

**A PROMINENT JEWISH
HUMAN-RIGHTS ACTIVIST
PRAISES—AND POINTEDLY
COUNSELS—EVANGELICALS.**

How to Win Friends and Influence Culture



by MICHAEL HOROWITZ

IN ALMOST 10 years of intimate association with Christians engaged in human-rights causes, I've watched evangelicals as both an outsider and a sympathetic ally.

I know pastors who have risked all to go into the forests of China to feed and rescue North Korean refugees. I know of some now being tortured in Chinese jails for their "underground railroad" efforts. I know Christians throughout the world who have been tormented, tortured, and martyred for their faith. I'm fortunate beyond measure to count as friends such great figures as Korean underground leaders Chun Ki-Won, Tim Peters, and Kim Hang Soon; Shahbaz Bhatti of the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance; Bob Fu of the China Aid Association; and comparably heroic Christian leaders from Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Sudan, and elsewhere throughout the world.

In the United States, I've seen Christian leaders asked to uproot their lives and families in order to take up causes on behalf of the vulnerable and persecuted. I've seen them unashamedly drop to their knees in quiet prayer and then get up to say that, as Christians, they have no alternative but to take those risks. I've also regularly seen the faith-based courage and determination of such leaders of the American evangelical community as Chuck Colson, Richard Land, Ted Haggard, Rich Cizik, and Barrett Duke, and seen the near-miracles wrought by such grassroots Christian leaders as Debbie Fikes and her colleagues of the Ministerial Alliance of Midland, Texas.

I've been awed in the presence of such faith; its example has helped make me a better and more observant practitioner of my own—for which I will forever be grateful.

EXTRAORDINARY DECADE

The evangelical community has become an extraordinary force for human rights during the last decade, a process that began with the release of the January 1996 "Statement of Conscience Concerning Worldwide Religious Persecution" by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The statement's concluding sentence summarized its purpose:

Therefore, before God, and because we are our brother's keeper, we solemnly pledge: to end our own silence in the face of the suffering of all those persecuted for their religious faith [and] to do what is within our power to the end that the government of the United States will take appropriate action to combat the intolerable religious persecution victimizing fellow believers and those of other faiths.

That statement—and comparable declarations from such key groups as Prison Fellowship and, then and increasingly, the Southern Baptist Convention—sparked a movement that engaged groups of every sort, from Tibetan Buddhists to Catholics, from Iranian Baha'is to Reform Jews, that followed your leadership, lit prairie fires of action across the country, and caused the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Has the law solved all the problems of religious persecution? Of course not; no act of legislation ever does. Has it made an extraordinary difference to persecuted believers around the world? It is beginning to—and then some—as America's national commitment to fight against religious persecution has grown by orders of magnitude. Today, the rights of believers has become to the United States government, and to most Americans, a central and basic entitlement whose protection is a core American obligation.

Against the opposition of presidential administrations, against all sorts of interest groups, with no money, with no teams of lobbyists, with little but passion, leadership, and faith, evangelicals have subsequently championed many other great human-rights causes. Initiatives you have mounted on behalf of trafficked women, abused prison inmates, North Korean refugees, and other vulnerable victims had the further advantage of not being discounted as "mere" parochial efforts to protect your own. By such leadership, evangelicals have demonstrated how deeply they are moved, and often driven, by deep compassion for the vulnerable victims of injustice. By so doing, you've helped shatter "us versus them" caricatures drawn by those opposed to Christian witness in the public square. You have made it far less possible for those who disagree with your views on given issues to discredit their animating spirit or decency.

For example, you've played an essential role in advancing the great slavery and women's issue of our time: sex trafficking. The trafficking by international mafias and corrupt government officials of at least 1 million girls and women per year into sexual bondage and slavery had been the world's fastest growing area of international crime, and the campaign to end this epidemic scourge was made in the spirit of 19th-century antislavery abolitionist evangelicals and the anti-trafficking efforts of Salvation Army founders William and Catherine Booth. It first began when former Salvation Army national commander Bob Watson convened a major session of evangelicals, Jewish leaders, and pro-abortion feminist groups to discuss the issue. The meeting triggered broad coalition action that ultimately led to passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This historic legislation was

Justice

fittingly sponsored by Senator Sam Brownback and Congressman Chris Smith (rooted Christians for whom prayer and faith are central elements of their lives), the late Paul Wellstone (a good man, a secularist, and the most liberal Democrat then in the Senate), and former Congressman Sam Gejdenson (the son of Nazi Holocaust survivors).

Anti-trafficking efforts continue to be spurred by evangelicals and feminists

under the banner of the Josephine Butler Forum, named after the great Victorian evangelical who led the 19th-century battle to end the abuse of women through state-protected prostitution.

Working with both Ted Kennedy and the great congressional human-rights leader Frank Wolf, a model of Christian decency, evangelicals were prime supporters of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003—legislation now putting to an end

Two Tests for Evangelical Action

HOW TO BE POLITICALLY MINDED AND DO SOME CHRISTIAN GOOD.

I've repeatedly seen how your evangelical faith is the great source of your strength and your most precious gift. And I know, as do you, that you risk that faith when you go out into the public arena, especially into its seductive and often corrupting worlds of politics and public policy.

And yet you do so, and do so because you are Christians.

Thus the dilemma you face. When, as Christians, should you enter the public policy arena? When are issues best undertaken by you as informed, ethical citizens but not as expressly Christian or church causes? How do your robust and growing churches avoid the decline, the hollowing out, that has happened to the churches that have traded their faith-centered bearings for the worship of political gods? How can you distinguish between modeling yourselves on 19th-century abolitionist William Wilberforce and, to cite an absurd contemporary example, the call of those who have you ask whether Christ would have driven an SUV? How, in short, do you know the issues for which you have no alternative but to risk your precious faith, and to do so in its very name?

Here are two tests, offered by an admiring friend who believes that the nurture,

spread, and well-being of Christianity will be crucial if the 21st century of my children and grandchildren is to be free of the bloodbaths of the "God is dead" 20th.

First: Can you act on behalf of vulnerable lambs and, without the sacrifice of principle, get Jews, Catholics, atheists and agnostics, liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans to join your efforts?

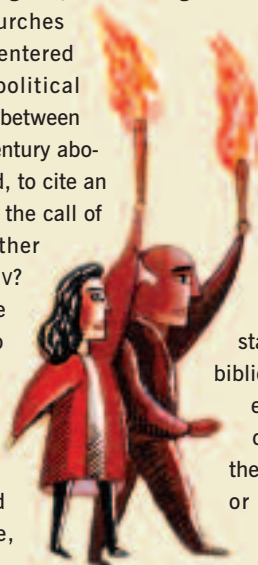
Second: Is the issue now the subject of robust policy debate within the political system on the part of people who differ in good faith over the means of achieving the goals you seek?

The above tests deliberately impose a high bar for the participation of your church bodies and the participation of evangelicals, as evangelicals, in the public policy arena.

DOUBLE RISKS AND MORE

To take the second test first: It creates a cautionary barrier against turning issues like welfare reform and global warming into matters on which churches stake their all. There are, to be sure, biblical mandates calling on all believers to aid the poor and to exercise caring stewardship of the earth. But these issues are unlikely to yield clear or uniquely "Christian" solutions.

While evangelical churches should



a form of widespread brutality that has destroyed 10 to 15 percent of all American prisoners at the hands of previously uncontrolled inmate gangs and predators.

Evangelicals also played the central role in ending the genocidal north-south war in Sudan that had claimed more than 2 million lives and made refugees of at least 5 million more.

Guided by the NAE's second "Statement of Conscience" of May 2002, evangelicals

are playing a key role in protecting the tragic victims of mass starvation, concentration camps, gas chambers, and ceaseless persecutions of the lunatic regime of North Korea's Kim Jong Il—an effort that will require and, I am supremely confident, will receive, the very best of your prayers and labors.

They—you—are now working on legislation to protect the runaway girls caught

continued on page 74

strongly encourage their members to participate as *citizens whose moral bearings are shaped by their faiths* in debates over vital policy issues, I believe they would be wrong to take the position that, in caring for the poor, being a Christian obliges one to be more concerned about the evils of welfare dependency than about those of limited resources, or to support or oppose the Kyoto treaty.

I am a political conservative and know—if only from the polls—that the majority of evangelicals tend to share my policy views. As such, I would of course welcome their voices in debates over welfare and the environment and on such hotly contested matters as tax and energy or agriculture policy. But knowing the intractability and complexity of those issues and, more critically, knowing there are good Christians on all sides of them, I think it best for evangelical churches to allow them to be dealt with under secular rather than religious auspices. This belief is greatly enhanced from having seen the decline of the mainline churches, and from knowing how easily their gods of politics have become objects of consuming and primary worship under cover of biblical tongue.

Evangelicals incur a further, double-sided risk when they fail to carefully limit their church-led public policy agendas. On the one hand, they will be subject to subtle but powerful pressures to "grow"—what the Washington establishment means when it presses innately conservative religious communities to abandon their views on cultural and policy issues. On

the other hand, failure to achieve such "growth" will trigger "Dread Christian Right" caricatures from establishment groups and, in particular, from the national press. Never underestimate the power of press adulation to entice you to abandon your "prior bigotry," nor its like capacity to wound and shape you by defining your politically incorrect positions as evidence of your "meanness of spirit" and "lack of compassion."

How can you distinguish between modeling yourselves on 19th-century abolitionist William Wilberforce and the call of those who have you ask whether Christ would have driven an SUV?

AVOIDING SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES

The first test, which advocates the need for broad support, is of course neither perfect nor universal. Clearly, there will be times when, as Christians, you must act alone and against the tide. But there are many profoundly moral and biblical undertakings where evangelicals can both lead and gain the support of all Americans. By creating such a test, evangelicals will be subject to a useful discipline that will make it harder to adopt toxic "us versus them" strategies that with thought and effort could have been avoided, and that often create self-fulfilling evangelical prophecies of impotence and isolation. Such

a test leaves much open for evangelical engagement capable of leading and succeeding on issues that shape our culture and the world at large for the better. The test will also give you more than enough opportunity to be true to your Christian obligation to protect vulnerable lambs whose cries would otherwise go unheard.

—Michael Horowitz

continued from page 73

at American bus stations, and the hundreds of thousands of girls and women trapped on the streets of America into lives of prostitution, routinely savage beatings, AIDS, and drug addiction. With your support, I know that the law of the land will soon ensure that the men who patronize and abuse the battered girls who walk our

mean streets, and the pimps who assault and enslave them, will become targets of a justice system that now only focuses its attentions on arresting the victims.

They—you—will play an instrumental role in the passage of a broadly supported Advance Democracy Act that will make the peaceful elimination of dictatorships and the promotion of democracy a central strategic objective of American foreign pol-

icy. This is as it should be, if only because the blessings of democracy are a gift to mankind that our faiths have been centrally instrumental in broadly spreading.

In fighting for human rights, you've shown your ability not to overload the circuits and, critically, not to tilt at windmills. You've picked targets that few cared about and seared the consciences of your fellow Americans in order to offer hope and protection to people who desperately needed it. As rightly described by Allen Hertzke, the great scholar of your movement and author of *Freeing God's Children*, you've

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during the last
decade.**

become, beneath the radar screens of the national press, America's most powerful force for human-rights progress. And you've done it as Christians whose biblical commands have made your silence impossible in the face of slavery and genocide.

THE NEW SCAPEGOATS

Now a word about who you are and why Christianity is—secularists gasp at the mention of this reality—the great force for *modernity* in those parts of the world poised between freedom and dark-age totalitarianism.

To tell this truth best, a word about my people is in order. A hundred or so years ago, oppressive thugs who ruled countries had ideal scapegoats whom they used to terrorize entire populations in order to remain in power. In Europe, if you wanted to know whether the people of a country were free, you didn't need to conduct a fancy human-rights survey. All you needed was to visit a few local synagogues. If the Jews who worshiped there were free, others in the country were almost certain to be free. On the other hand, if synagogue visits revealed fear and persecution, it was a safe bet that few others in the country were free.

Thugs need vulnerable scapegoats and find particular value in scapegoats who share our faiths—this because Judaism and Christianity send out the most powerful, radical political message of all time: the equality of all in the eyes of God. This message makes tyrants vulnerable—a fact they always realize. As Jews and Christians, we don't always live up to our teachings and obligations, but we do a better job at it than we generally give ourselves credit for. Tyrants know—almost always better than we do—that if they can silence the scapegoats whose faith calls for “love unbought by price or fear” and whose kingdom is “not of this earth,” they can silence and tyrannize all.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, the world discovered, thanks in part to evangelical efforts, that the seemingly powerful Soviet regime couldn't even turn its back on a mere synagogue burning. The “Free Soviet Jewry” movement, which culminated in the Jackson-Vanik amendment that barred U.S. trade with the Soviet Union unless Jews were free to migrate from its borders, not only gave freedom to Soviet Jews. Just as importantly, it placed large cracks in the hitherto solid walls the regime had built around the Soviet Union and thus offered hope and, ultimately, freedom to Pentecostals, artists, political dissidents, and all others.

As the battle for the soul of the 21st century is fought, too many of my people have been killed for us to be fully useful scapegoats. Thus, my evangelical friends, you have become the Jews of the 21st century. This is of course not true of Christians blessed to live in America and other free countries. It is, however, very much true of your brothers and sisters in the developing world—in the Sudan, in China, in India, in Sri Lanka, in Indonesia, in Saudi Arabia, in country after country where dictatorships reign.

To America's evangelicals I therefore say: Take pride *and responsibility* from the fact that religious and secular tyrants realize that their very survival obliges them to persecute and intimidate their Christian communities.

And when you do, please realize this: *In protecting persecuted Christians, you protect everyone else.*

The most moving calls I've received

while engaged in the battle against international religious persecution have come from moderate leaders of Muslim countries who, at risk of life, have said to me, “You must keep up this fight against the radical Muslims who are persecuting Christians.” They then add: “I may have to publicly denounce you as a Zionist agent, but here is information about what these radicals are doing in my country.

Stop them, please, because if the West is silent when Christians are persecuted, we're all going to have to start saluting the radicals.”

The battle over worldwide Christian persecution is a battle for the freedom of all—all the more so because the explosive global spread of Christianity has made the paradigmatic Christian a poor and brown third-world female rather than the white

middle-class Western male that your patronizing detractors paint you to be.

When the NAE was first getting started on the Christian persecution issue, I spoke with one of its board members. He asked, "You are a Jew. Why are you so involved?"

My response: "That's a good question. When I was a young boy coming home from yeshiva (Jewish parochial school), I got beat up by kids who said, 'You killed our Christ.'"

His response: "Oh, how I apologize. Oh, please forgive me." He was just so bereft, contrite, ridden with guilt.

I listened and then said, "Okay, I accept your apology. Now may I say something? If it weren't for the rooted Christian decency of this country, I'd be a lampshade. I'd be a bar of soap."

Whatever sins may have been committed in the name of your faith, please know that Rabbi Joshua Haberman

got it right when he called America's Bible Belt his safety belt. Evangelicals should apologize for the sins of Christians as they



must, but it is right and important for you to glory in what your faith has done—not

only for your fellow believers but for others as well.

The lesson: You count for more than yourselves. You're better than you often think you are. Your brothers and sisters around the world are canaries in the coal mine whose well-being secures the well-being of all.

DON'T OVERREACH

As praiseworthy and effective as evangelicals have often been, I believe you can be far more effective. Lesson One: You can get more support than you may imagine possible by avoiding utopian overreach; doing so can, without sacrifice of principle, broaden the support you can achieve. Take, for example, the hot-button issue of abortion. Many in the Christian community denounced the wise and shrewd leaders who conceived of the partial-birth abortion initiative.

Its critics demeaned the initiative as barely half a slice of the full-loaf reform that

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was needed. They argued that the reform would have the overall effect of legitimizing abortion even if it succeeded.

Those critics were wrong. They did not understand that success has ripple effects. They did not understand how much more could be achieved by framing the issue to allow false caricatures of evangelicals to be shattered. Americans' views of abortion have shifted by more than 20 percent since the onset of the partial-birth abortion debate and largely because of it. It has put the pro-abortion community on the defensive. And it all happened because wise Christian leaders picked a target that was winnable, and framed an issue that revealed abortion's underlying nature. Those leaders may have wanted to pass more far-reaching anti-abortion legislation, but knew they couldn't on both legal/constitutional and political grounds. They were tough-minded. They didn't sacrifice principle. And, more than perhaps even they expected, they began to

reach others not previously on their side as they began to change the terms of the abortion debate.

To America's evangelicals I therefore say: Take pride and responsibility from the fact that religious and secular tyrants realize that their very survival obliges them to persecute and intimidate their Christian communities.

The gay-marriage debate represents another, if more controversial, example of an issue that would have been better served by a principled but less utopian approach. Rather than seeking to bar the federal government from authorizing gay marriages,

an effort to bar courts from imposing them would have been more broadly supported and far more likely to pass. My wife's views are instructive. She does not object to gay marriage—to my mind a profoundly erroneous position—but she also believes it wrong and undemocratic for unelected courts to effectively bar voters from ever expressing their views on the matter. An evangelical approach to gay marriage based on trust of the American people to make the right decisions would have put you on the side of democracy, made it impossible to levy charges of antigay bigotry against you, divided the principled from the let's-get-it-any-way-we-can gay-marriage supporters, and stopped the gay-marriage movement in its tracks.

I have often come close to believing that many evangelical leaders, acting for the most part unconsciously, have shaped debates to ensure they don't win, that they do this because being on the losing side

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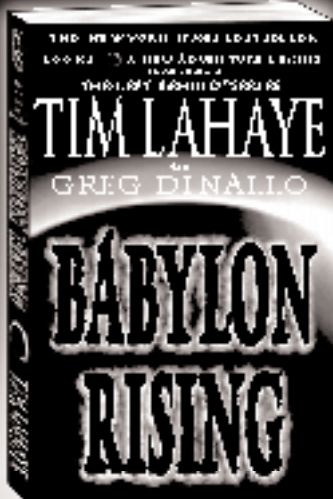
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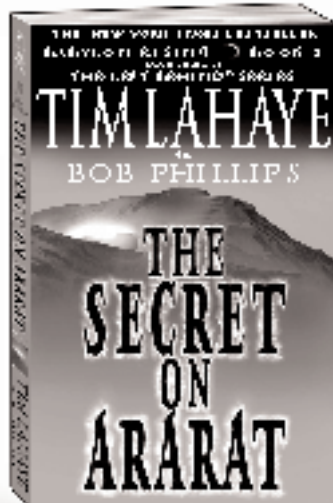
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enhances their sense of martyrdom and their negative and superior views toward nonbelievers. It is right for evangelicals to seek close bonds with fellow believers and understandable when, by interacting with few others, they try to avoid the seductions of a corrupting world. It is wrong, tragically wrong, when evangelicals provoke the unnecessary hostility of others or prefer the sound of one hand clapping.

WATCH THAT TONE

Lesson Two: Building support for your initiatives requires a shift in tone that reflects confidence in your capacity to persuade others and shows the respect and civility that your faith commands to be given to all.

My personal situation has helped me here. My wife believes that abortions are tragic but that women should have the right to have them whenever they so decide. Yet far from being morally insensitive, she's a physician who stays up until 1 A.M. reading *The New England Journal of Medicine* to better take care of her patients, and she earns half of what she could in order to be a better physician. She's an extraordinarily loving mother, deeply rooted in family—indeed, she is the most morally rooted person I know. Being blessed by having her as my spouse, and being a conservative, I've learned that when I talk to her about subjects like gay marriage, I must do it in ways that generate respect if not agreement. And I know for sure that it's no more accurate than it is decent to open a dialogue with her on the subject of abortion by calling her a murderer and someone indifferent to family values. Nor, based on all I have learned from you over the years, do I believe it the Christian thing to do.

When you're seeking my wife's soul, when you want her to accept Christ (I wouldn't hold my breath here), do you begin by calling her a heathen and a sinner and then give up on trying to reach her when she understandably tunes you out? Of course you don't. You communicate, you reach out. You find out what's in her

and search for common ground and common bonds. You don't do this in a manipulative way, but in a loving, caring fashion. And you gain souls in the process.

Why then, wrong as they think she may be, do some Christians call my wife a murderer rather than trying to find ways to reach her on the issue of abortion? By treating people like her respectfully, you will reach many others more often than you may now think you can.

Further, by showing your love for trafficked women, brutalized prisoners, and enslaved North Korean gulag victims, you will earn my wife's gratitude and trust. By following in the footsteps of your 19th-century counterparts who successfully reformed prisons, ended African chattel slavery, and protected and empowered women, you will shatter caricatures of who you are. By seeking common

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ground on issues of disagreement and by leading battles on commonly shared issues where others have not spoken, you will cause my wife, and others like her, to be more open to who you are and to what you have to say, even when you fail to persuade them.

As you enter the public arena in the name of your faith, please be conscious of your power to lead and persuade, even though the prevailing culture may appear daunting and hostile. Make it your solemn responsibility to reject the "us versus them" counsel of the pessimists and separatists among you. And, above all else, remember that you are morally and, to the extent I understand it, biblically obligated to demonstrate the love and decency that animates your efforts to seek the rescue of vulnerable victims and cultures.

What gives me most hope for the century in which my children and grandchildren will live is that you have shown, in important and growing ways, that you have the wisdom and ability to do so.

More and more, may this continue to be so.

Michael Horowitz is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.