University of Alberta

Lobbying by Religious Organizations in the United States on Embryonic Stem Cell Research

by

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Dedication

This thesis is concluded at the end of one life and the birth of another. It is the final marker of a fork in the journey of my life as I embark on a whole new path of discovery and service.

This thesis would not exist except by the grace of God who has been so good to me and who has bestowed so many gifts of love in my life.

There are so many people who have supported me and prayed for me. While there are too many to mention, however, I do wish to single some of them out. I would like to thank Sister Annata Brockman, Father Joselito Cantal, Father Mike McCaffery, Father Len Gartner, and Father Stan Lasko for the support they have shown me over the past year. I would also like to thank the formation team and seminarians at St. Joseph's Seminary, especially Father Shane Craig (who has already read 'some' of this thesis), Andrew Dornan, Marc Cramer, and Travis Myrheim. I would also like to thank Archbishop Thomas Collins, for his prayers and words of encouragement.

David Schaaf and Graham Steel have also been so supportive throughout the process of writing this thesis. Their friendship has meant so much to me over the years.

Judy Garber, who put up with my stubbornness and slacking off, with grace and determination. Without her support and effort, this thesis would have been abandoned long ago.

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My mother Kathy, whose unconditional love and support throughout my life has been an inspiration. It is to her, of any human being, that I owe everything.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Historical Analysis

"The issue has to do with us playing God and allowing human embryos to be produced. Make no mistake about it, we are compassionate Americans. We care about pain and suffering, we care about curing diseases; but at the cost of creating human life, human embryos?"[1] – Rep. Rick Renzi (R – AZ)

"Through stem cell research, scientists might one day help a person with a spinal cord injury walk again. How can this body ban this promising endeavor to end human suffering"[2] – Rep. James P. McGovern (D – MA)

Biotechnology is one of the most complex phenomena today. Scientists in countries around the world race against the clock and each other to map the human genome, clone different animals, and develop better food yielding plants. The science of biotechnology has intellectual, practical, and economic facets. It also stirs strong emotions and political positions.

Some results of biotechnology have been with us for many years. Genetically modified food is an example. However, other elements, such as human cloning and stem cell research, are in their very infancy. Francis Fukuyama, in Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution, points out that these new branches of biotechnology will change the way politics is done in liberal democratic states and that these new scientific discoveries will result in the alteration of human emotions and

[1] U.S. Congress. THOMAS. ONLINE. 2003. Library of Congress. Available: http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?r108:3:./temp/~r108EMxOEq:e0: [27 Feb. 2003].
[2] Ibid.

behavior, the prolongation of human life, and genetic engineering.[3] These advances will change politics, because, as he puts it, "[h]uman nature shapes and constrains the possible kinds of political regimes, so a technology powerful enough to reshape what we are will have possibly malign consequences for liberal democracy and human nature itself.

As we look at the debates occurring in contemporary political institutions, it becomes apparent that at no time in human history have politics and science been more directly involved with one another than they are today. Francis Fukuyama argues:

> As much as natural scientists would like to maintain a Chinese wall of separation between the natural 'is' that they study and the moral and political 'ought' engendered in discourse on rights, this is ultimately a dodge. The more science tells us about human nature, the more implications there are for human rights, and hence for the design of institutions and public polices that protect them.[4]

Biotechnology promises to be able to modify human beings and forever change the way we live. Fukuyama argues that within the promise of biotechnology exists "the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history."[5] In arguing his point he gives three examples of advances in biotechnology which will affect human beings in times to come. First is neuropharmacology, where new drugs are developed which can alter human personality. Fukuyama gives as early contemporary examples of this Prozac and Ritalin.[6] His second example is the genetic screening of embryos and human genes. This would include the 'designer babies' that we hear so much about. Third, and the subject of this work, is stem cell research.

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[3] Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 16.
[4] Ibid., 106.
[5] Ibid., 7.

Fukuyama argues that stem cell research will "allow scientists to regenerate virtually any tissue in the body, such that life expectancies are pushed well above 100 years."[7]

While human nature may be altered and political institutions may be changed, as Fukuyama suggests, at present any decisions over the fate of biotechnology, for countries such as the United States, will occur within the existing structure of political institutions. As Fukuyama says, and rightly so: "it is the democratically constituted political community, acting chiefly through its elected representatives, that is sovereign in these matters and has the authority to control the pace and scope of technological development."[8] It is therefore government institutions which ultimately will have to decide which course to chart when dealing with and regulating biotechnology. However, on scientific procedures of such a technical and moral nature, it is also clear that lobbying from various camps is expected to be powerful. Science, in this debate, is expected to have an advantage in that it is the chief technical advisor to the decision makers. The task of explaining these highly complex and morally controversial scientific developments in biotechnology to laypeople and politicians rests with the scientific community. Yet simultaneously, scientists are also the chief lobbyists for funding and establishing regulation over the limits of biotechnology science. These scientists, by virtue of their expertise, are not only advocates for a permissive regulatory environment for biotechnology but are literally co-writers of those regulations. This role for the scientists entrusts with them, in a very real way, the morality of a society as defined by its laws. These scientists are shaping the political perspective on what

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[6] Ibid.,8.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 186.

elements of science are morally permissible and, if Fukuyama is correct, the very future of human nature.

Fukuyama argues that, in addition to human nature, there is another element which lends itself to defining the human experience. Human nature, he argues, "conjointly with religion, defines our most basic values."[9] While there are many non-religious reasons for opposing different advances with biotechnology, Fukuyama's statement shows that the religion and politics angle of the debate is of no small account.

Scope of the Thesis

It has been historically true that wherever human nature is concerned in political debates, religion is not far away. We know by and large where scientists sit on the subject of biotechnology research, but do we know where religious groups are—for or against? Over the course of the twentieth century, various religious denominations held a hammer to politicians during political debates over many social and moral issues including, notably, abortion, as we shall see in this Chapter. Previously many denominations directly lobbied politicians or their staffers, engaged in protests, circulated petitions and initiated letter writing campaigns, as well as intervened in party and electoral politics. So the general question needs to be asked: Where are religious organizations in terms of supporting or opposing embryonic stem cell research, and how intensely are they lobbying for their positions? More specifically, the question is: Are Christian religious organizations in the United States employing the same tactics and intensity in lobbying on the topic of embryonic stem cell research as they have on the seemingly related matter of abortion? If not, why is it that the impetus is not present for

becoming politically active on stem cell research as it has been for abortion or a host of other issues such as same sex marriage, social welfare, health care, and racism? With those political debates, religious denominations have seen it as their place to involve themselves actively in articulating and pressing their positions. If the intensity of opinions and actions is not present on stem cell research, then we must gain insight into what is different from the circumstances surrounding these other political debates.

In many ways, embryonic stem cell research is a continuation of the abortion debate. The debate surrounding abortion has been around in its present form since the late 1960s when various states began liberalizing abortion laws. Different religious organizations and individuals within many religions have been very clear in what they believe about abortion and have not been afraid to express those beliefs to political leaders through activities ranging from face-to-face meetings to large protests to letter-writing campaigns. Embryonic stem cell research, on the other hand, is a fairly new concept. Human embryonic stem cells were only derived six years prior to this writing and twenty five years after *Roe v. Wade*. Yet, it is important to remember, that the same basic principles apply to embryonic stem cell research as to abortion: an embryo will be destroyed in order to derive stem cells. The end result is the same for the embryo in stem cell research as it is with the embryo or fetus in abortion. Therefore, as with abortion, with embryonic stem cell research we have a political controversy (whether it is right or wrong is of no force or effect for the purposes of this thesis).

When investigating these questions, it is my intention to conduct telephone interviews with various religious organizations and denominations. The organizations will be selected based on the general ideology (not in terms of party alignments or

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[9] Ibid.

stances on free market economies but rather in terms of being liberal and conservative on religious questions which intersect with the political sphere) of the organization, as well as by their size. More will be said about the methodology in Chapter Two.

At first glance there has been some lobbying activity on the issue of embryonic stem cell research from religious denominations. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for example, has advocated the abandonment of embryonic stem cell research on several fronts. News releases as well as speeches have been clear as to the Church's position. Additionally, persons representing the Conference have written to the United States Congress and have appeared to give testimony before House and Senate committees.[10] Other groups that have been politically active on some level include the Christian Coalition of America, whose members have previously collected petitions to ban human cloning.

First glance looks, however, can be deceiving. As we will see, beginning in this Chapter but more especially in Chapter Two, the Catholic Church's lobbying intensity and variation of tactics is a rarity. It is my observation that when it comes to lobbying for or against embryonic stem cell research, most religious denominations and ecumenical organizations are inactive and have failed to mobilize on the subject. Further, if they have defined some position (a rare occurrence), it has not been articulated clearly to the public, nor has there been any real attempt at influencing lawmakers towards their particular position. There are even cases, as we shall see, where religious denominations have de facto adopted contrary positions on the topic of abortion and embryonic stem cell research.

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[10] U.S. Catholic Bishops – Pro Life Activities – Stem Cell Research (http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/bioethic/stemcell/index.htm).

The scope of this thesis is to find out, first of all, what the positions of religious organizations are towards abortion and embryonic stem cell research. If, as suspected, the two do not match, we need to find out why. The positions to be highlighted are important because of the possible political consequences that arise in terms of lobbying lawmakers by religious groups, as will be discussed more fully in subsequent Chapters. Finally, we need to examine the tactics and the intensity used by religious organizations on the abortion question and compare them with the tactics and intensity used on the question of stem cell research.

Before proceeding to look directly at the research questions of this thesis, or a historical analysis of religion and politics in the United States, however, let us begin with some background information.

The Embryo: A Continuing Political Debate

As we will see throughout this Chapter, the political lobbying practices of religious organizations in the United States have had a profound effect on the development of public policy, contrary to the widely touted phrase "separation of church and state." There are many politically salient questions which arise naturally out of biotechnology research. One is around the issue of government funding for embryonic stem cell research. As with the political debate surrounding abortion, it has been argued by some that due to the ethical and religious concerns expressed about the human status of embryos, governments should not be picking up the tab to pay for their destruction. Put differently, some American taxpayers have expressed concern that their tax dollars would be used to, in their view, kill a human being. Since 1995, appropriations bills for

the federal government in the United States have had provisions specifying that dollars cannot be used to create human embryos nor to fund the research efforts themselves.[11] This thesis, in part, aims to discover the evolution of this ban on funding for any research that results in the destruction of a human embryo.

The broad topic of this work is the relationship between religion and politics in the United States regarding one facet of biotechnology, embryonic stem cell research. As we will see in this Chapter, the United States has a long tradition of religion playing a part in politics. Religious organizations in one form or another have vigorously lobbied on public policy throughout U.S. history, as early as the case of slavery. An ongoing case in point, I would argue the best case, is abortion, where over thirty years after the court ruling of *Roe v. Wade*, the debate has continued and still has the power to topple candidates running for office.

One politically salient element of embryonic stem cell research is government regulation. Traditionally scientific endeavors, such as the development of atomic energy for example, have been highly regulated. As we will see, government, at least at the federal level in the United States, has taken a hands off approach to regulation of private research of embryonic stem cells. According to Margaret McLean, "Because laws in many countries, including the United States, preclude public funding for human embryo or fetal research, human cell research has steamed ahead in a handful of privately funded labs. The panic-drenched, reactive atmosphere of the Dolly [the cloned sheep] effect raises questions about the wisdom of it remaining confined to private, commercial

[11] U.S. Congress. THOMAS. ONLINE. 2004. Library of Congress. Available http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c105:./temp/~c105NbduH4 [30 Jan. 2004].

enterprises."[12] As part of the examination of religious lobbying, this thesis will look to see if any action has been taken in lobbying the government to ban research in private facilities.

In preparation for a discussion of the role of religious organizations in lobbying for or against embryonic stem cell research, I will devote the larger share of this Chapter to the examination of past political lobbying by religious groups in the United States. Throughout the country's history, the intersection of religion and politics has gained special attention for those examining the formation and development of the US. We will examine past instances where the religious lobby has pursued public policy goals and contrast that level of action with what we see on embryonic stem cell research.

In God We Trust

When it comes to religion and politics in the United States, the phrase "enigma wrapped in a riddle" comes to mind. The US is a state founded initially by religious refugees, but which has a constitutional separation between church and state. The First Amendment to the US Constitution is the most famous of only two references to religion within the text. It reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."[13] The second reference is located in Article VI, Section III and states: "no Religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or Any public Trust under the United States."[14]

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[12] Margaret R. McLean, *Stem Cells: Shaping the Future in Public Policy,* in Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth eds., *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate: Science, Ethics and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2001), 199.
[13] Findlaw: US. Constitution: First Amendment, (http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment01/).
[14] Findlaw: US Constitution: Article VI, (http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/article06/).

There are statutes that govern the practice of religious groups influencing the political system. The most important example is from the Internal Revenue Code. Under Section 501(c)(3), religious groups, who are exempted from certain taxation, are not allowed to use funds to influence legislation or intervene in any political campaign.[15] More will be said about this particular statute later on. Suffice it to say for now that the courts have been reluctant about applying this section of the Internal Revenue Code to religious organizations. This is in part because of the lack of a standard measurement to determine when the code is actually broken by a religious organization or when an organization has involved itself in a political campaign.[16] The debate surrounding the interpretation and enforcement of the tax-exempt status clause of the code goes back more than thirty years, when legislators initially questioned its vagueness.[17] However, the case that really defined the court's role in the modern age in addressing the tax exemption issue was *Abortion Rights Mobilization, Inc. v. Regan*, which began in 1980 and did not end until 1990. This case involved a group of abortion providers and other individual voters suing the Roman Catholic Church and the secretary treasury over the Church's role in advocating against abortion and apparent attempts by church leaders to encourage their congregations not to vote for certain political candidates.[18] Years of litigation resulted in a ruling by a Federal Court of Appeals which upheld the church's tax-exempt standing and a refusal by the Supreme Court to grant the petition for a writ of certiorari to

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[15] US Code Collection, Title 26, Subtitle A, Chapter 1, Subchapter F, Part 1, Sec 501, Legal Information Institute, Cornell University (http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/26/501.html).
[16] Derek Davis "The Supreme Court, Public Policy, and the Advocacy Rights of Churches", in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 104.
[17] Ibid., 130.
[18] Ibid., 131-132.

the plaintiffs.[19] The court ruling is legally complex but largely addressed jurisdictional matters. The issues involved have also resulted in a game of hot potato that shuffled the application of the code from Congressional oversight to executive branch implementation.[20] Although challenges to the tax-exempt status of churches who engage in seemingly "influencing" behavior may proliferate, enforcement of the provisions of the code will likely not be forthcoming against many of them because of the continuing lack of clarity surrounding the implementation of the code.

Despite the apparent unwillingness of the courts to address the interpretation of the public policy surrounding tax-exemption of churches who stretch the boundaries of legally acceptable political activities, the US prima facie appears to be a secular society where religion is kept at arm's length from the political process. However, as mentioned previously, the history of the US relationship between religion and politics points in a very different direction. Before we look at that history, let us look at the contemporary religious scene in the United States as it compares with other countries.

Reginald Bibby is one of Canada's foremost experts when it comes to sociology of religion. Since 1975, Bibby has engaged in a semi-decade survey of Canadians to track religious trends. His most recent, in 2000, showed a continual national decline in Canadian religious service attendance. According to the survey results, only 20% of Canadians attend religious services on a weekly basis and a further 9% attend on a monthly basis.[21]

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[19] Ibid., 132.
[20] Ibid., 133-136
[21] Reginald Bibby, "Project Canada Survey, 2000" in Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2002), 81.

The Centre for Political Studies at the University of Michigan has collected similar statistics to Bibby's for Canada and the US. The National Election Studies have tracked national trends in religious service attendance. When we look at the numbers of people that attend church every week, Canada and the US do not appear to be that dissimilar. According to the NES, 25% of Americans attend services every week.[22] However, a different story emerges when we look at those who attend "almost every week" and "once or twice a month." According to the data, 11% of Americans fit into the former category, and 16% fit into the latter.[23] The picture that emerges in this case is that over half (52%) of Americans "church it" at least once a month, as opposed to their northern neighbours, 29% of whom go to church at least once per month. These statistics indicate the strong presence of religion in the lives of Americans.

Jeff Haynes creates a scale of the religiosity of certain nation-states, on one end categorizing "Confessional" states where an ecclesiastical authority presides over secular authority.[24] On the other is a categorization of "Marxist secular" states where religion is completely stifled by the state.[25] Haynes categorizes the US as a "Generally Religious" state which is one step removed from the "Confessional" state. Haynes argues that "Generally Religious" states "...are guided by religious beliefs in general where the concept of civil religion is important, but are not tied to any specific religious tradition."[26] The concept of civil religion is important in the US, and we will return to it. At this

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[22] The National Election Studies, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan. Electronic resources from the NES World Wide Web site (www.umich.edu/~nes). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1995-2000.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Jeff Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics* (London: Addison Wesley Longman limited, 1998), 10.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

point, however, it is important to examine the historic role of religion in US political developments.

From the founding of the United States, religious organizations and groups have lobbied hard to eliminate laws and practices that were deemed evil or alternatively to entrench laws and practices that would be considered a fulfillment of a religious morality. One early example of this lobbying involved the elimination of an action that we do not think much about today, dueling. Dean Kelly argues that "[t]his effort was led almost entirely by clergymen, effectuated by the churches acting corporately...though it dealt with an issue that was not conventionally 'religious.'"[27] While it may not have been deemed conventionally religious, Kelley does point out that it was deemed "a social evil."[28] Part of the action included clergymen speaking from the pulpit against dueling, but also by urging people to not vote for any duelist.[29] According to Kelley this action was "totally successful."[30] By 1838 legal dueling had disappeared.[31]

Another early example of religious lobbying is one which actually continues to haunt certain elements of the American economy today, Sunday closures. The whole issue of Sunday closures began with the US Congress requiring post offices to be open on any day when mail arrived, and this obviously included Sunday. According to Kelley, "Immediately protests began to flood Congress from churches and devout Christians, insisting that Sunday openings were a profanation of the Lord's Day – a flow of outrage

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[27] Dean K. Kelley, "The Rationale for the Involvement of Religion in the Body Politic" in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 163.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.,164.
[30] Ibid.,163.
[31] Ibid., 164.

that continued for twenty years."[32] Unlike dueling, however, this was an issue where the lobbying efforts were unsuccessful. As Kelley points out, the U.S. Senate, followed by several state legislatures, argued to keep the doors open on Sunday.[33]

While these examples were the stirring of religious lobbying in the United States, they certainly were not the only instances where the churches spoke up on a public issue. Charles Dunn points out that between the founding of the American state and before the Civil War, a new theology developed called "transcendentalism." Transcendentalism's leaders included Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau. They argued that there should be lobbying of government and there was a role for government coercion to motivate reform.[34] Transcendentalism eventually was applied to one of the key issues of the Nineteenth century, the abolition of slavery.

Transcendentalist theology argued several key points: First, it argued that the divine was present as a source of truth and a guide to human beings; second, it denied the concept of sin; third, it saw human beings as essentially good; fourth, it was optimistic about human futures; and finally, it believed in the removal of restrictions on human freedom.[35] While transcendentalism is considered to be ideologically and theologically liberal, conservative elements began to weigh in. Dunn argues that in fact, "without the voices of Finney...and others in conservative theological circles and Emerson, Thoreau, and Theodore Parker in the liberal theological circles of transcendentalism and utilitarianism, the abolitionist movement would most likely have fizzled."[36] It is very

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[32] Ibid.,164.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Charles W. Dunn, *American Political Theology: Historical Perspectives and Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 30.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Charles W. Dunn, *American Political Theology: Historical Perspectives and Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 31.

important to point out that although some conservative theologians may have participated in the abolitionist movement, it was the general conservative theology of the day that "regeneration of the heart" was to be achieved through the gospel rather than through the actions of government. More will be spoken of this later on. Contrarily, however, in liberal theological circles, "social reform through the use of government power began to emerge as a tool for theological action."[37] The usage of this philosophy will become important shortly.

Kelley points out that churches were the first groups in the US to oppose slavery and had done so for decades.[38] Keeping this example in perspective, however, Kelley rightly argues "The struggle to abolish slavery was by no means only a church-led effort, but the churches were in the forefront from the beginning and provided not only moral determination but many of the leaders and followers of more broad based organizations, such as the American Anti-Slavery Society."[39] Naturally, there were schisms created between conservative churches in the North and those in the South over the issue of slavery. Indeed, the first seeds of a religious schism really fell on the ground with this particular issue. This new schism between conservative and liberal theological traditions, would grow during the continuing evolution of liberal thought from transcendentalism to what was known as the "social gospel movement."

Continuing to advocate for government action (to assist in the helping of human kind on the earth), the liberal theological tradition of the US in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century concerned itself with helping the disadvantaged. As Dunn

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Dean K. Kelley, "The Rationale for the Involvement of Religion in the Body Politic" in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 162.

points out, "Long before the New Deal, the social gospel movement began to propose agendas for government action on social and economic issues, looking to the government to establish 'the kingdom of God on earth.'"[40] While it is true that economic and social disasters of the early twentieth century contributed to the rise of New Deal programs, the liberal theological tradition's position on the "welfare state," as it would come to be known, was well established.[41] Putting a fine point on it, Dunn states that "the liberal theological purposes of government became clear during the era, namely to utilize government as the principal tool to bring happiness to humans who could not achieve it on their own."[42] To that end, as the liberal theological tradition gained many churches in the US during the social gospel period, several of these churches that had been responsible for social welfare began to withdraw their services.[43] These churches included the Catholic Church and Protestant churches that we now call "mainline" Protestant churches (such as Presbyterian, Episcopalian, United Church of Christ, and Methodist). Government became compelled to pick up the pieces of the Depression with the New Deal. While the churches may not have lobbied for change as much as they added to the stress of economic concerns with the withdrawal of welfare services, they were nonetheless effective in their goals. The social gospel's increasing influence was also the main break between the liberal and conservative theological traditions. As Dunn points out, "Given their primary emphasis on the spiritual rather than the material aspects of life, conservative theological leaders generally did not make common cause with their

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[39] Ibid.,163.
[40] Charles W. Dunn, *American Political Theology: Historical Perspectives and Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 47.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.,48.
[43] Ibid.,47.

political counterpart."[44] Conservatives were thus unprepared to make their point of view on the matter heard. This point of view was an inherent respect for constitutional government which was code for limited government interference in the lives of citizens.[45] Thus, conservative theologians were quite dismissive of New Deal programs.

Before continuing into more contemporary time, it is important to look back at two specific cases in the twentieth century that were very heavily motivated by religious sentiment. These cases are important for two reasons. First, the topics they involve resonate with certain religious denominations to this day. Second, they represent the first major political thrusts of fundamentalists and evangelicals into the political sphere, by themselves in the first case, and in conjunction with other denominations in the second. The first of these two cases was the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925. John Scopes, a biology teacher in Tennessee, had contradicted a state law that forbade teaching the theory of evolution in the schools. The lead prosecutor was William Jennings Bryan, a strong fundamentalist and former presidential candidate. This case represented the fundamentalists' day in court fighting against what they perceived as secularization in local community institutions such as schools, and in the law. The important point to be derived from this case was that it was one of the first exercises for fundamentalists in the public arena.

The second case was Prohibition. One of the first offices established by a religious group in Washington belonged to the Methodists. The office was set up primarily to promote the "temperance crusade."[46] The 18th Amendment was instigated in

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[44] Ibid., 50.
[45] Ibid.,51.
[46] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 232.

1918, as Kelley argues, because of "the churches agitating for national prohibition"[47] While several states had begun the process of instituting prohibition already, this is one of the first instances where we see a religious group spearhead a successful single issue in American politics.[48] Prohibition highlighted new twists in the intertwining of religion and politics in the U.S., especially for Protestants. Throughout its history, Protestantism has typically had an unfavorable view of alcohol due to the deleterious effects it can have on a person and family. However, the 18th Amendment was repealed by the 20th Amendment in 1933.

Bearing that in mind, according to E. J. Dionne, "Prohibition struck a blow to Protestantism as a whole, since it was the one issue on which fundamentalist and modernist Protestants agreed. For the fundamentalists, Prohibition was a way for the state to enforce high individual moral standards. For the modernists, it was part of a program of social reform, aimed at lifting the urban poor."[49] The result, says Dionne, was a blending of new religious flavors in direct competition with Protestantism. "With the failure of Prohibition, Protestant and rural dominance in American culture ended. Cultural power passed to a heterogeneous urban America in which Catholics, Jews and nonbelievers played decisive roles."[50]

Of course, the reintroduction of alcohol into the US proceeded apace. With the utter failure of Prohibition, some have argued that this 'era' was the beginning of a change in the way the public viewed religion's involvement in the political sphere.

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[47] Dean K. Kelley, "The Rationale for the Involvement of Religion in the Body Politic" in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 161.
[48] Ibid.
[49] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 214.
[50] Ibid.

According to Robert Drinan, "When alcohol again became legal, doubt and ambiguity about the role of churches in shaping America's morality became a permanent feature in the souls of America."[51]

The fundamentally important point to note about the fights over evolution and Prohibition was that they were the first major events to really raise the political hackles of the fundamentalists in the United States. Slavery had, of course, been an earlier example, since the South contained of a very large percentage of fundamentalists; however, that particular issue was more of one between Northern and Southern religious groups. As Dionne puts it, "Fundamentalism was plunged into crisis by its two great public crusades of the teens and twenties, the wars against evolution and alcohol."[52] While fundamentalism made small victories on these two fronts, as Scopes was convicted (although the verdict was overturned a year later) and for a time Prohibition was law, the fundamentalists' actions acted as a boomerang that would force them back into the wilderness of American politics for 40 years. Dionne points out that "The fundamentalists' claims about evolution were held up for scorn throughout the nation."[53] He quotes George M. Marsden, a historian of evangelicalism, as saying "Respected 'evangelicals' in the 1870s, by the 1920s they had become a laughingstock, ideological strangers in their own land."[54] The result was that the fundamentalists withdrew to lick their wounds until they could remobilize in the 1950s, a cultural era which they found to be favorable to their views.[55]

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[51] Robert Drinan, "The Advocacy Role of Religion in American Politics" in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 162.
[52] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 210.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

Over time, different religious groups began to set up shop in Washington. In 1943, the Quakers established an office to fight the draft as well as other public issues.[56] In 1946, Presbyterians had a representative for the purpose of "procuring information."[57] And in 1950, the National Council of Churches was established to coordinate public policy activities of the main-line Protestants.[58] These establishments would find themselves quite busy in the decades ahead, especially in the 1960s.

Turning Tides

With the implementation of the political version of the "social gospel" via the New Deal and the temporary retreat of the fundamentalists from the political scene, the 1930s and 1940s were politically dominated by the mainline churches when it came to questions surrounding religion and politics. The 1950s saw a brand of social conservatism across America. Dionne characterized this period as the Religious Right's established "ordered world of the 1950s."[59] Activism from the fundamentalists and evangelicals did not require wholesale advancement, as the culture of the day was, at least on the face of it, styled around the traditional nuclear family of "Leave It to Beaver." This, of course, was not to last in the coming decades. And much like contemporary North America, the change in societal values began to manifest itself in the courts.

With respect to religion, the year 1962 was the first spark in the powder keg. In the case *Engel v. Vitale,* the Supreme Court ruled that organized prayer in public schools

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[56] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 232.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.,233.
[59] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 223.

was unconstitutional. The case began when New York's Board of Regents created a non denominational prayer for students. Some of the parents of the children objected to any prayer and took the State to court.[60] The resulting action saw the courts in the State of New York upholding prayer in school.[61] But when the matter was put before the United States Supreme Court, they ruled that all public school prayer was contrary to the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.[62] Religious conservatives and many other Americans were outraged.

The case of *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965 was yet another blow to "moral America," most especially to conservative Catholics. In this case a Planned Parenthood group was charged with and convicted of being accessories in the use of contraceptives, which were illegal in the state.[63] The Supreme Court found that the anti-contraceptive laws violated various aspects of the Bill of Rights, from which the court derived marital privacy rights.[64]

The two cases may have started and fueled the process of what was to come, but there were other events of the 1960s and 1970s that would only raise the stakes for religious groups. When hearings on the Civil Rights Act opened in 1963, religious organizations were lined up around the block to testify before the House Judiciary Committee.[65] Catholics and mainline Protestants, particularly the black Protestant churches, pushed political leaders to pass the civil rights legislation. Edsall and Edsall

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[60] International Information Programs. INFORMATION USA. 2003. US. Department of State. Available: http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/47.htm [29 Sept. 2003]
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Legal Information Institute. LII Supreme Court Collection. 2003. Cornell University. Available: http://www2.law.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/foliocgi.exe/historic/query=[group+381+u!2Es!2E+479!3A]!28[group+syllabus!3A]!7C[level+case+citation!3A]!29/doc/{@1}/hit_headings/words=4/hits_only? [29 Sept. 2003]
[64] Ibid.

point out quite correctly that the fight for civil rights had started for African Americans long before the 1950s and 1960s. "For a Century after the Civil War, blacks fought in the courts, the streets, the churches, the unions, at Democratic and Republican conventions, in back-country schools, in the halls of Congress, in the army barracks, and on the shop floor...."[66] However, it was largely the "nonviolent, church based struggle of the blacks"[67] that swayed public opinion in the north towards a Civil Rights Movement. Not surprisingly, one of the most influential members of that movement was an Ebenezer Baptist Church minister named Martin Luther King Jr.

As Reichley argues, "Protestant and Catholic leaders differed on tactics. Protestant clergy prowled the halls of the Capitol; Catholics preferred to bring pressure through their parish constituencies. But the two approaches were complementary rather than divisive."[68] As Allen Hertzke points out, "All accounts of the months of intense lobbying on behalf of the bill confirm the key role of religious leaders."[69] He further indicated that "[m]inisters flocked to the Capitol and were tremendously effective, in part because of their novelty: legislators were not used to being lobbied by clerics."[70] This was one of the first wholesale instances of direct religious influence on legislators.

The turmoil of the 1960s spurred evangelical and fundamentalists into action. The juggernaut that has been deemed the New Religious Right (a loosely dubbed group of conservative religious groups and personalities who moved from the traditional stance

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[65] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002),235.
[66] Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 32.
[67] Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 143.
[68] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002),236.
[69] Allen Hertzke, " An Assessment of the Mainline Churches Since 1945" in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 49.

of gospel soul saving to active involvement in political and social life because they perceive a societal move a way from a conservative concept of morality) began to move. Dunn shows that the real mobilization of the conservative Protestants began in 1964 with the presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater: "While abhorring the turbulent liberal and radical demonstrations, the conservative movement began to counterattack with its own demonstrations as well as more effective intellectual, legal, and political efforts to influence public opinion and public policy."[71]

The battle got even more heated over the next decade, with evangelical Protestants utilizing the television medium to attract Americans to their word. While conservative religious personalities had used radio and television since the 1930s to broadcast their message, events of the 1960s and 1970s helped mould a new captive audience. The mainline Protestant denominations and Catholics had established themselves as the champions of social justice. The conservative Protestants now began to establish themselves as the champions of an America fighting to keep the "moral fiber" of society intact. According to Reichley, "More important than specific court decisions or concrete institutional interests was a general sense among evangelicals in the 1970s that the moral foundations of American society were crumbling."[72] Watergate, Vietnam and the social disorders of the preceding decade were causes for pause amongst conservatives that the state and its leaders may be fallible after all. Talking heads such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson emerged during this time. Divorce rates were

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[70] Ibid.,50.
[71] Ibid.
[72] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 294.

skyrocketing when compared to 1950s America.[73] The movement for women's rights, including for the Equal Rights Amendment, was picking up speed.[74] Dionne defined much of what was going on as "counterculture." "Counterculture" basically prescribed a "if it feels good, do it" mentality.[75] It encouraged individualism, values of peace and living for today rather than tomorrow.[76] As an example, Dionne argues "Drugs became important to the counterculture in part because they were illegal."[77] All of these issues contributed to an America that was, in the New Religious Right's view, literally going to hell. However, one other issue became the rally point of the conservatives, and it exploded on a day in January 1973.

Throughout the late 1960s, several individual states began the process of legalizing abortions. In 1967, Colorado and California began changing their laws to allow abortions under such circumstances as rape, incest and endangerment of the health of mothers.[78] But with *Roe v. Wade*, the piecemeal process of allowing abortions dissolved. The mobilization of the fundamentalist and evangelical political movement truly began. Additionally, Catholics were now placed in the difficult position of having to choose sides between their traditional mainline alliances or to join under the conservative banner. This issue and others revolving around sex and human life, as we will see, allowed Catholics to hang their hats in both camps. Ardent anti-abortionist Catholics joined hands with the conservatives.

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[73] Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 108.
[74] Ibid.
[75] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 40.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002),273.

The tango between religion and politics sped up over the debate on abortion. According to Reichley, "The 1978 election turned out to be a trial run for the planned alliance, bringing together the political new right, Protestant fundamentalists, and Catholic right-to-lifers. Opposition to abortion...became the unifying cause."[79] The alliance gravitated towards the Republican Party. Many conservative candidates were elected, and many of the talking heads cried out that a shakeup in politics was coming. Pat Robertson stated that "[w]e have enough votes to run the country."[80] Jim Bakker stated that "[o]ur goal is to influence all viable candidates on public policy questions important to the church. We want answers. We want appointments in government."[81] As part of this mobilization process, organizations such as the Moral Majority under the leadership of Jerry Falwell arose. This was the same Jerry Falwell who was once quoted as saying, "Preachers are not called upon to be politicians but soul winners. Nowhere are we commissioned to reform the externals."[82] Later, his "Old Time Gospel Hour" attracted hundreds of thousands of donors to the New Religious Right's cause. His shift in position really goes to the heart of why this New Religious Right was "new;" the "moral America" that Falwell once knew was slipping away and therefore a new approach (a political approach) by fundamentalist religious leaders, many thought, was needed. And finally in 1980, Ronald Reagan, the poster child of a new conservative America, was elected President.

While the New Religious Right grew, the mainline groups began to falter during the period of the 1970's and 1980's. With the specter of communism, the perception of a

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[79] Ibid.,297.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 209

growing welfare state (where white people began to feel that the government was working only for minorities), as well as an increasing inherent distrust of government (due to Watergate and Vietnam), the mainline Protestant "social gospel" message was being attacked by conservative theologians. With the sky falling all around them, mainline Protestant groups began to fracture and their influence to falter. Hertzke argues that "the assertiveness of the feisty evangelicals and fundamentalists, along with the growing power of the Catholic lobby, confronted the Protestant 'children of light' with serious challenges to their cultural and political position in the nation."[83] Using the example of the establishment of a federal day care program, Hertzke cites the breakdown of the mainline lobby: "The 'mainline' witness on this bill demonstrated its weakened and fractured political position.... The problem was that members of Congress heard conflicting messages, even from the mainline Protestant community."[84] In addition to conflicting messages, the liberal theological center's voices were being drowned out. As Hertzke states, "[L]iberal church leaders often found themselves in the seemingly tenuous position of offering little that was distinctive from the ACLU, the National Education Association, or the left wing of the Democratic Party."[85]

To add insult to injury, liberal religious leaders were often perceived by their followers to hold different opinions from "the common man," in other words, themselves. Wuthnow points out that "...this has often been the weakness of liberal religious leaders who incorporate political rhetoric directly into their appeals to the faithful: slogans about 'human rights' may do well in political circles, but they clearly will not generate passion

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[83] Allen Hertzke, " An Assessment of the Mainline Churches Since 1945" in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 67.
[84] Ibid.,68-69.

at the grass-roots level."[86] To highlight the growing gap between views of the religious leaders and of their followers, Reichley presents a poll conducted by the Methodist Church in 1980 on major public issues of the day. The laity in support of quotas for minorities, for example, polled at 34.9%, while their bishops polled at 81.5%.[87] On guaranteed annual income, the laity polled at 30.7%, the bishops at 63%.[88] On the issue of abortion, 56.7% of laity was in support, but 92.6% of the bishops were in support.[89] Interestingly, a poll done for the Presbyterian Church in 1974 indicated that 38% of the laity thought abortion was an appropriate social concern for their local congregation, and 69% of their pastors agreed it was.[90]

The bottom line was that the mainstream churches of America were collapsing under their own weight. For decades they had enjoyed the privilege of being the only show in town. However, when the welfare state was being attacked by the New Right throughout the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s, many of the mainstream churches who had long affiliated themselves with the liberal state suffered stagnation. As Dionne puts it, "The declining churches were the liberal churches.... The churches on the rise were the most conservative."[91] Dionne further argues that by the time anyone realized what was happening, "liberals no longer had enough self-confidence to know which, if any, values they wanted the state to encourage."[92] So it was with the mainstream churches. Ted Jelen points out that "in areas and periods dominated by a single religious tradition, there is a

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[85] Ibid.
[86] Robert Wuthnow, "The Religious Right and Symbolic Politics in James E. Wood and Derek Davis, Editors, *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy* (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church – State Studies, 1991), 94.
[87] A. James Reichley, *Faith in Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 256.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 255.
[91] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 211.

tendency for religious organizations to become 'lazy' and to fail to respond to the needs and desires of potential members."[93] After the domination of the political landscape from the New Deal up through Civil Rights, the mainstream churches may indeed have become lazy.

Religious Rocks

I have mentioned the African American churches role in the Civil Rights Movement. It is key to note that unlike other mainline churches which suffered due to attacks from the New Religious Right beginning in the 1960s, the African American churches remained, by and large, key supporters of the liberal state and of the Democratic Party. The reason for this is quite simple, according to Edsall and Edsall: "In the years following the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, racial attitudes became a central characteristic of both ideology and party identification, integral to voters' choices between Democrats and Republicans, and integral to choices between policy positions on a range of non-racial issues traditionally identified with liberalism and conservatism."[94] Statistical increases crime and unemployment were disproportionately amongst the African American community. Increased welfare usage was disproportionately by African American and Hispanic persons. And affirmative action was specifically established to level the playing field for women and minorities.[95] It is small wonder why the African American Protestant churches remained strong and liberal in the days of

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[92] Ibid., 76.
[93] Ted G. Jelen, *To Serve God and Mammon: Church-State Relations in American Politics*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 61.
[94] Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 151.
[95] Ibid.

rampant neo-conservatism, while many of their predominantly white counterparts did not. African Americans were the ones being attacked, albeit through the coded language of attacks on the "liberal state" by the New Right and its partner The New Religious Right.

The allegiance of the Jews in America towards the liberal state and the Democratic Party is also not a cause for any amount of head scratching. By and large, Jews remained politically progressive and saw a threat in the New Right dominated by conservative Christianity because of leaders including Jerry Falwell who make comments like "The 'Christian Public' is...Mr. Bush's core constituency."[96] Further, the perception exists that such figures as Falwell and such movements as the Moral Majority and even the Republican Party are out to "evangelize" Jews or create a political reality that is dominated by Christian ethics and morals. Dionne says of Jimmy Carter's public claims about his religious beliefs that it was "a particular source of concern for American Jews, who were understandably worried whenever public institutions and organized Christianity became too intimately involved with one another."[97] This is not to say that all Jews are members of the Democratic Party or are 'liberal.' As Kevin MacDonald says, "Contemporary neo-conservatism fits into the general pattern of Jewish intellectual and political activism I have identified in my work...key figures in these movements identified in some sense as Jews and viewed their participation as in some sense advancing Jewish interests."[98] MacDonald notes that neo-conservatives have also historically been in favor of protecting Israel, surely attractive to many Jews in the US.[99]

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[96] CBS Broadcasting Inc. *60 Minutes* Zion's Christian Soldiers. 2003. CBSNews.com. Available: http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/10/03/60minutes/main524268.shtml
[97] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 225.
[98] VDARE.com. "Thinking About Neoconservatism". 2003. Available: http://www.vdare.com/misc/macdonald_neoconservatism.htm
[99] Ibid.

However, when we look at the survey data, Jews support the Democrats with a clear majority of 55% and Republicans at 13%.[100] The initial conclusion would be that the neo-conservative message does not appeal greatly to American Jews.

One very interesting and often confusing case in the history of religion and politics in the United States is that of Roman Catholicism. As mentioned above, the Catholic Church had become a religious force within the United States in the middle part of the twentieth century. It had contributed, along with the mainline Protestant churches, to the civil rights process. There was, and still is the reinforcement and promotion of inherently liberal social programs by the church. Peace and anti-capital punishment stances are vigorously touted by the Catholic Church across the world. Yet, unlike its mainline Protestant colleagues, it has not been targeted by the New Religious Right as vigorously. The Catholic Church has remained largely unshaken politically because it has successfully kept a foot in both the liberal and conservative camps by espousing values that appeal to both. We are already aware of the Catholic Church's liberal political credentials. What must also be mentioned, however, is the important role the Vatican II Council of 1962-1965 played in the continuing strength of the Church in America. In many ways the Church discarded much which would have been considered by the youth of the day as irrelevant. For example, free research and questioning on matters of faith were encouraged.

Yet the Catholic Church has some very fundamental beliefs which have not changed and which have prevented it from being dismissed outright by the conservative Protestants of the New Religious Right. The most famous of these is, of course, abortion.

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[100] Centre for Jewish Studies. American Jewish Identity Survey. The Graduate Centre of The City of New York University. 2003. Available: http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/ajis.pdf

As Dionne states, "Protestant preachers and Catholic bishops would frequently find themselves on the same side. In light of fundamentalist-Catholic history, it is truly remarkable that [Jerry] Falwell declared that it was the willingness of the Catholic bishops to speak out, as he put it, 'courageously' on abortion that inspired his decision to enter politics."[101] Further, the Catholic Church's position on traditional family values is often in line with the New Religious Right's as well. The latest example of this reinforcement of traditional family values is Pope John Paul II's "Considerations Regarding Proposals To Give Legal Recognitions to Unions Between Homosexual Persons," published in 2003.

On the Eve of the 21st Century

Ted Jelen has recently outlined the emerging role of religion in American politics. Particularly interesting is what he says about the last two decades of the twentieth century, those which were supposed to be ruled by the New Religious Right. Jelen makes the case that, starting in the 1980s and through the present, the New Religious Right has failed to entrench itself as a permanent force of change. Jelen points to several examples of this tenuous position including the failure of the Moral Majority to "attract more than a small fraction of their political constituencies."[102] Additionally, when discussing elections, Jelen notes that Pat Robertson "garnered only weak support, even amongst his most likely constituents"[103] when he ran for President in 1988. He argues that one of the reasons for the New Religious Right's failures to catch on in the public sphere was a

[101] Ibid., 224.
[102] Ted G. Jelen, *To Serve God and Mammon: Church-State Relations in American Politics*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 92.
[103] Ibid.

reverse of the public appeal that allowed them to gain so much ground in the first place. Their message infuriated large sections of the population: "Public reaction to the Religious Right in the 1980s made the notion of any moral consensus seem ludicrous, even apart from theological/ideological disagreements. The increasingly common practices of extramarital sex, abortion and homosexuality threw fuel on already contentious public debates about morality."[104] Jelen, in a nutshell, attributes the failures of an enforced 'morality' as dreamed by the New Religious Right to the defining spirit which so many ascribe to American culture, individualism. He contends, "The lack of consensus over personal morality can, to a large extent, be attributed to the reassertion of the value of individualism. Even highly religious and conservative citizens have been repelled by the attempts of the New Religious Right to 'legislate morality,' or to give their religious convictions the force of law."[105]

What has been the result of this failure of the New Religious Right to sustain its appeal? To Jelen, history appears to be repeating itself. "Some religious conservatives have revived Roger Williams' argument of a religious basis for separatism."[106] Williams was a preacher in 17th century Rhode Island who advocated that "the purpose of church-state separation was to prevent the church from being contaminated by the corruption of secular politics."[107] In essence, what Jelen is arguing is that New Religious Right is beginning the long slow march back into the wilderness where individual faith and the healing power of the gospel are the saving powers, not the government. Some might argue that the election of George W. Bush, which occurred after Jelen's comments in To

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 93.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., 34.

Serve God and Mammon: Church State Relations in American Politics, would be contrary to this observation. But could Jelen be on to something when we look at a whole new scientific and political front that is being opened around biotechnology and specifically stem cell research?

Washington's Oldest Profession

To gauge the lobbying activities of religious groups over biotechnology issues that we should expect to see, one must look briefly at the typical tactics used by lobbyists on various public policy debates. The bottom line is that lobbyists are in the information game, as tainted or partisan as it may be. Politicians need stakeholder information, and lobbyists are there to ensure that they have the vested interest's viewpoint. As Kernell and Jacobson point out, "[I]nformation is central to the effort that goes into persuading government officials to act as a lobbyist desires. Decision makers need two related types of information: technical and political."[108] The top six tactics used by lobby groups to give lawmakers this information, according to Kernell and Jacobson, are: testifying at hearings, contacting government officials directly, engaging in informal contacts with officials, presenting research results, sending letters to members of the public and interested groups and entering into coalitions with other groups to get their information across.[109] Other activities can range from protests to public endorsements (about which religion is in a bit of a quandary due to churches' tax-exempt status) to litigation.[110]

Several studies have been conducted on religious lobbying using various units of analysis. Commonly, individual political advocacy activities are correlated with religious

[108] Samuel Kernell and Gary Jacobson The Logic of American Politics (Washington: CQ Press, 2000), 438.
[109] Ibid., 439.

activity in National Election Surveys. Perhaps less commonly, particular denominations and their clergy are put under the microscope to examine their lobbying activities. One such study, conducted by John C. Green, examined the political activities of Unitarian-Universalist Clergy in the United States. Green found that for the 2000 election, 78% of the 1,011 persons surveyed signed or circulated a petition, 72% touched on a political issue in a sermon, and 69% had publicly (not preaching) taken a stand on a public issue.[111] While Green was no doubt thorough in listing some 27 activities engaged in by Clergy in his study, and while this type of study may provide some insight into religious lobbying in general, the unit of analysis for this thesis is congregational and denominational in scope.

When looking at larger units of analysis in studying religious political lobbying, the amount of existing literature is somewhat scarce. It is true that numerous works, including those which have been included in this Chapter and in those to come, talk about religious activity in the political world. But those works seem to either hone in on particular denominations or give a generalized sense of religion and politics. This does not mean, of course, that there is no helpful literature. Indeed, Kraig Beyerlein and Mark Chaves have provided some assistance. Their 2003 study focused purely on the political activities of congregations, a rare thing, according to them. They argue, "Although we know much about how congregations influence individuals' political involvement, we know very little about the ways in which congregations are politically engaged as

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[110] Ibid.
[111] John C. Green "A Liberal Dynamo: The Political Activism of the Unitarian – Universalist Clergy" in *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Dec 2003, Vol. 42 Issue 4., 579.

organizational actors."[112] Beyerlein and Chaves argue that this lack of study is of concern to those who study religion and politics. They state that:

> The absence of a quality national sample of religious congregations that contains various measures of political activity has meant that we have been unable to answer certain basic questions about the political involvement of congregations in the United States. Specifically, no research to date has adequately assessed the extent to which American religious congregations currently engage in a wide range of political activity on a national scale, and the nature of religious variation in this activity. We consequently know very little about the political activity of these religious organizations that often mediate between political activists and the religious constituents those activists sometimes wish to mobilize.[113]

Their study did shed some light, however, on the political activities of religious congregations in the United States. Beyerlein and Chaves found that the most common political activity engaged in by congregations was telling people at worship services about opportunities for political activity. This was followed by the distribution of voter guides. The least common activities that Beyerlein and Chaves found were having a group, meeting, class or event to organize or participate in efforts to lobby elected officials and having someone running for office as a visiting speaker.[114]

Beyerlein and Chaves broke down the type of political activity based on four religious traditions: Catholic, Black Protestant, Mainline/liberal Protestant and Evangelical/conservative Protestant.[115] The most common activity for the Catholic congregations was to tell people at worship services about opportunities for political

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[112] Kraig Beyerlein and Mark Chaves "The Political Activities of Religious Congregations in the United States" in *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, June 2003, Vol. 42 Issue 2., 230.
[113] Ibid., 231.
[114] Ibid. 235.
[115] Ibid., 237

activity, followed closely by having a group to organize a demonstration or march.[116] For Black Protestants, the most common political activity was the same as the Catholics.[117] However, the runner up for Black Protestant Churches was having a group to get people registered to vote.[118] For Mainline Protestants, telling people about political activities and distributing voter guides were the most common.[119] For Evangelical/conservative Protestants, hands down, after telling people at worship services about opportunities for political activity was the distribution of Christian Right voter guides.[120] According to the authors, "Evangelical/conservative Protestants specialize in distributing Christian Right voter guides. Indeed, this is the only political activity in which evangelical/conservative Protestant congregations are more likely to engage than congregations in the other religious traditions."[121]

One of the activities listed in Beyerlein and Chaves' article was labeled "Have had a group to lobby elected officials." The Catholic congregations interviewed, followed distantly by the Mainline/liberal Protestant congregations, were the frontrunners at this activity.[122] However, for Black Protestant and Evangelical/conservative Protestant churches, lobbying officials was a very uncommon activity.[123] But is failure to directly lobby officials a reflection of the fact that much of the lobbying of politicians is conducted at the denominational level? We have seen in this Chapter that several denominations in the history of the United States have lobbied politicians and engaged in political activism through central offices and communications bureaus. Congregations

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 236.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., 237

then would be freed up for more grassroots activity. Most of the large religious denominations have offices in Washington and large communications offices to bring to bear on politicians, and they have done so in the past. But have they brought them to bear on the questions surrounding embryonic stem cell research?

A First Hint of Divergence

A startling example of divergence in policy stances and intensity of lobbying between abortion and embryonic stem cell research comes from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. On the Church's "Beliefs and Doctrines" web page, the position of the Church on abortion could not be clearer: "The Church opposes abortion, pornography, gambling and other immoral behavior."[124] It is true, however, that this position does not make a definitive line of demarcation between cell and human being, yet it is clearly pro-life. On the subject of stem cell research, however, something interesting is happening within the LDS church in terms of position and lobbying efforts. In an issue of MSN's "Slate" Magazine, Drew Clark makes some startling revelations about the Church's position. According to Clark, the LDS church leadership officially took a stance of neutrality on the subject in July of 2001, a startling fact on its own.[125] However, Clark also notes that the five LDS members of the US Senate in August 2001 argued for federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.[126] Clark quite rightly points out: "Mormons have long been part of the conservative coalition on moral issues....

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[123] Ibid.
[124] Beliefs and Doctrines, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (http://www.lds.org/newsroom/page/0,15606,4030-1---4-168,00.html).
[125] Drew Clark "The Mormon Stem-Cell Choir" in "Slate", © 2003 Microsoft Corporation (http://slate.msn.com/id/112974).
[126] Ibid.

They have staunchly opposed pornography and abortion on demand. But stem-cell research has splintered that coalition, separating Mormons from conservative Catholics."[127] I intend to look at this divided stance and lobbying effort in more detail later; however, the silence of some churches and the 180 degree flips between positions on abortion and embryonic stem cell research are quite notable.

This flip of policy position, and the resulting change of lobbying tactic and intensity, brings us back to the question: Are Christian religious organizations in the United States employing the same tactics and intensity in lobbying on the topic of embryonic stem cell as they have on the seemingly related matter of abortion? To answer this question, further examination of religious organizations and religious lobby groups is warranted. This examination will involve asking these organizations where they stand on the issues of abortion and embryonic stem cell research. The examination will also involve a direct inquiry into the actions they have used in lobbying public officials over both issues.

[127] Ibid.

Chapter Two: Data Collection and Discussion

A New Political Language

Before proceeding to a treatment of the data I have obtained in researching my thesis, I feel it important to step back briefly for two reasons. First, some clarification is needed of scientific terminology being used in the political debates on stem cell research. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, politicians especially, but also ordinary citizens, more and more are being inundated with scientific terminology and technical arguments. What should be done with surplus IVF embryos? Should we allow human cloning? Is genetic screening immoral? These are only some of the other questions aside from stem cell research which are being or have been tackled in the US Congress. Second, a brief contemporary history of the interactions between politics and bio-technology (namely those technologies involved in the creation, use and destruction of embryos) is in order. This historical treatment is necessary because there have been significant political debates and activities surrounding such bio-technology issues between politicians, scientists and some religious organizations.

In his August 11, 2001, speech to the nation, President George W. Bush remarked that "Embryonic stem cell research is at the leading edge of a series of moral hazards."[128] Ten years previous to this statement very few people would have had a clue as to what the President was talking about. The term "embryonic stem cell" was largely unknown. Indeed, while there is more familiarity with the term today, the general public's understanding of it no doubt remains cloudy. If we look at the Congressional Record over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in scientific terms being used. For example, if we search for the term "stem cell" in the records for the 108th Congress

[128] The White House, President George W. Bush, *Remarks by the President on Stem Cell Research*, Available: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010809-2.html [17 May, 2004]

(2003-2004), we will find that there are ten pieces of legislation before the Congress that mention "stem cells".[129] We will also find that there are fifty debates in which the term is used.[130] When we compare this with previous Congresses such as the 103rd (1993-1994) and 101st (1989-1990), the term is now used far more often. In the 103rd Congress, "stem cell" does not appear in any debate.[131] In the 101st Congress, the term is used in one bill and one debate, and then only in the context of research on mice.[132]

Stem cell research is a generalization of several scientific techniques that raise varying ethical concerns. Depending on the type of stem cell, different political concerns are raised about the permissibility of research. Scientifically speaking, however, a stem cell always refers to a "...unique and essential cell type found in animals."[133] There are several types of these cells, many of which have particular, "pre-programmed" functions. "In other words, when stem cells divide, some of the progeny mature into cells of a specific type (e.g., heart, muscle, blood, or brain cells), while others remain stem cells, ready to repair some of the everyday wear and tear undergone by our bodies."[134] These cells are typically known as adult stem cells, not because they are destined to fulfil a specific function, but because of the method of their derivation. These cells are taken from humans at more mature stages of development. For example, hematopoietic stem cells are a type of cell found in the blood.[135]

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[129] U.S. Congress. THOMAS. ONLINE. Library of Congress. Available: http://thomas.loc.gov/ : [17 May, 2004].
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), i.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.

While stem cells having a specific function in the human body, such as marrow, are of great interest to scientists, the true "holy grail," as it is often referred to by scientists, is the stem cell that is not dedicated to a specific function. A stem cell that could essentially become any type of cell in the body has remarkable potential. As Ronald Green says, stem cells as "[u]ndifferentiated, pluripotent (capable of developing into virtually any bodily tissue), and able to proliferate indefinitely in culture, they promise to revolutionize medicine...".[136] These types of cells are not yet capable of being derived from adult stem cells. As Thomas Okarma states, "Restriction of differential potential, however, is characteristic of most stem cells that have been isolated and studied to date. The only certain exception is the embryonic stem cell, which can give rise to literally all cells and tissues of the body."[137]

Embryonic stem cells are derived from the cells of the inner mass of the very early embryo, which is only days old. It is at this stage of development that each cell derived has the potential to develop into any type of cell.[138] Further, embryonic stem cells, unlike adult stem cells, have the ability to continually "self-renew" or to form all cells and tissues of the body over long periods of time.[139] As Okarma says, "Because of pluripotency and infinite self-renewal, human embryonic stem cells are perhaps the most

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[136] Ronald M. Green, *The Human Embryo Research Debates: Bioethics in the Vortex of Controversy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), ix.
[137] Thomas B. Okarma, "Human Embryonic Stem Cells: A Primer on the Technology and Its Medical Applications", in Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth eds., *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate: Science, Ethics and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2001), 5.
[138] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 9.
[139] Ibid.

extraordinary cells ever discovered. Their discovery certainly qualifies as one of the major breakthroughs in biomedicine."[140]

Embryonic stem cells are derived in different ways. One of the methods of deriving stem cells is from embryos resulting from somatic cell nuclear transfer, a highly complex process.[141] The more common method, however, is through in vitro fertilisation (IVF). When used for procreation purposes, there are often "spare" embryos left over from IVF that were not used or "implanted" during the course of the procedure.[142] There are literally thousands of these "spare" embryos in the United States that are simply sitting in a frozen state. Often, the fate of these embryos is sealed when they are literally poured down the drain. In addition to the creation of embryos for infertility treatments, IVF embryos have also been created solely for medical research purposes.[143] We will be discussing the political debate surrounding utilization of this method shortly.

It is important to note at this stage that there is another form of cell which scientists have been working with, and these are known as Embryonic Germ cells. These cells are derived from the primordial reproductive cells (precursors to sperm and ova) of the developing fetus. Specifically, they are derived from human fetal tissue following an elective abortion.[144] These embryonic germ cells have been shown to have properties and abilities similar to embryonic stem cells. These cells are harder to come by than embryonic stem cells, however, because "it may be difficult to obtain an adequate supply

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[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 9.
[143] Ibid., 10.
[144] Ibid., i.

of appropriate fetal tissue to provide the relevant cell lines needed for both research and clinical uses."[145]

After taking a look at what embryonic stem cells are and how they are derived, a better picture presents itself as to why embryonic stem cell research is such a political hot potato. In order to derive the stem cells from the early embryo, it becomes quite clear that the embryo in question will be destroyed. It goes without saying that research involving cells derived from this embryo will be controversial and politically charged. It also becomes clear that at its root, the embryonic stem cell research question involves the same ethical issues as abortion. In both procedures, an embryo is destroyed. The difference between abortion and embryonic stem cell research is that abortion has no second step in the process. Embryonic stem cell research goes one step further by using the cells for what most would call a more constructive use. This is an important difference to note because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there are some religious organizations that have different, or at the very least modified, policy stances on these two procedures, even though the root action in both procedures is the same.

Before proceeding to look at the data collected from my interviews with some religious denominations on these two policy stances, let us turn briefly to the political history of bio-technology debates involving pre-natal human development.

Evolution of a Political Hot Potato

The social and political debates over embryonic stem cell research have a root in the 1970's. Although the technology to derive human pluripotent stem cells was only

[145] Ibid., 8-9.

announced in 1998,[146] the subject of using human embryos for research purposes goes back at least to the development of IVF. In 1978, the birth of Louise Brown in the UK truly started the ball rolling. She was the first "test-tube" baby in the world.[147]

In the United States, the question of allowing the creation and use of human embryos for IVF research really emerged politically in 1977, during the Presidency of Jimmy Carter. An academic researcher put in an application to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for government support of a study on the subject. Under the regulations that existed at the time, such requests had to be put to the Ethics Advisory Board (EAB) for consideration.[148] In 1979 the EAB reached a decision that the use of federal funds for IVF research was "acceptable from an ethical standpoint provided that certain conditions were met, such as informed consent for the use of gametes, an important scientific goal, and not maintaining an embryo in vitro beyond the stage normally associated with the completion of implantation."[149] In 1980, however, before action was taken on this proposal, the EAB was dissolved by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and no replacement body was put in its place.[150] Although it was not apparent at the time, the result of this action was that a de facto moratorium on federal funding for IVF research was imposed by the Reagan Administration. As the National Bioethics Advisory Commission put it, "DHEW effectively forestalled any attempts to support

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[146] Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth eds., *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate: Science, Ethics and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2001), xv.
[147] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 34.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

IVF; and no experimentation involving human embryos was ever funded pursuant to the conditions set forth in the May 1979 report or through any further EAB review."[151]

It is interesting to note that this entire application process and the dismissal of the EAB took place in an era of US history, as noted in the first chapter, when the Religious Right began to make political inroads on topics including reproductive issues. The "moratorium" that prevented government funded research on human embryos lasted for about fifteen years, through both Democratic and Republican Administrations. As Green puts it, "During the Reagan and Bush years...this moratorium was maintained because both administrations were aligned with 'right to life' constituencies that opposed any manipulations of human embryos."[152]

The de facto moratorium ended with the passage of the *Revitalization Act* of 1993.[153] The Act removed legislative and regulatory requirements that had previously mandated an EAB review of all research involving human embryos.[154] Effectively, by removing the defunct EAB review requirement, scientific research proposals were no longer held up. However, while researchers were free to submit applications on the subject, the administrators at NIH felt that ethical guidelines were needed to appropriately approve funds for such research.[155] Therefore, a panel was set up to provide recommendations and standards for the ethical treatment of embryonic research. The board was known as the Human Embryo Research Panel (HERP), of which Ronald Green

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[151] Ibid.
[152] Ronald M. Green, *The Human Embryo Research Debates: Bioethics in the Vortex of Controversy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.
[153] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 34.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ronald M. Green, *The Human Embryo Research Debates: Bioethics in the Vortex of Controversy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

was a member and which his work in *The Human Embryo Research Debates: Bioethics in the Vortex of Controversy* details.[156]

This was not the first government panel to be established to look at the ethical issues involved in researching human reproductive research. In 1988, the Human Fetal Tissue Transplantation Research Panel was convened to provide recommendations on ethical standards on such research. The Panel consisted of three doctors, one molecular and genetic physician, one bio-ethicist, one divinity school professor, one corporate president, one lawyer, one historian, one sociologist, one professor of humanities and technology in health care, and one psychologist.[157] However, according to Green, the Panel's recommendations were weakened by dissenting reports of critics, who felt the pro-life position was being shut out.[158] In his words "Lack of consensus here probably weakened the panel's ultimate recommendations."[159] This response would seem to indicate that the panel was not a free ride for the scientists on biotechnology, but that there was some attention paid to pro-life positions.

The Human Embryo Research Panel had far more success in establishing such recommendations than the Human Fetal Tissue Transplantation Research Panel. The Panel consisted of nineteen members, three of whom specialized in mammalian embryology, six were physicians of various specialties, three were biomedical ethicists, two were lawyers, one was a sociologist, two were political scientists, one was a infertility specialist, and one was mother of a child with sickle cell anemia.[160] In 1994,

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[156] Ibid., 4.
[157] Kathi E. Hanna, ed., *Biomedical Politics* (Washington: National Academy Press, 1991), iii. Available: http://books.nap.edu/books/0309044863/html/R3.html#pagetop [23 September 2004].
[158] Ibid., 5.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 4.

the Panel submitted its recommendations to the Advisory Committee to the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The Committee accepted the recommendations and then forwarded them onto the Director.[161] In response, President Clinton, the day after the recommendations were submitted to the Director of the NIH, directed that federal funds not be used for the creation of human embryos for research purposes."[162] Although such an action was not approved outright by the Panel, neither did they dismiss it out of hand. HERP had instead placed the recommendation for the creation of embryos expressly for embryonic stem cell research into the "Warrants Additional Review" category.[163]

In the end the Director of NIH then implemented the Panel's recommendations, which were not ruled out by the President. One such implemented recommendation was that research using "surplus embryos" could be funded.[164] As mentioned previously, in vitro fertilization procedures for the purposes of procreation commonly produce more embryos than are actually used. But before medical researchers could shout with glee about such a decision, Congress stepped in and added a provision in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) appropriations bill in 1995 which banned funding for any project which would result in the destruction of a human embryo. In the 2004 *Departments of Labour, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act*, the actual ban reads as follows:

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[161] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 34.
[162] Ibid.
[163] National Institutes of Health Human Embryo Research Panel: *Categories of Research,* in Ronald M. Green, *The Human Embryo Research Debates: Bioethics in the Vortex of Controversy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221.

> Sec. 510. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for--
>
> (1) the creation of a human embryo or embryos for research purposes; or
>
> (2) research in which a human embryo or embryos are destroyed, discarded, or knowingly subjected to risk of injury or death greater than that allowed for research on fetuses in utero under 45 CFR 46.208(a)(2) and section 498(b) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 289g(b)).
>
> (b) For purposes of this section, the term `human embryo or embryos' includes any organism, not protected as a human subject under 45 CFR 46 as of the date of the enactment of this Act, that is derived by fertilization, parthenogenesis, cloning, or any other means from one or more human gametes or human diploid cells.[165]

This text in the appropriations bill, although with different section numbers, is precisely the same wording which has been placed in every health appropriations bill since July 1995.

Although Congress's actions might have ended the use of federal funding, the Director of the NIH asked the Department's legal counsel whether or not the ban would apply to funding research on already derived stem cells from IVF embryos remaining from infertility treatments. Another loophole was found. The counsel reported back that "the OCESAA does not prevent NIH from supporting research that uses ES cells derived from this source because the cells themselves do not meet the statutory, medical, or biological definition of a human embryo."[166] While some may have rejoiced at this news, once again the loophole was closed when the NIH decided to delay actual funding until

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[164] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 34.

[165] U.S. Congress. THOMAS. ONLINE. 2003. Library of Congress. Available http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c108:./temp/~c108qFuZ91: [18 May. 2004].

[166] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), 35.

"an Ad Hoc Working Group of the ACD develops guidelines for the ethical research in this area."[167] Accordingly the working group started the development of the requested guidelines in early 1999.

Several months before this legal scrutiny began, and several months after the ban was introduced in the Appropriations Act in 1995, President Clinton again initiated the examination process into acceptable research. Executive Order 12975 of October 3, 1995, established a new body called the National Bioethics Advisory Commission (NBAC) to study the ethical issues involved in embryonic stem cell research. This was perhaps the most famous of all the boards, panels and commissions that had been established over the years. According to the Executive Order the NBAC was mandated as follows:

> **Sec. 4.** *Functions.* (a) NBAC shall provide advice and make recommendations to the National Science and Technology Council and to other appropriate government entities regarding the following matters:
>
> (1) the appropriateness of departmental, agency, or other governmental programs, policies, assignments, missions, guidelines, and regulations as they relate to bio-ethical issues arising from research on human biology and behaviour; and
>
> (2) applications, including the clinical applications, of that research.
>
> (b) NBAC shall identify broad principles to govern the ethical conduct of research, citing specific projects only as illustrations for such principles.
>
> (c) NBAC shall not be responsible for the review and approval of specific projects.
>
> (d) In addition to responding to requests for advice and recommendations from the National Science and Technology Council, NBAC also may accept suggestions of issues for consideration from both the Congress and the public. NBAC also may identify other bio-ethical issues for the purpose
> of providing advice and recommendations, subject to the approval of the

[167] Ibid.

National Science and Technology Council.[168]

While the written mandate proved to be relatively broad, the focus of the NBAC was unquestionably focused on the use of human embryos and embryonic stem cells in research. The Commission's report, which was delivered to President Clinton in September of 1999, consisted of three volumes that included 13 recommendations, commissioned papers, and, an entire academic volume on various religious perspectives from Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians and Jews. It is interesting to note that there was not one representative from a religious organization on the Commission, although there was one philosopher one bio-ethicist, five medical doctors, one nurse, three lawyers, one religious studies professor, one economics professor, one child psychiatrist, one psychologist, one biology and genetics professor, a representative from the Hastings Centre and the Chief Business Officer for Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Inc. This composition may speak to why religious organizations opposed to embryonic stem cell research might want to participate in the political process.[169]

The report of the NBAC recommended that funding should be available for research on embryos remaining after infertility treatments.[170] Further, it was recommended that donors of embryos left over from infertility treatments should have the option of donating them to research.[171] The report also recommended that federal

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[168] William J. Clinton, *Protection of Human Research Subjects and Creation of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Federal Register, Vol. 60, No. 193, October 3, 1995), 52063.
[169] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), National Bioethics Advisory Commission Composition.
[170] The National Bioethics Advisory Commission, Established Under Executive Order 12975, October 3, 1995, *Volume I: Report and Recommendations of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, (Rockville, Maryland, 1999), iv.
[171] Ibid., vi.

funding should not be available for research involving stem cells derived from human embryos created solely for research.[172]

While the report was presented in 1999 to President Clinton, and subsequent reports were conducted by the NBAC on international bio-medical research topics, a decision on the Federal Government's policy was not announced until August, 2001, by President George W. Bush. It was established then that the Federal Government should provide funding for existing stem cell lines, which were initially created in privately funded research.[173] It was expressed that this decision "allows us to explore the promise and potential of stem cell research without crossing a fundamental moral line, by providing taxpayer funding that would sanction or encourage further destruction of human embryos that have at least the potential for life."[174] This policy position of the Executive Branch reflects the ban in the appropriations bills on federal funding for stem cell research. Simultaneously, President Bush made a plug for advancing research on adult stem cells.[175] This policy is reflected in several federal funding initiatives including $10 million in the 2004 appropriations bill for the establishment of a National Cord Blood Stem Cell Bank Program.[176] Further, President Bush established a new body to examine ethical issues in human reproductive research called the President's Council on Bioethics.[177]

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[172] Ibid., v.
[173] President George W. Bush in a Press Release *Remarks by the President on Stem Cell Research*, Available http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010809-2.html, [18 May 2004]
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] U.S. Congress. THOMAS. ONLINE. 2003. Library of Congress. http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c108:./temp/~c108sOCHHG: [18 May. 2004].
[177] George W. Bush, *Creation of the President's Council on Bioethics*, (Federal Register, Vol. 66, No. 231, November 30, 2001), 59851.

When looking at the history of human bio-technology and reproductive medicine in the United States, a clear pattern emerges. When recommendations arise expanding the use of human embryos in medical research, there is almost certainly a counter move by federal executive or legislative bodies to narrow the research. In the first instance the EAB approved research on IVF, and the response was a moratorium on federal funding for research for a 15 year period. When legislation was enacted to allow funding by eliminating the EAB's role in the process, a lag time was created by requiring the establishment of a body, namely the Human Embryo Research Panel, to study the ethical issues involved. When a report was delivered to President Clinton from the Panel recommending funding for research on human embryos, he banned federal funding for the creation of embryos and Congress banned the use of federal funding for any research involving the destruction of human embryos. When the National Bioethics Advisory Commission recommended using embryos created from IVF for infertility treatment for research purposes, President Bush indicated that he would not allow funding for such a process.

These countermoves appear to represent a pro-life "bent" (or at least cautious reluctance to pursue research into bio-technology involving human embryos) by the government across party lines and over three decades. We should now examine the data obtained from my interviews in order to determine whether or not religious organizations have been one of the major causal agents in the human embryo research political debates.

Methodology

In examining the political advocacy activities of religious organizations surrounding the debates on embryonic stem cell research, it is important to note that my research focused on Christian (Protestant and Catholic) denominations and organizations only. There are several reasons for this focus, not the least of which was the time required and resources necessary to conduct a broader study. The Christian perspective was also selected because it is the religion which is most prevalent in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total combined number of followers of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in the United States is approximately 7.2 million people.[178] In contrast, Roman Catholicism has 62 million adherents in the US, the Southern Baptist Convention has 15.7 million adherents and the United Methodist Church has 8.4 million.[179] There are dozens of other Christian denominations with millions more adherents. Clearly, the United States is inhabited by a large Christian majority. Further, throughout United States history, some small treatment of which is given in Chapter 1, Christian denominations have largely dominated religious political activism.

The data I collected from various Christian denominations were obtained by way of telephone interviews, with clarifications made through electronic mail. It was thought that this format would be the best suited to this particular study, and provide the best response rate. As Simon and Burstein indicate, there are several advantages to telephone interviews, including: low cost, ease of obtaining information, and a very low non-

[178] U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 Statistical Abstract of the United States, Available: http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/statab/sec01.pdf [18 May 2004].
[179] Ibid.

response rate.[180] The main disadvantage of telephone interviews, specifically for my research, is that the interview period is relatively short.[181] However, this disadvantage is mitigated by the fact that call backs are simple and economical.[182] Although call backs were few, electronic mail provided a means for the interviewees to respond and make additions or clarifications to the notes which I took during the interviews.[183]

I had intended to conduct interviews with eight Christian organizations and denominations. On the original interview list was the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Coalition of America, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (The Mormons), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Methodist Church, and the United Church of Christ. Unfortunately the National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Coalition, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Church of Christ declined to participate or did not return several initial contact attempts to setup an interview. An attempt was also made to contact the Presbyterian Church and the Orthodox Church in America. Again, these two Churches either declined an interview or did not return initial contact attempts. In the end, I was able to collect data from four individual denominations and one Christian organization that represents over 30 separate denominations. Within these five responses, I was able to obtain a fairly diverse sample along several axes. The first, and perhaps the most obvious one was the Catholic – Protestant axis. I was able to obtain an

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[180] Julian L. Simon and Paul Burstein *Basic Research Methods in Social Science, 3rd Ed.*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1985), 172.
[181] Ibid., 171.
[182] Ibid., 172.
[183] It is important to note that in addition to telephone interviews, information was also obtained from websites and secondary literary research.

interview with a representative from the Roman Catholic Church as well as from three Protestant denominations and a religious organization with members from many Protestant denominations. The individual Protestant denominations I spoke with are also fairly diverse in background, ranging from the Reformed, Evangelical, and Methodist traditions.[184] It is also important to note that the interviews I conducted with each of the organizations and denominations were with representatives of a national church body, not the average church going member. As we saw in Chapter One, there are some significant differences of opinion between Church leaders and individual church members, a fact which should be kept in mind as we proceed in Chapter Three.

The second axis is along the liberal – conservative spectrum. Liberal in this context would perhaps capture a religious organization that places greater emphasis on embracing a less orthodox approach to theology, such as in the case of women being ordained ministers, but also keeping in mind a more individualized conscience based approach. Conservative would perhaps capture organizations with more orthodox theology with fewer individual variations. Although this may be a more subjective form of measurement, the placements of the organizations and denominations, I would argue, fit roughly as follows: for liberal, or, as some would put it, mainstream denominations, I did obtain interviews with a representative of the United Methodist Church as well as the National Council of Churches. In terms of conservative denominations, I obtained interviews with representatives of the Evangelical Free Church and the Christian Reformed Church. It is difficult for me to situate the Roman Catholic Church on this spectrum because it has attributes that would fit nicely into both liberal and conservative

[184] Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain an interview with anyone in an Orthodox denomination or from the LDS Church.

sides, as has been detailed in Chapter 1. While some would argue that this is true of any religious tradition, Roman Catholicism takes a position, for example, on the death penalty that would likely be considered by most Americans to be quite liberal. Yet at the same time its well-documented ardent pro-life and anti-contraceptive positions would fit well on the conservative side of the spectrum. For the purposes of this research on political positions regarding abortion and embryonic research, I characterize the Roman Catholic Church as conservative.

Table 2-1: Catholic-Protestant / liberal – conservative placing.

	conservative	liberal
Catholic	Roman Catholic	
Protestant	Evangelical Free Church Christian Reformed Church	United Methodist Church National Council of Churches

It is also of some merit to point out the varying sizes of these denominations and religious organizations. This is because size gives us an indication of what sort of human and material resources can be focused on the questions at hand: more people often means more money and larger infrastructure, thus more latitude to explore highly complex issues in depth. Contrarily, less of a resource base means an organization would have to pick and choose as to where they put their efforts. The Roman Catholic Church, as previously mentioned, has approximately 62 million members in the United States.[185]

[185] U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 Statistical Abstract of the United States, Available: http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/statab/sec01.pdf [18 May. 2004].

Also as previously mentioned, the United Methodist Church has 8.4 million members.[186] The Evangelical Free and Christian Reformed Churches have 243,000 and 199,000 members, respectively.[187] The National Council of Churches (NCC) is composed of 36 individual Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox denominations with 50 million members among them.[188] It is important to note that the NCC is not a central body that develops policy for the individual denominations. It is, as they describe it, "the leading force for ecumenical co-operation among Christians in the United States...Each of the member communions also has a unique heritage, including teachings and practices that differ from those of other members."[189] However, as has been mentioned in the previous Chapter, the NCC has been quite active in political advocacy on various issues in the past.

During the telephone interviews, four major areas were covered. The first was the denomination's or organization's general policy position on abortion. As mentioned throughout this thesis, abortion and embryonic stem cell research share a common root of concern for many religious organizations. In order to better understand the position on abortion and to create a better comparison of policy positions on abortion and embryonic stem cell research, it was important to understand the root position. Questions under this specific heading were designed to determine beliefs on the point at which human life begins, the permissibility of abortion, and any circumstances under which the denomination's position on abortion might vary.

The second major area of questioning surrounded the use of non-embryonic derived stem cells in research, because investigating different religious positions on

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[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] The National Council of Churches. The NCC at a Glance, Available: http://www.ncccusa.org/about/about_ncc.htm [May 20, 2004].

general stem cell research would contribute to the overall discussion and serve as a point of comparison with embryonic stem cell research. Questions in this particular area probed whether or not policy positions of the religious organizations had been established on the use of adult stem cells. Further, the questions in this area also asked about the permissibility of using post-natal materials for the derivation of stem cells, i.e. placental material and umbilical cord materials.

The third major area of questioning surrounded the use of embryonic stem cells in scientific research. The questions here revolved around general policy positions on using stem cells derived from embryos for research purposes. Questions were also posed about using so-called "surplus" or "spare" embryos left over from IVF procedures for scientific research. As with the topic of abortion, questions were also asked about any circumstances in which it would be permissible to use embryonic stem cells for research purposes.

Finally, a set of questions was asked about political activity or activism of the particular religious organization. Questions in this section ranged from the permissibility of political activity by the church, to general political activity, to previous activities on specific issues other than abortion and embryonic stem cell research. Questions were then asked about any political activity that the organization or denomination had engaged in to try to influence public policy on abortion and embryonic stem cell research. These questions looked at the type of political activity that had been engaged in, but also if the activity centred around government funding of abortion or embryonic stem cell research, or contrarily outright legal bans that would include private sector research. With the

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[189] Ibid.

methodology and a general sense of the questions asked laid out, let us turn to what the interviews found.[190]

Findings: On Abortion

The first interview that I conducted was with Linda Bales of the United Methodist Church (UMC). Bales is the Program Director, Louise and Hugh Moore Population Project and Children's Concerns, with the General Board of Church and Society of the UMC. When discussing the questions surrounding abortion it was made clear to me that in terms of a "policy" the UMC has no position on when human life begins.[191] As a denomination, she said the UMC believes that abortion, although tragic, should be kept as a legal option for women.[192] Bales provided me with a backgrounder on the abortion position of the UMC. It indicates that during the 1996 General Conference of the Church, the latest position on abortion was established, although according to Bales, the UMC has had a position on abortion since 1972.[193] According to the backgrounder provided, the UMC believes that "...the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and wellbeing of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy."[194] Although there is a belief that abortion should be kept as a legal option,

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[190] It should be noted that each interview was approximately 25 to 30 minutes in length. After explaining the four major areas interviews proceeded as open questions to which the interviewee would respond. If something I felt important arose out of the answer, it was probed further to ensure clarity. Permission was obtained to use the interviewees names. If this work is published beyond an MA thesis, as per the conditions of the letter of consent, I will approach the interviewees again to seek their permission again.
[191] Interview Notes [Feb. 20, 2004]: Linda Bales, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] United Methodist Church. News Service Backgrounder on Abortion, Available: http://umns.umc.org/backgrounders/abortion.html [20 Feb 2004].

the Church qualifies that position with some exceptions. According to the backgrounder, "We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection,"[195] a position Bales confirmed.

The UMC has also established a firm position on the more highly charged political debate regarding late-term abortion. Bales indicated that the UMC does oppose late-term abortions (abortions at the 2nd and 3rd trimesters) unless the mother's health is at risk or if severe fetal anomalies exist.[196] We will speak about the political activities of the UMC on this issue later on in this chapter. Overall, it could be surmised that although there is a general sense of "reluctance" in UMC policy, the church has expressed support for abortions to remain legal and could be considered pro-choice. Of course, the aforementioned concerns with abortion should be kept in mind.

The National Council of Churches was the next group that I interviewed. The representative I spoke to was Rev. Eileen Lindner, the Deputy General Secretary for Research and Planning. The National Council of Churches (NCC) is not a denomination of Christianity. Rather, it is an ecumenical group made up of 36 separate denominations. It is therefore not a policy making body, but rather a means of coming together to express consensus on policy concerns. With that in mind, Rev. Lindner mentioned quite clearly that the NCC has no real position on abortion.[197] It had deliberated on the questions surrounding abortion some 20 years ago. However, given that the organization consists of various theological traditions, it was not possible to reach a consensus.[198]

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[195] Ibid.
[196] Interview Notes [Feb. 20, 2004]: Linda Bales, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.
[197] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Rev. Eileen Lindner, National Council of Churches.
[198] Ibid.

Richard Doerflinger was the next person to be interviewed. Doerflinger is the Deputy Director of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. As the name of the Secretariat suggests, and as is fairly widely known, Roman Catholic policy is quite specific that abortion is not permissible. Therefore, the portion of the interview dealing specifically with abortion was waived.

Doerflinger and I did discuss the permissibility of infertility treatments such as in vitro fertilization. According to Doerflinger, the Catholic Church has a moral problem with the use of IVF.[199] This is because IVF takes procreation away from the mother and the father, and places it in a laboratory.[200] The result, according to Doerflinger, is that there is a tendency to treat the embryo as an object, not as a person. Catholic theology is quite stringent that human life should be created by the act of "marital love".[201] The position on IVF will be important as we examine the use of embryos for stem cell research later in this chapter.

Following Doerflinger, I interviewed Dr. Greg Strand, the Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialling of the Evangelical Free Church (EFC) National Office. Although it is an actual Christian denomination, the EFC, like the NCC , does not have a "policy" per se on abortion.[202] This is largely due to the structure of the church, which is congregationally based, not hierarchical. The denomination is based on 12 "Statements of Faith," as opposed to a larger catechism as is the case in the Roman Catholic Church. While this is true, there are a number of denominational committees which present resolutions for national ministerial and general conferences. Once such committee is the

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[199] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Richard Doerflinger, Pro-life Secretariat, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.

Social Concerns Committee, which in 1977 brought forward resolutions on the subject of abortion.[203] While a pro-life position was expressed at that conference, it was made clear by Strand that resolutions are not policy and therefore only reflect the sentiment of the conference at which they are approved.

The EFC did pass a resolution in 1996 opposing "partial birth" abortions that more clearly defined the feelings of the EFC Church ministry. It was indicated quite clearly in the resolution that "...we believe that God creates a human being when conception occurs."[204] This resolution, although it is only the sentiment of the particular conference, does appear to indicate a particular sympathy towards the pro-life camp. Strand further focused this perception during the interview by indicating that de facto, most of the EFC membership does tend to take a pro-life stand.[205] We will return to that when speaking about the political activity of individual EFC congregations.

Finally, the last interview that I conducted was with Dr. Calvin Van Reken, a Professor of Moral Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. According to him the Christian Reformed Church is pro-life, and opposes abortion as immoral.[206] The pro-life position is further spelled out in that the Christian Reformed Church believes that a human embryo ought to be protected from the moment of conception.[207] Unlike other faith denominations, however, the Christian Reformed Church does believe that there are circumstances where abortion may be permissible to save the life of the mother.[208] Further, the Synod of the Church, although it did not formally approve taking the so

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[202] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Greg Strand, Evangelical Free Church National Office.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Calvin Van Reken, Calvin Theological Seminary.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.

called "morning after pill" in the case of sexual assault, did say that a woman should not be held culpable for doing so, even though taking the pill is theologically speaking, wrong.[209]

Table 2-2: General Positions on Abortion

	Pro-Life	Leans Towards Pro-Life	Leans Towards Pro-Choice	Pro-Choice	No Position
United Methodist Church				X	
National Council of Churches					X
Roman Catholic Church	X				
Evangelical Free Church		X			
Christian Reformed Church	X				

Findings: Non-Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Following questions around abortion, I then asked questions about positions on stem cell research in general, with a particular emphasis on non-embryonic stem cell research. During the interviews, Linda Bales of the United Methodist Church laid out a general position of her church for many types of bio-technology. According to her, the UMC welcomes the use of genetic technology for human health; this includes the use of

[209] Ibid.

non-embryonic derived stem cells for scientific research.[210] According to Bales, the use of post-natal material

Table 2-3: Positions on Partial Birth / Late-Term Abortion

	In Favour	Leans Towards being in Favour	Leans Towards not being in Favour	Not In Favour	Inconclusive
United Methodist Church				X	
National Council of Churches					X
Roman Catholic Church				X	
Evangelical Free Church				X	
Christian Reformed Church				X	

such as umbilical cords raises few moral questions.[211]

Rev. Lindner of the National Council of Churches indicated that her organization did not have a position on the topic of stem cell research as a concept.[212] The NCC General Assembly in 2002 did, however, authorize an exploration committee to review their 1986 policy on bio-technology.[213] This committee had one year to do its work, and it reported back in November of 2003.[214] In essence the report indicated that science has moved so quickly that a wholesale review of policy was needed. Due to the consultative

[210] Interview Notes [Feb. 20, 2004]: Linda Bales, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Rev. Eileen Lindner, National Council of Churches.
[213] Ibid.

nature of policy making in the NCC, which involves a two round study process, a new committee was named to report in November 2004.[215]

What is fascinating about the NCC report was its scope. According to Lindner, the committee reviewed with member churches their own individual denominational positions on the subject of stem cell research, and bio-technology in general.[216] Not one church in the survey thought that its own policy was adequate.[217] Further, it was indicated that when it comes to using stem cells derived from human umbilical cords or from human placental material, no or very few churches have any detailed, co-ordinated policy.[218] These statements by Rev. Lindner will be very important later on in this Chapter, as well as in Chapter Three.

The Roman Catholic perception of adult sources of stem cells for scientific research is pretty well in sync with that of the United Methodist Church. According to Richard Doerflinger, there is no problem with using umbilical cord material, placental material, fetal tissue from spontaneous abortions (miscarriages), bone marrow, or other adult sources to derive stem cells.[219] Indeed, it is felt by Doerflinger that there is enormous progress going into the use of adult stem cells that may make the use of embryonic stem cells unnecessary for progress in curing diseases.[220]

Dr. Strand, when asked about stem cell research in general, outlined a very different approach on general stem cell research from the previous groups. As with abortion, there are no denomination policy statements on using non-embryonic derived

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[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Richard Doerflinger, Pro-life Secretariat, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

stem cells for the EFC. However, he indicated that because of a commitment to the sanctity of life, the EFC constituency would be against anything that would compromise the basic sacredness of life "as all are created in the image of God."[221] In short, there is no real position on adult stem cell research that was highlighted.

According to Van Reken, the position of the Christian Reformed Church is similar to the UMC, although it has no official policy. As far as he could see, there is no problem with using adult stem cells for scientific research.[222] As with many other Christian denominations, a position is being compiled by the Christian Reformed Church. Van Reken indicated that in a 2003 report for Synod, biotechnology issues were referenced for discussion.[223] This included stem cell research. Although the report referenced embryonic stem cells for the most part, it did express a few concerns with the use of stem cells derived from other sources. The report stated that:

> We applaud the progress that is being made in medical science to treat serious conditions and diseases, and we encourage continued research into the role stem cells may play in treatment. Such research should be done, however, with stem cells obtained from sources that do not involve the death of human embryos.[224]

Although this is not a formal policy statement, it clearly indicates a stance that could easily be deemed in favour of non-embryonic stem cell research.

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Greg Strand, Evangelical Free Church National Office.
[222] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Calvin Van Reken, Calvin Theological Seminary.
[223] Ibid.

Table 2-4: Positions on the Use of Stem Cells From Non-Embryo Sources.

	No Policy; Favourable	Policy; Favourable	No Policy; Not Favourable	Policy; Not Favourable	No Policy; Inconclusive
United Methodist Church		X			
National Council of Churches					X
Roman Catholic		X			
Evangelical Free Church				X (Generally inconclusive, but indications of opposition)	
Christian Reformed Church	X				

Findings: Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Linda Bales made it clear at the outset that the United Methodist Church is opposed to the creation of human embryos for research purposes.[225] As mentioned previously, the UMC

expressed some reluctance with abortion because of their belief in sanctity of "unborn human life."[226] It therefore seems to follow that the creation of embryos for research purposes would pose some concern.

While the creation of human embryos for research was not acceptable, according to Bales, if embryos were created for in vitro fertilization and were not implanted, then it

[224] Christian Reformed Church, *Agenda for Synod 2003*, (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2003), 287.
[225] Interview Notes [Feb. 20, 2004]: Linda Bales, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.

would be alright to use them for embryonic stem cell research.[227] In such a case, for the UMC, it would be morally tolerable.[228] Indeed, in May 2004, three months after this interview, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church upheld this view and indeed called on the Federal Government to provide funding for the derivation of stem cells from "spare" IVF embryos, for scientific research.[229]

For the National Council of Churches, there is no policy surrounding the use of embryos in scientific research. This is for the same reasons that there is no policy on abortion.[230]

The Roman Catholic position on embryonic stem cell research is no surprise. The position of the Catholic Church flows from the same teaching that forms its position on abortion, the need to respect each human life from its beginning.[231] There is therefore no distinction between the use of embryos created solely for research or using embryos that are left over from IVF.[232] As mentioned previously, the Catholic Church has some concerns with the use of IVF to begin with. According to Doerflinger, it is the feeling of the Catholic Church that if someone does not want a child (embryo) it doesn't change the "human status" of that child.[233]

I did discuss the issue of so called "surplus" embryos from IVF treatments more with Doerflinger than with the other denominations and organizations. He indicated to

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] United Methodist Church. General Conference 2004, Petitions. Available: http://www.umc.org/Calms/petition.asp?mid=2886&Petition=531 [May 24, 2004]
[230] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Rev. Eileen Lindner, National Council of Churches.
[231] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Richard Doerflinger, Pro-life Secretariat, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.

me that the argument that these embryos are "spare" does not work.[234] According to him, many people who undergo IVF are paying to keep those "spare" embryos because they simply do not know what to do with them.[235] For Doerflinger, it is not at all clear that these embryos will be discarded, as mentioned previously. He felt that the vast majority of human embryos left over from IVF do not yet have a decided fate.[236]

Dr. Strand with the Evangelical Free Church indicated that although the topic had been brought up in their denomination, there are no general policies about embryonic stem cell research.[237] The year 2000 was the last time that the EFC General Conference saw information on the subject.[238] It was the Social Concerns committee, mentioned previously, that was working on resolutions on the topic.[239] However, this committee has since become dormant and no resolutions have been brought forth recently.[240] Strand did mention that in 1988 there was a statement about the sanctity of life[241] and in 1990 there was a resolution brought forward regarding the use of fetal tissue in research.[242] However, it would seem that for the EFC, questions surrounding embryonic stem cell research have been left undecided. That being said, however, Dr. Strand did offer an opinion that the EFC would be against embryonic stem cell research, as it would be considered the taking of a human life.[243]

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[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Greg Strand, Evangelical Free Church National Office.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid.

Dr. Van Reken, when asked what the position of the Christian Reformed Church was, indicated that it would be against the killing of the embryo.[244] However, he stated quite clearly that Synod refused to adopt this recommendation.[245] According to Van Reken, the Synod was unofficially sympathetic to the issue of genetic screening for seriously deficient embryos.[246] When a study committee recommended a position that was against the killing of an embryo, the

Table: 2-5 Positions on Using Embryos Created Solely for Research Purposes

	No Policy, Favourable	Policy, Favourable	No Policy, Unfavourable	Policy, Unfavourable	No Policy, Inconclusive
United Methodist Church				X	
National Council of Churches					X
Roman Catholic Church				X	
Evangelical Free Church			X		
Christian Reformed Church			X		

Synod did not approve it.[247] There was no reasons given for siding against the recommendation, according to Van Reken,[248] but there were some thoughts expressed at the time that could be considered sympathetic to genetic screening. However, without an

[244] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Calvin Van Reken, Calvin Theological Seminary.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.

official statement adopted by the Synod, the Christian Reformed Church is not officially sympathetic to genetic screening.[249]

In terms of using in vitro fertilization, Van Reken highlighted the position that couples should not create more embryos than the number of children they are prepared to have.[250] Indeed, he quite clearly indicated that it is morally wrong to cause the death of a human embryo except to save the life of the mother.[251]

Table: 2-6: Positions on Using Embryos Created for IVF for Research Purposes

	No Policy, Favourable	Policy, Favourable	No Policy, Unfavourable	Policy, Unfavourable	No Policy, Inconclusive
United Methodist Church		X			
National Council of Churches					X
Roman Catholic Church				X	
Evangelical Free Church			X		
Christian Reformed Church			X		

Findings: Political Activity of Christian Denominations and Organizations

Finally, the interviews concluded by looking at each of the denominational and organizational political advocacy activities. As mentioned previously, although focused mainly on the political advocacy concerns involving abortion and stem cell research, I had also asked questions about the general political activity of each denomination.

[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.

The United Methodist Church, one of the largest Protestant denominations in the United States, does, according to Linda Bales, engage in political advocacy. The UMC has an advocacy agency with five full time political advocates which has been active since the early 1900s.[252] These advocates, in Washington, D.C., meet with members of Congress on a frequent basis.[253] One such example was on the late-term abortion bill passed in 2003, where advocates attempted to include "severe fetal anomalies" as an exception in the legislation.[254] In addition to professional political advocates acting on their own, the United Methodist Church General Conferences provide in their resolutions mandates for the advocacy office to pursue.

As previously mentioned, the 2004 General Conference resolution regarding embryonic stem cell research provided instructions to the General Board of Church and Society to "communicate this resolution to appropriate members and committees of the United States Congress and to identify and advocate the legislation called for by this resolution."[255] The UMC also has other means of encouraging political activity from its members. According to Linda Bales, the UMC has a legislative alert system which sends out messages to UMC members to advocate their members of Congress on certain issues which are pressing.[256] There is also a great deal of advocacy done in conjunction with ecumenical and secular groups such as Planned Parenthood and the March for Women's Lives to preserve the choice of abortion.[257] The UMC has also been very active on a

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[252] Interview Notes [Feb. 20, 2004]: Linda Bales, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.
[255] United Methodist Church. General Conference 2004, Petitions. Available: http://www.umc.org/Calms/petition.asp?mid=2886&Petition=531 [24 May 2004]
[256] Interview Notes [Feb. 20, 2004]: Linda Bales, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.
[257] Ibid.

variety of other issues including capital punishment, campaign finance reform, health and justice issues.[258]

On the issue of stem cell research, particularly embryonic stem cell research, the advocacy of the UMC is far less clear. While the new resolution passed at the UMC 2004 General Conference may change the level of activity, Bales was far less certain that embryonic stem cell research had been advocated for or against.[259] Looking at the General Board of Church and Society website, it appears that no "legislative alerts," "sign-on letters," or other grassroots political activities have been initiated on the question of stem cell research.[260] It does appear, therefore, as of the time of this writing, and based on the interviews conducted as well as publicly available materials, that the United Methodist Church has not advocated its position on embryonic stem cell research with any force in the political realm.

When it comes to the National Council of Churches, the general idea of the organization is to work on ecumenical coalition building to publicly promote and advocate for certain agreed-upon policies. Speaking with Rev. Lindner, it became very clear that the NCC is very active politically and very active in the private sphere as well. According to Lindner, a great deal of the advocacy work of the NCC goes into equity of access issues, for example equity of access to the health care system.[261] On such issues the NCC does give testimony to politicians and does engage in letter writing campaigns.[262]

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[258] United Methodist Church. General Board of Church and Society: Six Principles. Available: http://www.umc-gbcs.org/principles/index.php?principle=5 [24 May 2004]
[259] Ibid.
[260] United Methodist Church. General Board of Church and Society: Issues and Action. Available: http://www.umc-gbcs.org/issues/index.php [24 May 2004]
[261] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Rev. Eileen Lindner, National Council of Churches.
[262] Ibid.

The NCC is also active in the private sector in pursuing issues of importance. According to Lindner, part of this activity involves advocating on patents and regulatory aspects.[263] When it comes to bio-technological issues, advocacy would be focused around the right to patent human gene sequences, for example. However, the NCC is also, according to Lindner, involved in buying stocks in corporations and then bringing forward stockholder resolutions to try and influence corporate policy.[264] This is a unique form of advocacy that I did not encounter with any of the other denominations or organizations that I interviewed, although it is possible that other denominations also act similarly.

In terms of advocating around abortion, given the lack of policy on this subject from the NCC, it becomes clear that there has been no political advocacy on the question of abortion. Further, according to Lindner, because stem cell policies are inadequate, as mentioned previously in this chapter, the NCC cannot realistically engage in any advocacy activity.[265]

The Roman Catholic Church in the United States is a very different animal than the UMC and NCC in terms of political advocacy. Speaking with Richard Doerflinger, he indicated in no uncertain terms that there are few issues that the Catholic Church is as well organized on as abortion and embryonic stem cell research.[266] Indeed, he stated that pro-life issues have the biggest influx of political advocacy after social security.[267] Beyond the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, in individual parishes and in each

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[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Richard Doerflinger, Pro-life Secretariat, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
[267] Ibid.

diocese there are directors dedicated specifically to pro-life activities.[268] These directors receive "alerts" about upcoming bills and generate letters to individual members of Congress outlining the Catholic viewpoint.[269] In a more liturgical way, priests and bishops also address pro-life issues in their homilies during Mass.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops maintains a Washington, D.C. based office. There is a government liaison office for direct lobbying of Congressional staff.[270] This office sends out letters and gives testimony to Congressional committees.[271] They also engage in post card campaigns such as the campaigns on partial birth abortion and universal healthcare.[272]

When it comes to stem cell research Doerflinger indicated that the Church's advocacy involves highlighting non-embryonic sources for stem cell research.[273] The Church is largely involved in advocating that funds be dedicated to these forms of stem cell research, including the recent $10 million allotment in the 2004 appropriations bill as seed money for a national umbilical cord blood stem cell bank.[274] All in all, it is fair to say that the Roman Catholic Church is very politically active on both abortion and stem cell research.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the Evangelical Free Church has a different structure than the other denominations we are looking at, as it is congregational as opposed to hierarchical. Dr. Greg Strand mentioned that in such a structure individual

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[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.

churches voluntarily decide to become part of the denomination.[275] As such, there is no real political advocacy as a whole denomination. Strand did point out however that individual churches have been active in advocating for different issues. Indeed, he stated that political activity occurs at the local church level, and the level of engagement will vary from church to church.[276] Some churches, for example, have been very active on abortion by engaging in such activities as "Life Chain."[277] On the topic of ethics and biotechnology, individual churches are now beginning to address this important issue.[278] While it was the topic of a "mid-winter Ministerial Conference," it is still left up to each congregation to advocate. When I asked Strand if he knew about any political activity on the stem cell research front, he indicated that he was unaware of any well organized effort to either advocate for or against it.[279]

Finally, the Christian Reformed Church is politically active, according to Dr. Calvin Van Reken, especially on racism and other social issues.[280] Recently, on the partial-birth abortion issue, a petition was started to urge a Presidential veto of the respective Congressional bill.[281] On stem cell research, however, the story is different. Van Reken indicated that there has been no advocacy on the question of using non-embryonic stem cells in scientific research, interestingly enough because it is felt that it is going to be advanced whether the church advocates for it or not.[282] Further, while local congregations have the autonomy to lobby the government to protect embryos and

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[275] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Greg Strand, Evangelical Free Church National Office.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Calvin Van Reken, Calvin Theological Seminary.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.

fetuses, there are no prescribed actions to do so.[283] There does seem to be some difference between the level of activity on social issues and abortion when compared with stem cell research. It does appear that advocacy on stem cell research is being left largely unattended by the Christian Reformed Church.

Table 2-7: Political Activity on Various Issues

	Issues Other than Abortion and Stem Cell Research	Abortion	Non-embryonic Stem Cell Research	Embryonic Stem Cell Research
United Methodist Church	X	X		
National Council of Churches	X			
Roman Catholic Church	X	X	X	X
Evangelical Free Church		X (Individual Congregations)		
Christian Reformed Church	X	X		

Conclusions:

In the course of collecting my data, one of the interviewees made mention (albeit in an unofficial way) that I was onto a topic which has been relatively untouched. Indeed, in making initial contact with persons to interview, some were more than a little skittish talking about abortion and stem cell research. When looking at the data I did collect for this thesis, there is clearly a diversity of position and political activity that

[283] Ibid.

exists on the subjects of abortion and embryonic stem cell research. It is important to mention, however, that there are religious organizations (e.g., LDS Church) with far more diverse positions on these topics than the ones I was able to interview. That being said, one research question of this thesis can be answered with the information obtained both from the interviews and other sources in this thesis. To refresh, the question is: Are Christian religious organizations in the United States employing the same tactics and intensity in lobbying on the topic of embryonic stem cell as they have on the seemingly related matter of abortion? The answer is no. The religious denominations and organizations that I was able to interview have not, with the exception of the Catholic Church, put their advocacy efforts towards stem cell research nearly to the degree they have on abortion.

Looking at the five interviewees[284] whose views were discussed in Chapter Two, four have either a firm policy position on abortion or have a firm inclination towards a certain position. One has not established a policy position, not because they have failed to raise abortion as a policy concern, but because of great diversity of opinion within the organization. All five have a strong sense of their position or at least have a strong explanation as to why they have not articulated a position. If we look at positions on late term or partial birth abortions, the four denominations I interviewed have clearly established a stance which is not in favour of these procedures. One organization that I

[284] It is important to keep in mind when examining the sources for the conclusions that although there were five interviewees, some data for over 40 Christian denominations was obtained. The National Council of Churches is made up of 36 denominations. Rev. Lindner made it very clear that, when asked about biotechnology including stem cell research in her report, not one denomination thought their policy was adequate on the subject. She also made it clear that very few of the NCC members had a co-ordinated policy on using umbilical cord and placental material in stem cell research.

interviewed does not have a position on partial birth or late term abortions, for the same reason I mentioned above.

When looking at the political activity of the various denominations, all four have put some effort toward political advocacy on the question of abortion. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Evangelical Free Church has not done so as a denomination, but rather a number of individual congregations have clearly been politically active on the pro-life circuit. The other three have exhibited a certain heightened intensity and have engaged in various political advocacy tactics to get their message across to the public and politicians by way of letter writing campaigns, protests, and testimony to members of Congress and their staffs. The questions surrounding abortion are not the only political debates in which these denominations and organizations have engaged. All five of the interviewees indicated that their denominations or organizations have engaged the political world on social issues such as racism, social security, health as well as a host of other issues. Again, various political tactics have been used by each of the five bodies I interviewed.

However, an entirely different picture emerges when we look at stem cell research. When looking at the data regarding the positions each of these religious organizations have taken on the question of using stem cells from non-embryonic sources, only two of the five interviewed had any kind of firm policy on the subject. Another two do not have policies and do not have any strong inclination on the subject. The fifth has no policy but has a nonchalant tendency in favour of adult stem cell research. There is a similar breakdown of opinion when we look at research on stem cells derived from human embryos. When it comes to using "surplus" in vitro fertilization embryos, two organizations have a firm policy, one has no policy or

particular inclination, the other two also have no policy but appear to be opposed to the procedure. The picture does, in all fairness, look a little different when we are talking about creating embryos solely for stem cell research purposes. Two of the organizations have a strong policy on the subject, another two do not have a firm policy but are fairly strong in their inclinations towards a stance, and one has no policy or inclination.

While the difference between abortion and stem cell research policies of these religious organizations may appear to only weakly support the answer I have given to the first research question (have Christian religious organizations in the United States employed the same tactics and intensity in lobbying on the topic of embryonic stem cell as they have on the seemingly related matter of abortion?), it must be remembered that this thesis poses a question about political advocacy, not simply theological positions. In fact, only one of the five denominations or organizations I interviewed has been politically engaged with any intensity or variety of tactics on the stem cell research debates. That denomination is the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has expended much energy, meeting with Congressional committees and individual Congressmen and working grassroots political avenues such as letter writing campaigns to local politicians. While it is true, as mentioned in Chapter Two, that we may see the inclusion of another major denomination in lobbying public officials in the coming months, as the United Methodist Church has now established a firm position on stem cell research, the fact remains that only the Roman Catholic Church as been politically active up until now.

Notably, however, some other organizations and denominations that I was not able to interview do have a firm policy on stem cell research and have engaged in some

level of political activity. Besides the Roman Catholic Church, one other major advocate on the subject is the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1999, representatives of the Conference urged the Congress to maintain its ban on funding for stem cell research.[285] The Southern Baptist Convention has also passed resolutions at their conventions maintaining this position.[286]

More Stand Up to be Counted?

In the course of doing further secondary source research for this Chapter, I found three other religious denominations (all of which I did try to interview, unsuccessfully) that have at least established positions on stem cell research in resolutions of their respective governing bodies. The Orthodox Church in America, in a statement of their Synod of Bishops, states: "Above all, we urge our faithful, together with the medical community and political leaders, to return to the spirit of the Hippocratic Oath.... Embryonic stem cell research results in unmitigated harm. It should be unequivocally rejected in the interests of preserving both the sacredness and the dignity of the human person."[287] In contrast to the Orthodox Church, the United Church of Christ has passed resolutions calling upon their synod to "support federally funded embryonic stem cell research. Such research may enable the development of new approaches to diagnosis,

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[285] The ProLife Infonet, *Southern Baptist Convention Opposes Stem Cell Research,* Available: http://www.euthanasia.com/stem6.html [15 June 2004].
[286] SBC.net, SBC Resolution: RESOLUTION ON GENTIC TECHNOLOGY AND CLONING, June 1997. Available: http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=571 [15 June 2004].
[287] Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, "Embryonic Stem Cell Research in the Perspective of Orthodox Christianity" in Brent Waters and Ronald Cole-Turner Eds., *God and the Embryo: Religious Voices on Stem Cells and Cloning* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 175.

prevention and the treatment of some of our most devastating diseases."[288] Finally, the Presbyterian Church, in their resolution which is similar in result to the United Church of Christ's position, states:

> We affirm the use of human stem cell tissue for research that may result in the restoring of health to those suffering from serious illness. We affirm our support for stem cell research, recognising that this research moves us to a new and challenging frontier. We recognise the need for continuing, informed public dialogue and equitable sharing of information of the results of stem cell research.[289]

If we look at the resolutions of these three denominations, we see a situation emerge similar to the five groups that were interviewed for this thesis: although all three in these cases have a solid position on stem cell research, only one of the three provides any "marching orders" for political action. It is only in the United Church of Christ's resolution where we see a definitive course of political advocacy laid out. Their resolution states:

> That the Twenty-third General Synod requests the General Minister and President of UCC to send a letter to the President of the United States urging approval of federal funding for embryonic stem cell research within NIH guidelines, and...requests Justice and Witness Ministries to advocate for allocation for stem cell research before the appropriate Congressional committees, and...requests Conferences, Associations and Local Churches to work diligently in support of the legislation allowing stem cell research, providing

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[288] United Church of Christ "Support for Federally Funded Research on Embryonic Stem Cells" in Brent Waters and Ronald Cole-Turner Eds., *God and the Embryo: Religious Voices on Stem Cells and Cloning* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 182.

[289] Presbyterian Church (USA) "Overture 01-50. On Adopting a Resolution Enunciating Ethical Guidelines for Fetal Tissue and Stem Cell Research – From the Presbytery of Baltimore", Brent Waters and Ronald Cole-Turner Eds., *God and the Embryo: Religious Voices on Stem Cells and Cloning* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 188.

> appropriate guidelines for such research, and allocating funds to support the research.[290]

The closest acknowledgement of the political world in the two other resolutions comes from the Presbyterian Church. Their resolution states that the "present political climate, especially with the change of national administrations, suggests that we may see serious attempts to limit or eliminate fetal tissue and stem cell research."[291]

All three of these resolutions are twenty-first century creations. They were passed between 2001 and 2003 by their respective governing bodies. To have only one of three actually implement a course of political action on embryonic stem cell research, and another warn that limitations on stem cell research are possible-after a decade of funding freezes by the federal government of the United States-only bolsters the conclusions made from my interviews. Religious denominations are, by and large, not technically, theologically or politically prepared on the biotechnology front.

Audrey R. Chapman, in studying the topic of religious organizations' involvement with biotechnology advances, appears to support the conclusions I have made with regard to religion, politics and stem cell research. In reviewing a study she conducted on biotechnology, she states that "the study grew out of my belief that religious thought can potentially make a significant contribution both to the religious community and to the broader societal efforts to grapple with the choices and dilemmas arising from the genetics revolution.... Nevertheless, the emphasis should be on the word potentially in

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[290] United Church of Christ "Support for Federally Funded Research on Embryonic Stem Cells" in Brent Waters and Ronald Cole-Turner Eds., *God and the Embryo: Religious Voices on Stem Cells and Cloning* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 183.

[291] Presbyterian Church (USA) "Overture 01-50. On Adopting a Resolution Enunciating Ethical Guidelines for Fetal Tissue and Stem Cell Research – From the Presbytery of Baltimore", Brent Waters and Ronald Cole-Turner Eds., *God and the Embryo: Religious Voices on Stem Cells and Cloning* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 188.

the affirmation that religious ethics are relevant to the task of shaping a moral response to the impact and implications of biotechnology."[292]

Chapman lists five criteria for use in examining religious organizations' advocacy efforts, or what she calls "public theology." The first criterion for "public theology to be consistent with the nature and mission of a religious actor" is that "it should proceed from a clear religious rationale and reflect the priorities of the communions it is representing."[293] Second, "to be appropriate, public theology should be timely and at the very least explain why the religious community or communion has decided to address a specific issue in the public arena."[294] Third, "it is important that public theology appeals to theological beliefs, even when the beliefs are not widely shared...."[295] Fourth, "to be credible, public theology should exhibit knowledge of relevant research and data released to the subject it is addressing."[296] Finally, "if public theology aims at changing public policy, it needs to be clear about what it is advocating as well as what it is criticizing."[297]

Chapman mainly studied genetic patenting and human cloning, although she did look at biotechnology as a broad subject. According to her, "[S]cience and technology, let alone genetic issues or patenting, are barely on the agenda of most religious leaders and communities."[298] She concludes by speaking about the work of religious leaders on biotechnology issues:

> Few works offer specific guidance toward resolving the many ethical dilemmas and unprecedented choices resulting from

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[292] Audrey R. Chapman "Religious Perspectives on Biotechnology" in Mark J. Hanson, Editor, *Claiming Power over Life: Religion and Biotechnology Policy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 113.
[293] Ibid., 129.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid., 130.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

> genetic developments. Nor do they provide norms, methodologies, or guidelines to use in making these determinations. The various thinkers do not illuminate where to draw the precise boundary between genetic interventions representing responsible expressions of human stewardship, co-creation, or partnership with the divine and those that are extensions of human hubris or pride. Instead, it can be said that the greatest value of these works is more in the issues they raise than the answers they provide.... Given the magnitude of the issues – as set forth in the various analysis of the unprecedented challenges and choices related to genetic developments in these works it is not enough to stimulate the moral imagination. Unless religious ethicists can offer guidance on how to respond to these developments or, at the least, offer a normative approach, they may be bypassed by their members and the broader society alike.[299]

Wilcox and Jelen on Twenty First Century Lobbying

Before continuing on to examine the reasons why larger religious organizations (denominations and larger ecumenical organizations) have not been politically active on the subject of embryonic stem cell research, a brief examination of the state of today's religious lobbying mobilization would be in order. Clyde Wilcox and Ted Jelen wrote a piece in 2002 which included a history and examination of political activism and mobilization of religious organizations in the United States. They point out that "Although the United States is known for its constitutional provisions separating church and state, religious groups are very active in American politics."[300] They go on to say that "Religious groups have marched on Washington, blockaded abortion clinics, and harboured illegal refugees from Latin America."[301]

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[299] Ibid., 138.
[300] Clyde Wilcox and Ted Jelen "Religion and Politics in an Open Market: Religious Mobilization in the United States" in Ted G. Jelen and Clyde Wilcox Eds. *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 289.
[301] Ibid., 290.

Wilcox and Jelen argue that the different traditions of the religious community in the United States at the beginning of the twenty first century tend to focus on different topics when they lobby. Mainline churches, they state, "focus much of their communitarian activity on bettering social conditions on earth, trying to alleviate the problems of poverty, racism and discrimination...."[302] As for the evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants and conservative elements of Catholicism and Judaism, Wilcox and Jelen argue that their "leaders and members promote traditional morality, including traditional gender roles, a ban on most or all abortions, and strictures against homosexual conduct."[303] In the context of political mobilization around embryonic stem cell research, the Catholic Church has engaged as expected if one assumes that embryonic stem cell research is an extension of the abortion debate. Yet others in the evangelical and fundamentalist camp have failed to do so. When speaking about previous political activity by religious organizations, Wilcox and Jelen plainly state that "religious constituencies have been mobilized into politics throughout American history, and have led to some of the most important policy changes in the nation's history."[304] While this has been shown to be true in Chapter One, the authors provide some insight which may show that religious denominations lack the intensity to be effective in lobbying in the embryonic stem cell debate. They state that:

> the pluralistic nature of American religion has generally meant that religious voices have been divided on most controversial policy issues, and rarely have the main religious bodies mobilized together behind a cause. The outcome of many of these disputes has hinged on the size of the religious constituencies and the degree of their mobilization, the degree of religious opposition, the strength and unity of other

[302] Ibid., 296.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid., 302.

> political actors in the system, and prevailing public sentiments.[305]

The latter elements in this quote regarding the lobbying and mobilization of other political actors and prevailing public sentiments on the subject of embryonic stem cell research will be addressed shortly. However, if Wilcox and Jelen are correct, religious organizations may be too late to join into the discussion with any effect. Most have not mobilized and there is diversity of opinion even amongst the churches who have adopted a position on embryonic stem cell research. But the question needs to be asked: why have these churches failed to mobilize?

[305] Ibid.

Chapter Three: A Question of Why?

But Why?

What we have seen so far in terms of the interviews and examination of available data indicates that few religious denominations and ecumenical organizations are politically active on the subject of stem cell research. The question, then, is why? Why is it that the impetus is not present for becoming politically active on stem cell research as has been on abortion, same sex marriage, social welfare, health care, and racism? One of the most obvious reasons for the lack of political activism and, in fact, denominational policy making on the subject of embryonic stem cell research is a microcosm of a traditional concern, scarcity of resources.

Resource and Technical Concerns

If we revisit the question of membership in the various denominations we see that membership in the Catholic Church in the United States is approximately 62 million.[306] The United Methodist Church membership is at 8.4 million.[307] The Southern Baptist Convention membership is at 15.7 million.[308] These are the three largest denominations in the United States[309] and the three denominations that have been identified in this study as having an established policy on stem cell research. They are also the three denominations who have advocated, or at least strongly advocated in their policies for lobbying politicians on the subject. These denominations, because of their size, would have a plethora of resources at their disposal to examine this issue and act on stem cell research policy.

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[306] U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 Statistical Abstract of the United States, Available: http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/statab/sec01.pdf [18 May. 2004].
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid.

The question of resources is only part of the explanation however. The speed at which biotechnological advances proceeds is another significant (and I argue co-related) part of the explanation. Rev. Eileen Lindner, the representative from the National Council of Churches, provides some assistance here. Ironically, it is the National Council of Churches that has not developed policies, or at least not established a general position on the questions surrounding abortion, adult stem cell research or embryonic stem cell research. Yet the NCC has been exploring the questions regarding biotechnology for some time now and has provided some insights into what the data I collected revealed. The NCC has been talking with each of its member denominations on both abortion and stem cell research and preliminary reports for the development of policy on biotechnology are being finalized. Rev. Lindner has been key in the examination of biotechnology issues and in preparing the report. When we discussed stem cell research in the interview, she expressed the view that the science of the new bio-technologies that have been emerging is moving so quickly that a full reevaluation of policy was necessary.[310] Further, she stated that the committee involved in polling individual denominations on their policies surrounding biotechnology, including stem cell research, found that not one church thought that its policy was adequate.[311]

The various denominations and organizations that I interviewed, outside of the Catholic Church and United Methodist Church, had no policy on stem cell research and were for the most part at the very early stages of policy development. The Evangelical Free Church, as a congregational not hierarchical organization, is not expected to establish a denominational policy. Further, the prospect of individual congregations

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[309] Ibid.
[310] Interview Notes [Feb. 27, 2004]: Rev. Eileen Lindner, National Council of Churches.

having the resources and capacity to stay current with the latest advances in biotechnology is highly unlikely. It is therefore not unrealistic to say that they would be overwhelmed by the highly technical, expensive and ever-advancing field of stem cell research. The Christian Reformed Church is now just getting around to discussing questions surrounding biotechnology. Dr. Van Reken, during the interview, commented that a report for the Church's Synod was presented in 2003.[312] If the discussions are really only beginning with any momentum, more than half a decade after human stem cells were derived from embryos and four years after the National Bioethics Advisory Commission delivered its report, it becomes quite clear that the topic is simply too overwhelming to be dealt with by many religious groups in a timely manner. If we look at the United Methodist Church, a resolution and policy on using IVF "surplus" embryos for stem cell research was only approved in the spring of 2004. While the position is definitive, and political action has been rigorously called for in the resolution, the same argument applies to the UMC as to all the others: If a position is only being developed now, the capacity of religious denominations to develop a course of political advocacy on questions regarding biotechnology questions appears to be deficient.

Rev. Lindner does appear to be on to something by pointing out that churches are being subjected to a virtual tidal wave of biotechnology issues. Naturally, as mentioned in this chapter, the question of available resources that churches have to devote to this topic is not irrelevant. If a religious organization cannot afford to develop a body or internal department devoted to theology of science questions that confront them, or gain access to experts on bio-technology, their theological position will suffer. Biotechnology

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[311] Ibid.
[312] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Calvin Van Reken, Calvin Theological Seminary.

it must be reiterated is a highly complex subject both theologically and scientifically. If a religious organization cannot afford the necessary experts to develop a solid position on bio-technology consistent with their theological position, they become weakened right out of the starting gate. Further, if a religious organization lacks financial and human resources, the degree to which they can effectively lobby and the tactics which they can use are limited.

Audrey Chapman also comments on the ability of religious organizations to respond to biotechnology. She states that "the genetic revolution offers both a challenge and opportunity to religious communities.... Religious thinkers have to surmount various methodological issues and other liabilities before they can shape a meaningful and effective moral response to the genetics revolution."[313]

A Shift in the Role of Religion?

Another explanation for the results which we see may be a further indication of something that was touched on in Chapter One. Ted Jelen argues that the New Religious Right that blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s, and whose most touted theme was its pro-life credentials, failed to have as widespread an appeal as its proponents had hoped. If we recall the views of the conservative religious forces in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was felt that there should be a separation between government and religion because religion's role was to save the soul, not influence the government. As Jelen argues, "Some religious conservatives have revived Roger Williams' argument of a

[313] Audrey R. Chapman "Religious Perspectives on Biotechnology" in Mark J. Hanson, Editor, *Claiming Power over Life: Religion and Biotechnology Policy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 113.

religious basis for separatism."[314] Williams was a preacher in 17th century Rhode Island who advocated that "the purpose of church-state separation was to prevent the church from being contaminated by the corruption of secular politics."[315]

It is true that we see new US government policies such as faith-based initiatives (where grants are given to support faith and community organizations that provide certain services such as helping people with addictions and providing services such as soup kitchens[316]) cropping up. However, those initiatives involve more traditional roles of religious organizations which were, as indicated in Chapter One, filling the welfare role for the state. Biotechnology issues, including stem cell research, fall well outside the realm of those traditional social service roles for religious denominations. Abortion as a topic of debate would be more accessible to religious organizations because the question surrounding that procedure is fairly clear cut: is it morally permissible to abort a human fetus? Therefore, it seems that Jelen is on to something when he says that many of the US religious groups are consciously falling back to a more traditional role and leaving these highly complex issues for someone else to tackle. With Jelen and Wilcox, this thought is repeated again. They state that "In the 1960s the religious liberals were mobilized while the conservatives were withdrawn; in the twenty-first century the opposite pattern holds. At the end of the twentieth century however, there is some

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[314] Ted G. Jelen, *To Serve God and Mammon: Church-State Relations in American Politics*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 93.
[315] Ibid., 34.
[316] Faith Based and Community Initiatives. The White House. Available: http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/ [August 15, 2004].

scattered evidence that the conservative Protestants may begin to withdraw from politics again."[317]

Bearing Jelen's ideas in mind, it is noteworthy that one of the people I interviewed had a rather interesting approach to political advocacy on stem cell research. Dr. Van Reken of the Christian Reformed Church, when asked whether his denomination had engaged in any political advocacy surrounding non-embryonic stem cell research, indicated that they had not because it was felt that the research was going to be advanced anyway, whether the church expressed an opinion about it or not.[318] While it is true that the Christian Reformed Church appeared generally in favour of adult stem cell research (although they have no official policy on the subject), they are also in favour of a number of social issues such as eliminating racism, on which they have been politically active. The Christian Reformed Church has also launched its "Elections Matter!: Vote to End Hunger" campaign.[319] The contrast with the frankly unconcerned political approach that has been taken to biotechnology issues adds credibility to Jelen's argument.

A Change in the Social View of the Embryo?

When comparing and contrasting abortion with embryonic stem cell research, there is another explanation for the difference in opinion and action by religious organizations. Although I was not able to conduct an interview with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS or Mormons), there are public sources that shed light on

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[317] Clyde Wilcox and Ted Jelen "Religion and Politics in an Open Market: Religious Mobilization in the United States" in Ted G. Jelen and Clyde Wilcox Eds. *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 310.
[318] Interview Notes [April 13, 2004]: Calvin Van Reken, Calvin Theological Seminary.
[319] Christian Reformed Church Social Justice Action. The Justice Site. Elections Matter! Available: http://www.crcjustice.org/crjs_election.htm [20 July 2004].

that church's positions on stem cell research and abortion. As mentioned in Chapter One, the doctrine and beliefs of the LDS church state that abortion is an "immoral behaviour."[320] At the same time, the theology of the LDS church stands neutral on the question of stem cell research, a position reflected in its lack of activity on the subject.[321] Meanwhile all five of the current LDS US Senators, regardless of party affiliation, have come out in favour of stem cell research and have in fact cosponsored legislation to that effect.[322]

Drew Clark points out that "Mormon philosophy holds that fetal abortion is too much like killing but that unimplanted blastocysts haven't yet been animated by the human spirit."[323]

The distinction raised by the LDS church represents the most polarized religious view point on abortion and stem cell research that I have come across in this study. The demarcation between pre-human and post human creation raises some social questions which will have an effect on political activity on biotechnology development. Reproduction of the human species has been traditionally seen as a "woman's issue." There is no need to go into any specific discussion here, as this view is generally known. However, if we place abortion and embryonic stem cell research under the focal lens, we see that abortion is primarily of concern to women. It is the woman's reproductive system that is involved in and affected by the procedure.

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[320] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Beliefs and Doctrine. Available: (http://www.lds.org/newsroom/page/0,15606,4030-1---4-168,00.html) [16 June 2004].
[321] Drew Clark "The Mormon Stem-Cell Choir" in "Slate", © 2003 Microsoft Corporation (http://slate.msn.com/id/112974) Available [16 June 2004].
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.

Although male and female reproductive materials are used in the creation of the embryo in both abortion and embryonic stem cell research, the latter has become less of a woman's issue and far less gender specific because of the nature of the procedure, and because the outcome of the procedure may benefit both men and women. Embryonic stem cell research is a process that men are far more invested in because they stand to benefit from the potential cures that the science promises.

It is no secret that by and large most religious denominations world wide are highly patriarchal. One might argue that it is very easy for the male dominated churches to pass religious doctrine on the permissibility of abortion because they do not have the same sensitivity to reproductive choice as women because they do not share the same biology or social impacts which come with reproduction. It would therefore be very easy and advantageous for the male dominated churches to politically oppose abortion on one hand and proclaim the virtues of embryonic stem cell research on the other. Is this, however, a viable explanation for the political ambivalence, not just of the LDS Church, but for those whose political advocacy on embryonic stem cell research is far more muted than on their position concerning abortion?

While this explanation may be tempting, it is not consistent with the data collected. The problem lies in applying the explanation to the Roman Catholic Church, arguably one of the most patriarchal organizations in the United States. While it is true that the Catholic Church opposes interference with the reproductive system of human beings through contraception, in vitro fertilization, or abortion, we have seen they are also vehemently opposed to embryonic stem cell research. The destruction of an embryo, with all its potential benefits to men and women, is clearly not an option for the Catholic

Church. Additionally, the data collected from the other denominations interviewed also tend to create some difficulty with the explanation before us. While it is true that opinions on the use of in vitro fertilization embryos for embryonic stem cell research are somewhat diverse, the proposition of creating human embryos solely for research purposes, is as we have seen, quite unacceptable to a broad spectrum of religious denominations. It becomes apparent, therefore, that, although there may be some room to argue that the differences in political activity surrounding abortion and embryonic stem cell research is at some level related to a gendered vision of human reproduction, it is not an all encompassing explanation.

Others have questioned whether or not the treatment of embryonic stem cell research, by society in general, when compared with that of abortion, is part of differing social views of the two processes. A difference of visualization, if you will, and imagery of the abortion procedure as opposed to the procedure involved in embryonic stem cell research. Janet Dolgin argues that although the debates surrounding abortion and embryonic stem cell research do revolve around certain similarities that an embryo will be destroyed for example "a fundamental discontinuity distinguishes the two debates."[324] Dolgin states:

> The debate around abortion, framed in the needs and demands of the nineteenth and twentieth century, concerns the preservation of a world view that valued hierarchy, fixed roles, and communal solidarity more than equality of choice.... The debate around embryonic stem cell research and therapeutic cloning raises novel questions about personhood. This debate is being framed in response to very different needs and demands than those that defined the central ideological debates of the two previous centuries.[325]

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[324] Janet L. Dolgin "Embryonic Discourse: Abortion, Stem Cells and Cloning" in *Issues in Law and Medicine*, Spring 2004, Vol. 19 Issue 3, 102.
[325] Ibid., 103.

For Dolgin the debate surrounding abortion is a representation of a pro-traditional family value and belief system which concerns so many conservative religious personalities.[326] It is about maintaining traditional marriage and family life, something that has recently been of great interest on other fronts, such as the Defense of Marriage Act that Congress passed in 1996. The debate surrounding embryonic stem cell research is very different, she maintains. Dolgin argues that it is the view on the embryo which has been socially changed in the whole discourse surrounding embryonic stem cell research: "This new embryo, unlike the embryo of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is formed outside the human body; it can be created either...in vitro or through the transfer of somatic cells into denucleated ova; it provides for reproduction apart from sexuality."[327] In essence, she is arguing that the social view of embryos destined for stem cell research are being visualized as different from embryos which are aborted. But why? Dolgin points out that "Claims about the sanctity of embryonic life, comparatively effective in the debate around abortion, are meeting unfamiliar rejoinders in the context of embryonic research. In a society that views health as tantamount to salvation, it is difficult to dismiss sanguinely research that promises to provide cures for a host of deleterious, often fatal, or seriously debilitating illnesses and disabilities."[328]

Dolgin argues that it is therefore not just scientific roadblocks which are preventing pro-life groups (and, I would argue, established religious denominations) from making policy and engaging politically on the topic of embryonic stem cell research. It is fundamental to note, however, that Dolgin does not dismiss the complexity of the science

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[326] Ibid., 130.
[327] Ibid., 105.
[328] Ibid., 134-135.

as being a reason for the deterrence of establishing policy on stem cell research. She argues that in the "last years of the twentieth century, the right to life movement faced two broad challenges – the first essentially social and the second essentially scientific.... The scientific challenge developed later-only in the last couple of years of the twentieth century."[329] Therefore Lindner and Chapman's explanations of the technical scientific nature of embryonic stem cell research as being a causal agent for the lack of the development of policy and political activity on the subject still hold water. Dolgin is arguing, however, that there is another element in addition to the scientific one. To reaffirm, Dolgin states that:

> The debate about abortion is a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during which time personhood was defined through a bifurcated reference to home and community, on the one hand, and to work and autonomy on the other. In that cultural context, pro-life images of the aborted fetus - representing women's un-natural choice-suggested a desecration of the forms through which social and familial life are presumed most felicitously to proceed. In contrast, the debate about embryonic research is a product of a different time and a different culture, one within which personhood is being widely reconstructed. Increasingly, individual autonomy is valued, and the gap between home and work blurs.[330]

One must also consider in this whole equation the fact that up until now, politicians seem to be doing a fairly good job at holding biotechnology issues at bay with funding delays, review panels and sheer unwillingness to effectively regulate the matter. One might ask why it would be necessary for religious denominations to saddle up for a political fight? Francis Fukuyama provides us with some help here. However, before turning to him let us look at two elements which shed some light on the reason why

[329] Ibid., 134.
[330] Ibid., 160.

religious organizations may feel some relief from the pressure of having to advocate on stem cell research.

The Third Party Element

In addition to scientists and religious organizations (denominations and "official" ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches), there are other groups that have been politically active on the topic of embryonic stem cell research. It has become apparent that various Hollywood personalities, disease organizations and charities have taken an interest in the subject, as have various pro-life groups who have a strong religious base.

On July 14, 2004, Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kansas) chaired a Senate sub-committee on adult stem cell research. As might be expected, the hearing did not stay on the topic of adult stem cell research, but included testimony regarding embryonic stem cell research. Dr. Robert Goldstein of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation testified at the sub-committee hearing that his organization in the past year spent $8.2 million on stem cell research, $6.3 million of that on embryonic stem cell research.[331] He further spoke to the need of further research on embryonic stem cell research, as early data indicated that it may be possible to create insulin-producing cells from embryonic tissue, something not yet possible from adult stem cells.[332] The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, however, is not the only organization which has provided such testimony to political leaders or engaged in political activism. The American Cancer

[331] Senate Hearing on Stem Cell Research, July 14, 2004: C-SPAN. Available: http://www.cspan.org/ [15 July 2004].
[332] Ibid.

Society has also provided written and oral testimony regarding NIH guidelines on the topic of embryonic stem cell research.[333]

Other organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association and the American Parkinson's Disease Association have strong positions on stem cell research, as do well known personalities such as the actor Michael J. Fox, who has Parkinson's. Fox has stated in public interviews that "to limit or disallow that avenue of research is fundamentally wrong."[334] Perhaps one of the most unexpected third party advocates for stem cell research comes from the wife of the pro-life movement's greatest political hopeful, Nancy Reagan. After former President Ronald Reagan's Alzheimer's Disease was announced, her stance on stem cell research was made public and no doubt caused ripples of dissension amongst conservative pro-lifers. Nevertheless, the former First Lady of the United States in a CBS interview argued that "there are so many diseases that can be cured or at least helped. We have lost so much time already and I just really can't bear to lose anymore."[335] With these pro-embryonic stem cell groups and people, we get a sense that not only scientists but also the "disease and Hollywood" lobbies have been very active in promoting their position. But on the opposing side, how active have third parties been in advocating against embryonic stem cell research?

While gathering data for my thesis, I did try to set up an interview with the Christian Coalition of America. Unfortunately, they turned me down. The Christian Coalition's stance on abortion is very clear, as has been indicated in Chapter One. But

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[333] American Cancer Society Statement in Response to Presidential Decision Regarding Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research: American Cancer Society. Available: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/MED/content/MED_2_1x_American_Cancer_Society_Statement_in_Response_to_Presidential_Decision_Regarding_Human_Embryonic_Stem_Cell_Research.asp [19 July 2004]

[334] The World Health Network. Michael J. Fox, "Advances in Stem Cell Research". Available: http://www.worldhealth.net/?p=416%2C2234 [19 July 2004].

how strong has its advocacy been on embryonic stem cell research? On August 10, 2001, the organization put out a press release on President George W. Bush's policy regarding federal funding for stem cell research. The release was, bearing in mind the source, quite timid. This bears out from the first line of the release: "The Christian Coalition of America has expressed satisfaction today with President Bush's announcement to allow federal funding for limited embryonic stem cell research."[336] Pat Robertson himself was quoted in the release as saying, "The President showed true compassion for those crippled by spinal cord injuries, those suffering from Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's, those with juvenile diabetes, and other debilitating diseases which might be alleviated by aggressive stem cell research."[337]

Before one walks away, however, with the impression that the Christian Coalition has turned into a total pussy cat on the subject, the Executive Vice President of Christian Coalition did indicate, "We are content that President Bush has placed limits and would not allow any federal dollars to pay for the additional killing of human life.... Even though the stems cells President Bush is allowing funding for arose from destroyed embryos, we are pleased he will not fund additional destruction."[338] This response is clearly ambivalent.

Since then, the Christian Coalition has become relatively silent on the subject of embryonic stem cell research. Looking at their main website, at the page labelled "Issues", there is a startling absence of stem cell advocacy language, although a statement

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[335] CBS News. Nancy Reagan, "Strong Plea from a First Lady". Available: http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/10/health/main616473.shtml [19 July 2004].
[336] Christian Coalition of Alabama. Christian Coalition is Satisfied with President Bush's Position Stem Cell Position. Available: http://www.ccbama.org/Newsreleases/NewsReleaseAugust10-2001.htm [19 July 2004
[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.

against human cloning is present.[339] Even on their page marked "Victories" we do not see anything about President Bush's stem cell plans, nor anything else on stem cell research.[340] It should be stated, however, that the "Victories" are only for the 108th Congress, and it is probable that the President Bush plan was listed under the 107th Congress "Victories" page. The Christian Coalition may feel they no longer have any need to advocate on the subject of stem cell research (as long as Bush is in office). However, the procedure continues in the private sphere and in some state-funded spheres, so: why isn't the advocacy against embryonic stem cell research aggressively proceeding? If it is the case that they feel a sense of security under President Bush's ban, they too have begun falling behind in advocacy efforts as those groups supporting embryonic stem cell research will continue their advocacy and may eventually gain the upper hand.

Other organizations have been vigilantly advocating against stem cell research. The American Family Association (a conservative pro-family organization) in August of 2001 put out an Action Alert urging its supporters to contact President Bush to ban funding for embryonic stem cell research. The Alert stated that:

> President Bush will announce a decision soon on whether to allow taxpayer funding of embryonic stem cell research. Please contact him and politely tell them not to use your tax dollars to fund embryonic stem cell research. Even if you have contacted them before on this issue, please do so again. The president is under intense pressure from supporters of stem cell research, and your calls are sorely needed.[341]

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[339] Christian Coalition of America. Issues We're Fighting for in the Current Congress. Available: http://www.cc.org/issues.php [19 July 2004].
[340] Christian Coalition of America. Victories 108th Congress. Available: http://www.cc.org/victories.php [19 July 2004].
[341] American Family Association Online. Action Alert House Bans Human Cloning...Period!. Available: http://www.afa.net/activism/aa080101.asp [19 July 2004].

We have seen the outcome of the President's decision. We can also see what activity the American Family Association has engaged in recently. In June of 2004, the American Family Association, along with the Concerned Women for America, Louisiana Family Forum, the Louisiana Right to Life Federation, and other conservative quasi-religious groups, were advocating, unsuccessfully, in favour of state bans on human cloning in Louisiana.[342] The three bills in question had some significant impacts on the ability of scientists to use human embryos for any research, including stem cell research. Leaving the outcome of the lobbying aside, however, the fact that these organizations had been heavily lobbying a state government on the subject of embryonic stem cell research poses some questions about conclusions this thesis makes. The problem is that the American Family Association, Concerned Women for America, the Louisiana Family Forum and most of the other members of the coalition in Louisiana are organizations which claim to be based on Christian principles. In other words, they claim a religious foundation to their organization. However, it should be noted that they are strictly incorporated as socially conservative, pro-life lobby groups. Their whole reason for being is to advance the pro-life agenda as opposed to advance a particular multi-faceted religious theology.

These types of groups are by no means limited to the State of Louisiana. They exist throughout the United States. We see this fact come through in even more contemporary examples. In California, the acceptability of using embryonic stem cells for scientific research will be put to a vote in November 2004. Proposition 71 asks Californians to support, among other things, a "constitutional right to conduct stem cell

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[342] Lifenews.com. Paul Nowak, "Louisiana Lawmakers Fail to Pass Any Human Cloning Ban This Year". Available: http://www.lifenews.com/bio354.html [19 July 2004].

research."[343] This initiative has triggered pro-life groups, including the California Catholic Conference, California Right to Life, and others into campaign and political activism mode.

It has become apparent that these pro-life groups have become "stand-in" lobbying arms for fundamentalist denominations when it comes to "right to life" debates. This is possible because of the strong ties these groups have to the religious right. That being said, however, it must be remembered that these groups are largely independent of any particular denomination. Further, many of them, such as the "Right to Life Groups," could be classified as "single issue" organizations. They are also, by and large, groups that are organized by grassroots lay leaders. If we recall in Chapter Two in the methodology for my study, I interviewed only Church leaders and those who are employed by ministerial conferences. This methodological fact leaves us with another explanation for the data I collected.

In Chapter One, I made mention of studies done by A. James Reichley with regard to the disparity in opinions on various subjects between pastoral or ministerial leaders and lay church membership. On questions from abortion to minority employment quotas, the disparity existed between the "shepherds" and the "flock." This disparity may be rearing its head when we look at the fact that lay-led groups of a pro-life bent, with no formal denominational attachment (although they are often categorized as ecumenical fundamentalist associations), have advanced the position that stem cell research is objectionable and that they need to lobby politicians to ensure embryonic stem cell research is not permitted. Let us remember that the representative I interviewed from the

[343] California Secretary of State. 2004 Initiative Update. Available: http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections_j.htm#2004General [19 July 2004].

Evangelical Free Church indicated that several individual congregations from his denomination independently became involved in pro-life activities. Again, larger Christian denominations and ministerial ecumenical organizations have largely failed to articulate a position on embryonic stem cell research; however, smaller, grassroots, quasi-religious lobby organizations, such as the ones listed above, have not failed. It is logical, then, to say that this facet of the religion and politics debate may represent an avenue for church goers to express their views where their churches have not. It may be that members may be disappointed with a lack of leadership or political engagement from church officials and have decided to go it alone on certain issues. It is also possible that members of these organizations may be concerned that their religious denomination will advocate a position on stem cell research contrary to their own, as was the case with the mainline Protestant churches over issues such as affirmative action. Recent public opinion polling may be a cause of concern for these organizations who feel the need to act. In an August 10, 2004, Annenberg Election Survey, 64% of respondents were in favour of "Federal funding of research on diseases like Alzheimers using stem cells taken from human embryos."[344] Meanwhile only 28% of respondents were opposed.[345] Further, 53% of Republicans and 74% of Democrats interviewed supported funding for stem cell research, as did 46% of conservatives polled.[346] These numbers would be of concern to a group whose sole issue is being pro-life (where pro-life includes being anti embryonic stem cell research).

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[344] Public Favours Stem Cell Research. National Annenberg Election Study, 2004. Available: http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes/2004_03_stem-cell_08-09_pr.pdf [August 15, 2004].
[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid.

We see that there are grassroots organizations founded on a religious base that are politically advocating on the subject of embryonic stem cell research. Denominations do not need to speak up when politicians have up until now effectively placed a moratorium on funding for stem cell research and grassroots religious and political organizations have been working hard to keep it that way.

Fukuyama's Post Human Future?

Francis Fukuyama drew world wide attention in 1989 with his article "The End of History?," in which he proclaimed that Hegel was right that history ended in 1806 and that the collapse of communism was the last hurdle to liberal-democracy in the world.[347] Reactions to this proclamation were mixed. According to Fukuyama, "We appear to be poised at the cusp of one of the most momentous periods of technological advance in history. Biotechnology and a greater scientific understanding of the human brain promise to have extremely significant political ramifications."[348] This assertion is based on the idea that biotechnology advances now and in the coming years will have a profound effect on "human nature" or the "essence of humanity." To Fukuyama, "The most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history. This is important...because human nature exists, is a meaningful concept, and has provided a stable continuity to our experience as a species."[349] Fukuyama goes on to say: "The fact

[347] Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), xi.
[348] Ibid., 15.
[349] Ibid., 7.

that there has been a stable human nature throughout human history has had very great political consequences."[350]

One example of Fukuyama's claim that human nature has been relatively constant for a long period of time is that politicians have been betting over the last fifty years that the average life expectancy of human beings would fall somewhere between 65 and 85 years of age. According to the World Health Organization in 2000, the United States has a healthy life expectancy of 70 years.[351] Consider the effect a population whose life span is doubled would have on the cost of government services, population density, resource consumption, waste and pollution production, among others. Clearly, biotechnological advances, especially when achieved over a short period of time, would have a profound effect on political and other social institutions as well. In a span of one century the world has gone from horse and buggy to nuclear powered submarines and interstellar space probes. Consider what similar sized leaps in biotechnology would have not only on socio-political institutions, but on the very existence of human beings, as Fukuyama suggests.

In light of these potentially species altering advances, Fukuyama prescribes what may be a hard pill to swallow for some. He states:

> In the face of the challenge from a technology like this, where good and bad are intimately connected, it seems to me that there can be only one possible response: countries must regulate the development and use of technology politically, setting up institutions that will discriminate between those technological advances that promote human flourishing, and those that pose a threat to human dignity and well-being.[352]

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[350] Ibid., 13.
[351] World Health Organization. PR-2000 / WHO Issues New Healthy Life Expectancy Rankings, Available: http://www.who.int/inf-pr-2000/en/pr2000-life.html [17 June 2004].
[352] Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 182.

Naturally, such a statement provokes questions as to who should be the judge of how far science should progress. As we have seen in examining the role of government in such advances in Chapter Two, and as Fukuyama has himself observed, "[a]lmost no one has been looking concretely at what kinds of institutions would be needed to allow scientists to control the pace and scope of technology development."[353] One thing is clear to Fukuyama, however: "Science by itself cannot establish the ends to which it is put."[354] There are a host of reasons, including that, as with any other enterprise in a liberal-democratic-capitalist environment, there is a laissez-faire mentality which prevails in the scientific community. Fukuyama solidifies that position by stating that "[s]cience itself is just a tool for achieving human ends; what the political community decides are appropriate ends are not ultimately scientific questions."[355] What, then, is responsible for contributing to the establishment of limits on science? The answer is, as I have alluded to throughout the thesis, and as Fukuyama points out, "theology, philosophy or politics," as well as certain scientists who have contributed to establishing ethical guidelines involving such research.[356]

This thesis is, however, not about the role of philosophy or scientists on the subject of biotechnology. It is rather about that element that Fukuyama talks about, theology or religion, the political community, and what activities take place in the relationship between religion and politics. There is no question that this study is very narrow in that only certain elements of religious organizations in the United States were selected and only one area of biotechnology as well. However, it does give some sense

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[353] Ibid., 183.
[354] Ibid., 185.
[355] Ibid., 186

of the political interactions in one sector of advocacy which may be indicative of the interactions in the new politics of biotechnology as a whole. While including theology in the discussion, Fukuyama does take care to point out that it should not have sole input regarding biotechnology. He states:

> Many of the current debates over biotechnology, on issues like cloning, stem cell research, and germ-line engineering, are polarized between the scientific community and those with religious commitments. I believe that this polarization is unfortunate because it leads many to believe that the only reason one might object to certain advances in biotechnology is out of religious belief.[357]

I believe that Fukuyama, in trying to move away from the polarization of science and religions, does not give a fair treatment to the role of the theological sector in the debate. It is assumed by him and so many others, including Ronald Green, as we have seen in other chapters, that religious denominations and larger ecumenical organizations have been major players during the political debates on stem cell research. The data collected for this thesis show, however, that any assumption by Fukuyama and Green that all religious bodies are together into one camp, pulling in the same direction, is not accurate. Indeed, we have seen that when compared to other issues such as abortion as well as a host of social issues, religious denominations and ecumenical organizations are largely underdeveloped in political advocacy on biotechnology debates. There are only three major religious denominations (Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist Convention and United Church of Christ) which have contributed substantially to the political debates, and only a handful of others who have even developed theological policy on questions such as those surrounding embryonic stem cell research. Further, based on the policies

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[356] Ibid., 185
[357] Ibid., 12.

and positions they have adopted, those few will not necessarily be pulling in the same direction. Chapman adds that "some commentators assume that religious communities or thinkers have positions based on their heritage that they can readily apply to biotechnology, but clearly that is not the case."[358]

Fukuyama is correct that religion, philosophy, and science seem to be the only major inputs into government policy surrounding biotechnology issues, especially stem cell research. However, as my conclusion shows, the inputs into the "black box" of policy making on these topics have not contributed equally to the discussion. Yet, curiously, what we see is that there seems to be a balance that has been achieved. Although scientists have been bombarding governments around the world to allow procedures such as embryonic stem cell research, they are not winning out, at least in the United States government. If we remember in Chapter Two, each progression in policy in favour of embryo research by scientists has been cut off by an equal and opposite reaction by politicians, even though only two churches, the Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention, have been the major religious opponents. When looking at the various coalitions of pro-lifers, Catholics are generally found to play a significant role.

Are there secular organizations involved in the "black box" of policy development that would help contribute to this situation? No doubt. But let us not forget that abortion and embryonic stem cell research inspire the same objection, that an embryo will be destroyed. Yet, abortion is legal in the United States. The question becomes, will embryonic stem cell research be treated under the same auspices as abortion, and

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[358] Audrey R. Chapman "Religious Perspectives on Biotechnology" in Mark J. Hanson, Editor, *Claiming Power over Life: Religion and Biotechnology Policy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001),

therefore tip the very uneasy balance in favour of stem cell research scientists and other people and organizations such as Michael J. Fox, Nancy Reagan, the American Heart Association, Alzheimer Association and the American Cancer Society, who have advocated vigorously in favour of allowing embryonic stem cell research? This is a question which religious denominations must consider even when smaller, religiously based, pro-life groups are clearly present. We then see a problem develop: if religious denominations and larger Christian ecumenical organizations have not been able to even establish policies, either in favour of or opposing stem cell research, more than half a decade after the initial derivation of human stem cells, they are not going to fare well as contributors on other biotechnology political debates that arise.

Conclusion

Looking back to Chapter One, it is clear that throughout United States history, religion has played an important role in political advocacy from slavery, to the creation of the New Deal, civil rights and reproductive medicine. Christian denominations and organizations represented a strong political force in influencing public policy. Although the strength of influence shifted between what we would call mainline Protestant to more conservative elements of Protestants over the course of the twentieth century, the fact remains that religious denominations and organizations have held a hammer to the politicians on various political debates. The question then needed to be asked how these denominations were faring on the subject of biotechnology. Where were they in the political process? What tactics were they using and how intensely were they employing those tactics?

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Biotechnology is, as Fukuyama suggests, a very different animal from any political issue that has arisen before. In a unique way, the questions involved are about the state of human life, and the potential to transform the human species in a manner suggested by Fukuyama into something "Post-human". On such life-altering issues, we would expect to see the churches contributing to the debate. Thus far, however, religious denominations and large ecumenical organizations have, with a handful of exceptions, failed to jump into political debates which could not be more fundamental to theology. If Fukuyama is correct that we are on the cusp of a new era not only in politics but for humanity, these base religious groups have missed the boat. They have thus far failed to involve themselves on the new biotechnology front in the United States as they did on so many social issues of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The battle seems to be left to loosely organized grassroots church member involvement, where the "sheep" lead the "shepherds." Wilcox and Jelen's analysis highlighted earlier in this Chapter, if correct, would see the religious lobby as totally ineffective on the issue of embryonic stem cell research. Recall that, they argue that the outcome in debates for religious organizations depends on their level of mobilization, the size of their constituency and the size of any religious opposition constituency, not to mention public support and the mobilization of non-religious actors in the debate. In that analysis, religion is completely outclassed by public opinion and the mobilization of the scientists on the issue of embryonic stem cell research, never mind the fact that religious organizations have next to no organization or common mobilization tactic on the topic.

I have identified several possible ways to answer the question why it is that the impetus is not present for becoming politically active on stem cell research as has been

on abortion, same sex marriage, social welfare, health care, and racism I argue that the two primary answers to this question are the ones which focus on resources and technical issues, as laid out above, and Dolgin's argument that the concept of the embryo in the abortion debate and the concept of the embryo in the stem cell research debate are visualized in socially different manners. Although these two explanations may not appear connected, the question of resources and technical issues is really about fact gathering and the processing of those facts. Dolgin's explanation of the social change in terms of visualizing and conceptualizing the human embryo is about framing those facts for a particular audience. Both explanations show why churches appear stunned into inaction by the whole discussion of biotechnology and may be left out in either promoting or fighting against embryonic stem cell research.

In 1980, a letter was sent to President Carter by three major religious groups, the Roman Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches and the Synagogue Council of America, regarding advances in genetic engineering. In it the writers stated that "the religious community must and will address these fundamental questions in a more urgent and organized way."[359] Clearly, twenty four years later the urgency and organizational advances suggested in the letter regarding biotechnology seem not to have materialized in a broader environment. While religious denominations and ecumenical organizations are re-evaluating their policies, they risk weakening their historical role of helping develop public policy.

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[359] Audrey R. Chapman "Religious Perspectives on Biotechnology" in Mark J. Hanson, Editor, *Claiming Power over Life: Religion and Biotechnology Policy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 112.

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