical disadvantaged is frowned at. The problems that minorities and others face as a result of institutional and structural constraints are seen as indications of their moral and character failure (also see Kerbo 2003:263-271). This

implies less support for the welfare state, less support for programs to help disadvantaged people, especially minorities. While the record of the Religious Right, especially in the area of supporting and promoting social and economic rights of the marginalized people of the United States is not impressive, their political activism in the international arena with respect to human rights is however very impressive. It is probably there that we can draw very positive lessons on what the Religious Right needs to do in order to improve its record on socioeconomic rights of a segment of citizens of the United States.

The Impact of Political Activism by Religious Right on Human Rights in the International Arena

In the 1990s, the Religious Right became actively engaged in campaigning for human rights issues in the international arena. There are several reasons why this became a major concern of theirs at this particular point in time. First, we have to note that the center of gravity of protestant Christianity has moved to the developing world of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This development has a lot to do with the high involvement of American conservative evangelical Christians in missionary work. This development is accompanied by the relatively less involvement by American mainline liberal denominations in missionary work. So the great commitment and involvement of conservative Christians in missionary work in the developing world has turned them into global citizens. They became informed about the suffering of Christians and other populations in the developing world and saw it as part of their mission work to make a difference in the lives of the suffering people in the developing world.

There is evidence that many careful observers of events related to human rights issues have recognized the new development related to the involvement of the Religious Right, especially when one compares the organization's performance in the international arena with its

domestic record. For instance Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times described evangelicals as the “newest internationalist” in America because they mobilize and deliver relief materials and development aid, while also working against the violation of human rights all over the world (New York Times, May 21, 2002). Another observer asserts that the influence of evangelicals on the presidency of President George W. Bush has made it possible for the nation to make significant gains in the area of human rights at the international level (Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times October 26, 2003). Similarly, Richard Cizik who is with the National Association of Evangelicals asserted that “human rights is now no longer the prerogative of the left” (see Lauri Goodstein, The New York Times, November 9, 1998).

A more spectacular demonstration of the involvement of evangelicals in human rights issues at the international level is exemplified by the work of Gary Haugen, who is the founder and president of the Christian based “International Justice Mission (IJM). He initially worked with the U.S. Justice department and then later became a United Nations genocide investigator for Rwanda. The main message in his book which was written to an evangelical audience was “God is Against Injustice (Haugen 1999). His International Non-Governmental Organization has freed child prostitutes, bonded servants, and those in exploitative relationship. The organization also closed many children’s brothels and put the freed teenagers under the care of aid workers. This phenomenal contribution by Gary Haugen’s organization has led to the observation that the long term goal of the United States is to eradicate modern day slavery internationally. I now proceed to provide empirical examples of human rights contribution that the Religious Right in America has made at the international level.

Empirical Examples of the Contribution of the Religious Right to Human Rights in the International Arena³

³ I derived insight on this section of the paper from Fowler, Robert et al. 2004. Third Edition. *Religion and Politics in America*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. Chapter 7.

a) International Religious Freedom Act (1998).

This act was initiated by Christians but it applies to all religions. The act requires government to have a special independent commission with the state department that will keep records of any violation of the act and produce annual report. It was required to be part of U.S. foreign policy and therefore, all diplomats were expected to be conversant with the problem. The commission that monitors the act is multi-religious and a person was appointed to be the country's "ambassador" at large for international religious freedom.

b) The Sudan Campaign

The human rights situation in Sudan is one where the national government which is essentially Islamic and in the Northern part of the country, oppresses minorities in the Southern part of the country who are either Christians or traditional religious worshippers. Military action by the government of Sudan inhibited the distribution of relief materials by Graham's Samaritan Purse, a non-governmental organization. The coalition put pressure on congress to pass the "Sudan Peace Act in 2002." The act exerted pressure on the Sudanese government to work towards negotiating cease fire and eventually restore peace to the region. This is a case in point of members of the Religious Right as American citizens shaping international human rights diplomacy.

c) The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (October 28, 2000).

This act came into effect as a result of effort by a coalition of religious groups to stop the trafficking of women and children to serve as bonded slaves or engage in prostitution. Over one million people are involved in this trafficking (William Branig, Washington Post, March 20, 1999). Violators of the law will receive harsh punishment. The law also protects the victims and penalizes countries that fail to criminalize the act and prosecute the culprit. It also provides

technical support to certain countries so that they can improve their institutional capacity to deal with organized criminal syndicates that operate in this area.

d) Debt Relief for Impoverished Nations.

Pope John Paul II and rock singer Bono of U2 all in different ways campaigned for debt relief. The campaign for debt relief which was in 2000 was framed the “Year of Jubilee” in reference to the bible, where it was recorded that debtors were periodically forgiven their debt. The 106th U.S. Congress appropriated \$400 million as debt relief. Although conservative senators did not originally support the debt relief appropriation by U.S. congress, because the elite of the Religious Right was in support, they took action to ensure that conservative senators fall in line. For instance, when Republican Senator Phil Gramm asserted his plan to defeat the debt relief appropriation bill using filibuster, Pat Robertson used the 700 Club Television channel as a broadcast medium to appeal to his viewers to call Senator Gramm and counsel him to stop his threat to quash the bill. With huge pressure exerted on him, Senator Gramm dropped his opposition without any resistance. This clearly shows the significant influence that the Religious Right has in influencing public policy if the issue fits its vision of social reality. Given that the Religious Right have made more impressive impact on human rights issues at the international level rather than within the country, it is useful to examine briefly what factors made this achievement possible at one level but not other.

d) Elements of the Strategy that Brought About the Success of the Religious Right at the International Level

A key element that led the strategy of the Religious Right to succeed on international issues but not domestic was grassroots level campaign among churches, and para-church organizations using: radio, television broadcast networks, newspapers and other print publications. This campaign was from bottom up instead of top-down. Second, in the 1990s,

there was the emergence of evangelical advocacy groups that have become more experienced and sophisticated in campaigning for human rights issues. Examples of such advocacy groups that have emerged are: the Voice of the Martyrs, Christian Solidarity International, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Salvation Army, Open Doors with Brother Andrew, and the Samaritan Purse. Third, the Religious Right formed or participated in multi-faith alliance / coalition in pursuing the human rights agenda at the international level. The coalition they worked with at different levels in order to get the human rights acts passed by congress includes: Conservative and Reform Judaism, United States' Conference of Catholic Bishops, Liberal Episcopalian Lobby, Tibetan Buddhists, Iranian Baha'is, Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, and the National Association of Evangelicals. It is admirable that many groups that ordinarily disagree with each were able to bury their differences for the sake of achieving a common goal. This of course is critical in explaining their success.

One fascinating thing about this was how Christian evangelicals worked side by side with feminists such as Gloria Steinem, and members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People such as Kwesi Mfume, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Walter Fauntroy, and Al Sharpton. Another factor that explains their success was the ability of the coalition to get people of high ranking position and integrity to get involved in the process. These people were well respected across the diverse groups in America (e.g., Charles Colson; Michael Horowitz, a Jewish Think Tank lawyer in New York that served under President Ronald Reagan). These respected leaders were willing to offer selfless service. Fifth, this collaboration to pass human rights laws at the international level was also made possible because there was truce about the "the culture wars" which is characteristic of characterized American domestic politics. When fighting the culture wars, representatives of these groups quarreled bitterly about many social

issues. The bitterness that develops out of the culture war struggle makes it impossible for them to feel comfortable to work together as a group in order to achieve a common objective. What this means is that the prospect of future cooperation and collaboration hinges on continued truce on culture war issues. Sixth and finally, the Religious Right was able to succeed because of what I call the “demonstration effect” of the organization's initial cooperation. Once the organization tried cooperating with other groups and it succeeded in achieving its goals, the success became a "demonstrated effect" of cooperation. How long the impact of the demonstration effect will continue to sustain good will among the different groups is an empirical question that can only be answered in the future.

Conclusion:

There are several important themes that come out clearly from this paper's examination of the involvement of the Religious Right in politics and the consequences of such involvement on human rights, particularly social and economic rights.

First, the Religious Right has no substantive agenda of its own. This is probably so because it is constituted by diverse groups that are hardly united by what they agree. They are rather united by what they do not like in the culture. To this extent, by and large, the Religious Right is a reactive organization that is reacting to perceived moral decline and decay in the wider society.

Second, the organization's conception of the ethical and moral teachings of Christianity is very limited and selective. It focuses primarily on things such as homosexuality, abortion, gambling, pornography, prayer and bible reading in the public school, traditional gender relationship etc. In a great majority of the official documents describing the main goals / objectives of various organizations under the umbrella of the Religious Right, there is none that

has forceful, systematic, and coherent position or statement on social justice, which includes political, social, and economic rights. The documents are either totally silent or lukewarmly interested on such issues (Martin 1996:201; Wogaman 2000:126-127).

Third, much of the rhetoric and political involvement of the Religious Right suggests lack of humility, love, and caring attitude. The Religious Right comes across as willing to create a society of the righteous only. The organization demonizes those who disagree with it and in the process prevent any means of influencing and changing the opinion of their opponents.

Fourth, without a fundamental reorientation in the mindset of the Religious Right, the organization will not be able to effectively tackle problems of social injustice or oppression that are essentially perpetuated through the institutional mechanism of domination. Until the Religious Right come to grips with the reality of unjust social structures and institutions, by keeping quiet on such issues of faith that are of fundamental concern, the organization is by default perpetuating the status quo. Since injustice exists in the status quo, if the Religious Right continues to keep quiet, the organization becomes part of the problem rather than the solution. There is, however, clear evidence that should the Religious Right change its mind as an organization, it will make significant impact in changing America for the better on issues of political, social, and economic rights for the socially marginalized within the country and internationally.

At this point I want to ask: Is there any basis for justifying the pursuit of social justice (which includes political, social and economic rights) in the bible? If there is, then we can assert that with or without the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Christians have an obligation to provide social and economic rights. I conclude the paper by making a case for the need to

provide, political, and socioeconomic rights to the socially marginalized, based on the teachings of the bible.

The Position of the Bible on Social Injustice and Oppression in Human Society⁴

The first example I want to cite in the bible demonstrating that concern about injustice is not a peripheral issue in Christianity, can be teased out from the story of how the prophet Nehemiah governed the community of Israelites in Jerusalem when he returned from captivity to rebuild the temple and the wall. When Nehemiah came to realize how some affluent Israelites (nobles) were taking advantage of less affluent people (i.e., peasants) through predatory lending, he was angry and publicly declared his anger (Nehemiah chapter 5). He compelled the perpetrators to compensate their victims. Nehemiah governed the community based on ethics of the sacred texts. Indeed, Nehemiah's story is an inspiring one regarding how a Christian leader should govern. He established an open government and made sure that neither he nor anyone in the system exploits another person who is in a vulnerable situation. The result was the people trusted him. He denied the predators the moral legitimacy to exploit others. Yet even the exploiters knew he was not trying to reserve any privileges for himself. Nehemiah's story is not just about God being angry about human beings using others in an instrumental way by exploiting them but it is also about how people in power can use their power to bring justice to people, and glory to God's name.

The second example illustrating God's anger about human oppression and injustice is the story of the prophet of doom i.e., Amos. Sociologically, Amos is a pertinent example because in his prophetic message to the Israelites, he asserted God's anger on the strategies the rich used to enrich themselves, while impoverishing others (Amos 2:6-16; 4:1-3; 5:7, 10-13). Beyond that,

he highlighted the consequence of inequality in wealth and power in Israel, one of which was that it affected the justice system. The poor in Israel were unable to get true justice because the rich and privileged manipulated the system, thereby corrupting the justice system to further dehumanize the poor. Interestingly, while some prophets in the bible were from “upper class” backgrounds, or related closely with the upper crust of their communities, the prophet Amos was from a lower socioeconomic background.

One important sociological lesson from Amos is that there is a close relationship between the structure of inequality in a society and the quality of justice that people receive. Based on the foregoing, it is naïve therefore for any Christian to maintain the idea that because of varied level of achievement and motivation, we can have any magnitude of inequality and that this will have no social consequences on other institutions and social processes in society. I conclude this section with a quote from Wogaman on how oppression represents a distortion of God’s plan for humanity rather than being a reflection of his glory, as many privileged people tend to think.

Wogaman asserts while critically evaluating the contribution of liberation theologians that:

...The gospel is not about individual transactions between human beings and God, having nothing to do with the way life is ordered in this world. And they are also right in emphasizing God’s special concern for the poor and oppressed, not because God does not love everybody but because the poverty and oppression represent the breakdown of God’s overall intention for human existence (Wogaman 200:99).

Contrary to Wogaman’s observation, however, poverty and oppression in bourgeois society has been adopted and used by some people as conspicuous evidence of their superior humanity over others, instead of something to ponder about and regret because it suggests “breakdown of God’s overall intention for human existence.” While this may be all right by popular discourse of bourgeois society, it is biblically an aberration.

⁴ For an extensive discussion of the numerous use of the concept “oppression” in the bible, please see Thomas D. Hanks, (2000). *God So Loved The Third World: The Biblical Vocabulary of Oppression*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Yet certain forces within evangelicalism work seriously to suppress any serious discussion of social justice that raises fundamental questions about the existing structure of society and refuse to only think within the predetermined contours of the existing structure. It is in this respect that I explore the question of whether we can ground the struggle for political, social and economic rights in biblical scriptures. I do this by examining the contribution of John Driver in *Kingdom Citizens* (1998) and Escobar and Driver in *Christian Mission and Social Justice* (1978). There is no space here for an elaborate analysis of these two books, but the main thrust of their thinking is that the struggle for social justice is not a residual goal of Christianity but one of its core essences.

One of the things I found helpful in Driver's book (1998) was his analysis of the ethics that informed the beatitudes. The beatitudes for him demonstrate how Jesus intended people who want to follow him and live in the New Kingdom he inaugurated should live. It was a new Kingdom with different ethical standards from the worldly kingdom. As I read the book, I could feel in my body how some of the ethical principles sound unnatural in the popular parlance of bourgeois society. This led me to conclude that we cannot practice authentic Christianity in contemporary society without being counter cultural. I do not mean counter cultural in the pejorative way it was used in the sixties, but counter cultural in the sense that our worldview and ethics will compel us to live a life that is contrary to what is considered normal in mainstream society.

Ethics of the Kingdom and Some Concomitant Values

The Kingdom of God heralded by Christ is built on "an ethic of repentance." The new dispensation cannot be truly lived without "a radical reorientation of the will" (Driver 1998:49). This point makes one wonder whether we can ever achieve social, economic, and political rights in society without repenting from the forces that distorted our relationship with God and other

human beings in the first place. If we treat the conditions for the realization of the rights, at the personal level and ignore the institutional dimension, it means going by Driver's argument, there is no genuine repentance and radical reorientation since institutions will continue to operate in a manner that distorts relationship.

Another ethic that informs the beatitudes according to Driver is that of accepting to be disciples of Jesus (1998:49). This entails living in a Kingdom that is being transformed and requires the grace of the Holy Spirit to succeed. If we are disciples of Christ, we have to follow his footsteps. Furthermore, as a community, we are supposed to always be imitating him and in doing so we are increasingly being transformed to be like him. To live in the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated is to live in present continuous tense (Driver 1998:50).

The Sermon on the Mount also portrays the Christian community as one built on "a communitarian ethic." The ethics articulated by Christ were not meant for "individuals independently of the new social reality of the Kingdom of God" (Driver 1998:50). Thus the hyper individualistic ethic that characterizes some strands of evangelical thinking may well be an indication of the impact of modernity, rather than an authentic reflection of what the New Testament church was and is supposed to be. Another ethical principle that underlies the beatitudes according John Driver is the ethic of fulfillment, meaning Christ's goal was to fulfill the law and not subvert it (Driver 1998:51). One implication of this is that in the New Testament era, Christians are not supposed to be primarily concerned about just outward behavior such as obeying the law in order to fulfill all righteousness, when deep inside, we remain unchanged. Rather, we are supposed to go beyond that and ask ourselves what is the motivation for our behavior. A lot of behavior might comply with the law but fall short of what is considered a sincere Christian motivation.

Love is another ethical principle that Jesus articulated in the beatitudes. Jesus illuminated the ethical principle of love by asserting that we have to love our enemies. Even people who are spiritually untransformed love those who love them. Christ is concerned about the redemption and rehabilitation of persons rather than vengeance. This ethical principle has significant implications for human interaction at the group, organizational, corporate, national and international levels.

Jesus also in the beatitudes espoused an ethic of excess (Driver 1998:53) which refers to the fact that we Christians are supposed to transcend human ethical principles by doing more through the power of the Holy Spirit. This ethical principle means that we cannot settle for situational ethics for the sake of convenience under whatever pretext. We are expected to go outside the paradigm that the world considers normal. Our frame of reference in human conduct should be higher than that in the world. We should be pacesetters. Finally, another ethical principle that was articulated in the beatitudes is "reconciliation" (Driver 1998:53). What this ethical principle means in practice is that just as Christians are reconciled with God and Christ, this must have implication for the relationship among us. We cannot truly worship God without truly reconciling the distorted relationship among ourselves. This means attempt by Christians to insulate the nature of personal relationships they have with other humans from the nature of the relationship with God demonstrates a lack of deeper understanding of what the gospel of Christ is all about. From the foregoing the Religious Right needs to learn from experience. For it may be succeeding politically but in doing so, it undermines many biblically ethical principles that evangelicals claim to adhere because of their belief in inerrancy of the bible.

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