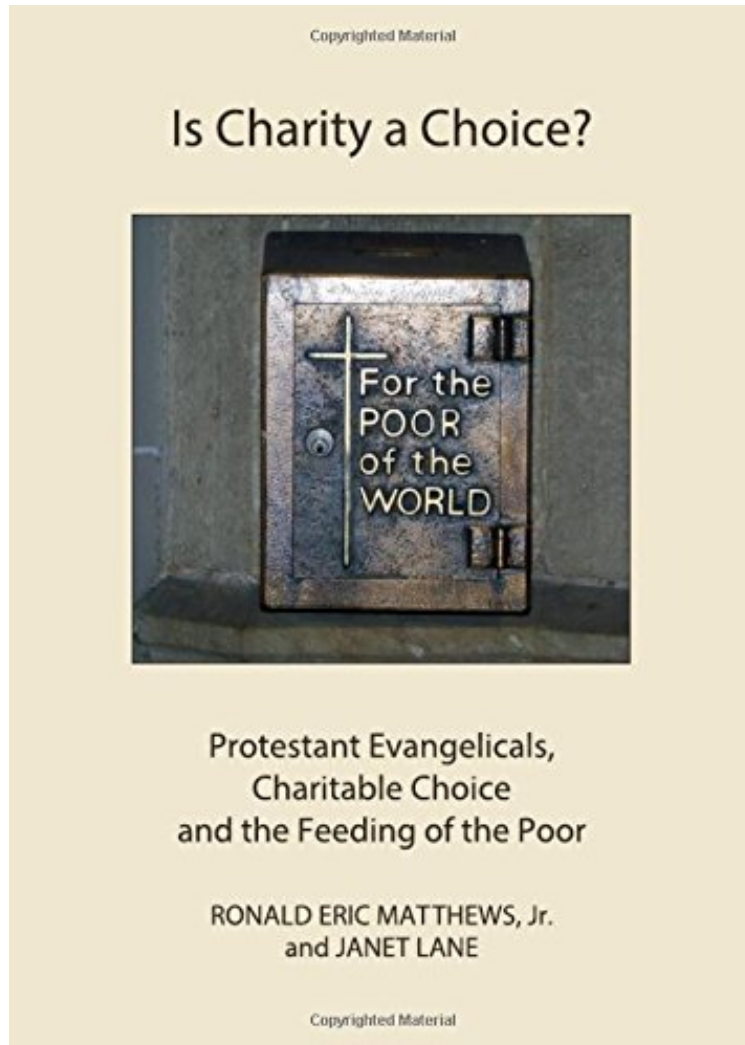


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# Is Charity a Choice?: Protestant Evangelicals, Charitable Choice and the Feeding of the Poor

*Ronald Eric Matthews, Jr., Janet Lane*  
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**Ronald Eric Matthews, Jr., Janet Lane : Is Charity a Choice?: Protestant Evangelicals, Charitable Choice and the Feeding of the Poor** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Is Charity a Choice?: Protestant Evangelicals, Charitable Choice and the Feeding of the Poor:

Debates on public policy in the United States are shaped, in part, by moral and religious commitments of individuals and communities. Hecló (2003) writes in Religion Returns to the Public Square, Government policy and religious

matters . . . both claim to give authoritative answers to important questions about how people should live. Hecla's words apply especially to the issue of poverty and welfare reform, a matter on which the great religious traditions have played an integral part. Apart from its profound political significance, there is every indication that the welfare reform legislation of 1996 (Personal Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act, PWORA) has altered the landscape of American religion. Through Section 104 of PWORA, also known as Charitable Choice, religious congregations, interfaith ministries and denominational work relief agencies have been thrust into the center of America's welfare to work transition and community revitalization efforts. Charitable Choice makes it illegal for state governments to discriminate against social service providers whose organization has a religious mandate. This book examines Charitable Choice and more broadly, the changing relationship between religion and social welfare as its primary point of departure for investigating faith-based poverty relief in the post-welfare era. This research employs a mixed methods approach to understanding the role of Protestant evangelicals in addressing the needs of the poor and specifically their role in the implementation of Charitable Choice. To accomplish this task, two national surveys, one individual and one congregational, are used to explore the role of religiosity and the creation of Protestant evangelical sub-cultures and their effects on civic engagement, volunteerism and support for Charitable Choice. It then triangulates this data with qualitative research to develop a clearer understanding of the issues that affect participation rates and public welfare delivery systems. In-depth interviews of thirty-six Protestant evangelical ministers from central Appalachia are conducted and analyzed. This text will advance both practice and theory by providing an understanding about the complex world of Protestant evangelicalism. This volume has the potential to increase our understanding about the role intra-textual and inter-textual theological beliefs and convictions play in the public policy process and whether faith-based organizations can help to address the issues surrounding poverty and social welfare. To the policy maker, the authors hope to provide practical information that affects policy delivery and policy evaluation. To the religious scholar and social science researcher, they hope this study serves as one brick in a larger foundation known as Protestant evangelicalism. It will provide a different strategy for identifying key variables associated with public policy analysis. And in the end, it will require us all to answer if charity is truly a choice.

About the Author Ronald Eric Matthews, Jr. received his PhD from Kent State University, Ohio, USA and attended the Pollsters and Parishioners Workshop at Calvin College, Michigan, USA. Dr Matthews, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Notre Dame College, Cleveland, Ohio, co-authored *Obamagelicals: How the Right Turned Left* with Dr Michele Gilbert, and *Perspectives on the Legacy of George Bush* with Dr Michael Grossman. Janet Lane received her Bachelor's degrees in Elementary and Special Education from Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio, USA and her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. She is a junior high language arts teacher at David Anderson Jr. Sr. High School in Lisbon, Ohio. Lane has licenses for Elementary 1-8 and Education of the Handicapped.