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EVANGELICALS AND JEWS IN COMMON CAUSE

Marshall J. Breger

This essay will consider possibilities of common ground between evangelicals and Jews in the United States. This is a topic filled with stereotypes and caricature, one in which most progenitors of common ground envision an instrumental relationship based on an almost willful ignorance of the "other." Obviously, my position will largely be from a Jewish perspective. I am myself representative of the ignorance of evangelicals among Jews.

We have come a long way since 1994 when the Anti-Defamation League (A.D.L.) published The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America.1 In that book Abe Foxman attacked evangelicals (or "the Religious Right," in his parlance) as being "an exclusionist religious movement in this country ... [that] has attempted to restore what it perceives as the ruins of a Christian nation by more closely seeking to unite its vision of Christianity with state power."2 This perspective has morphed today into the unstinting praise of those like Hillel Halkin, who has written, "The Christian Right is today Israel’s main political backer in the United States."3 To Jewish ears perhaps both statements are true. Certainly, most Jewish discussion of evangelical and Jewish relations focus on the value of reflexive evangelical support for Israel and the concomitant fear that evangelicals are out to spread the "good news" through the conversion of the Jews.

While I will of necessity advert to it, my goal is not to focus on the Christian Zionist alliance with Israel but to consider other areas where Jews and evangelicals can find and have found common ground. I will first review the history of coalitions between evangelicals and Jews and then offer some reflections on the problems and possibilities in the Evangelical-Jewish relationship.

1 Common Ground in the Modern Era

A. Early Years

The first area of common ground between evangelicals and Jews was the long battle in the 1990’s over the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (R.F.R.A.).4 The Act was designed to override Justice Scalia’s opinion in Employment Div., Dept of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith,5 which found

2Ibid., p 1
3Hillel Halkin, "Foxman’s Hypocrisy," Jerusalem Post, November 11, 2005, p 11
5494 U.S. 872, 878-79 (1990)
laws that have a negative impact on religious expression constitutional, as long as they have a valid neutral secular purpose. Jewish groups worked closely with the National Association of Evangelicals and the Christian Legal Society to promote this legislation. When the R.F.R.A. was itself found to be unconstitutional, efforts continued between the religious organizations to secure legislation to overrule R.F.R.A. for federal law and land-use issues, namely, the Religious Land Use and Institutional Persons Act.

A second area of common action between evangelicals and Jews was issues of international religious freedom. In the mid-1990's Michael Horowitz of the Hudson Institute cobbled together an ad hoc coalition of evangelicals to work on the International Religious Freedom Act. Horowitz is a unique person in this story. While not connected with the organized Jewish community, he comes from a strong Jewish background. He became a Republican in the late 1970’s and served in senior positions in the Reagan White House. He threw himself into the cause of persecuted Christians with zeal and was both a moral catalyst and a political advisor to the effort. He alternatively bullied and shamed the evangelicals into greater efforts, while seeking coalitions with unlikely suspects and particularly with the Jewish community.

Indeed, the evangelicals joined forces with the Catholic bishops and the Religious Action Committee of Reform Judaism. The Republican National Jewish Coalition became involved, as did Stacy Burdette, lobbyist for the A.D.L. once the legislation was being “worked on the Hill.” The resulting legislation created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center (RAC) was the founding chair of the Commission, serving from 1999 to 2001. He has formed coalitions on African hunger and prison rape that worked closely with evangelical partners.

RAC, the Catholic Bishops, and Michael Horowitz’s group—led by the unusual trio of Bill Bennett, Chuck Colson, and David Saperstein—also worked closely on the Sudan Peace Act. Indeed, three weeks after the Bush administration took office they met with Karl Rove and President Bush to explain the tragedy in Sudan (this was pre-Darfur and was about the looming human tragedy in Southern Sudan). This informal coalition continued to develop and expand.

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6 City of Boerne v. Flores, 521 U.S. 507, 511 (1997)
9 International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, 22 U.S.C. § 6401 (1998) Also see Tad Stahnke, “A Paradox of Independence The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom,” The Review of Faith and International Affairs 6 (Summer, 2008) 48 (asserting the Commission “was intended to be both a check and a nudge on how well the Executive Branch was using its discretion to promote religious freedom”)
11 See Jeffrey Haynes, “Religion and a Human Rights Culture in America,” The Review of Faith and International Affairs 6 (Summer 2008) 73–78 The Sudan Peace Act was enacted in response to human-rights violations by the northern-based National Islamic Front (NIF) government in Khartoum. These violations included the enslavement of women and children in the non-Arab south of Sudan, ethnic cleansing, mainly in the same region, destruction of churches and schools in the South, and prevention of food aid from reaching Christians in the South
Together with Horowitz’s *ad hoc* evangelical coalition, RAC joined with Chuck Colson, Bill Bennett, Gloria Steinem, and women’s groups to combat sex trafficking. This was broadened to human trafficking and to the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

In the late 1980’s, the Christian evangelicals sat in the cabinet room with President Clinton, together with RAC, Bono, and the Rev. Pat Robertson to discuss debt relief. The evangelicals were key to that coalition, with Robertson personally urging the television audience of the 700 Club to phone the Senate roadblock, then Sen. Phil Gramm, asking him to change his position on the issue, which he did.

In this international human-rights coalition, secular organizations were stragglers—if they followed at all. Indeed, what was unique about this coalition was that, in Allen Hertzke’s words, “it filled a void in human rights advocacy, raising issues previously slighted—or insufficiently pressed—by secular groups, the prestige press, and the foreign policy establishment.”

Hertzke supported this argument with compelling evidence, illustrating that each of the movement’s campaigns has included three hallmarks: (1) a massive and a slighted humanitarian tragedy, (2) engagement by the faith-based movement in alliance with others, and (3) pressure on the U.S. government to exercise more international leadership to stem abuses. These efforts have resulted in tough congressional legislation, robust executive action, and new international cooperation.

**B. Recent Efforts**

The most significant opportunities for common ground between evangelicals and Jewish organizations are premised on the evolving concerns of evangelicals today, what the *New York Times* has somewhat bizarrely called the “Evangelical crack-up.” Without trespassing on or even suggesting that I am intimate with the roiling occurring today in the evangelical world, I would note that there appears to be an enlargement in focus of evangelical social concern from “culture war” issues to issues of social justice, environmental “stewardship,” and war and peace. Within this new constellation, many opportunities for common ground with Jewish organizations exist.

This has been confirmed, at least in part, by the results of the 2008 presidential election. President Obama doubled his support among young white evangelicals compared with that of Senator John Kerry in 2004. The Obama campaign targeted moderate Christians in key swing states, organizing “American

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13 Ibid


15 Melinda Henneberger, “Think Evangelicals Vote in Lockstep? Meet the Routhe Family,” *Politics Magazine*, no 265 (April, 2008), p 26 Henneberger noted that “among younger Evangelicals views are changing so quickly that the trends of 2004 have literally been turned upside down.”

values house parties" and visiting Christian colleges. According to the Pew Research Center, the payoff was significant—among white evangelical Protestants, Obama gained five points over Kerry in 2004. As evidenced by this shift, Obama’s message on affordable health care, safeguarding the environment, and reducing poverty resonated among evangelical voters. It is important, however, not to overstate the electoral shift among so-called “Obama-gelicals.” Republican Senator John McCain still received 73 percent of the evangelical vote.

Evangelicals and Jews have worked in concert and achieved significant gains in the past. For example, an ad hoc coalition of religious groups was developed in 2002 to increase funding for HIV/AIDS. Here, the evangelicals worked primarily on the Jewish side with RAC and then with the A.D.L. Bush agreed to increase funding for HIV/AIDS by 50% over that of the Clinton years. This was not accomplished because of ACT-UP or even Frank Rich. It was achieved because of the dogged work of Christian evangelicals. The same is true of the scourge of prison rape, where RAC joined with Chuck Colson, Ted Kennedy, and the NAACP to pass the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003.

On global warming evangelicals are working with RAC and with the Jewish Council on Public Affairs and its subsidiary Council on Jewish Environment. Indeed, most recently the coalition weighed in on a bill proposed by Senators Joe Lieberman and John Warner to require a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The Associated Press reported that:

The religious leaders planned to press the bill's sponsors “to strengthen and improve protections for the poor and vulnerable as (the) legislation moves forward,” said Paul Gorman, executive director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

The church leaders, in a conference call with reporters, outlined their priorities for the legislation. They include helping low-income families deal with the impact of higher energy prices that result from new climate policies and making sure that vulnerable people are shielded from the environmental effects of global warming.

The group said it will seek to have 40 percent of the emissions-related revenues from climate change legislation directed to help such people. The Lieberman-Warner bill calls for a 5 percent allocation for such purposes.

“While not all of us agree on much,” said the Rev. Michael Livingston, president of the National Council of Churches, “we do agree on the need to protect God's creation. It has become clear that global warming will have

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17 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid. There is some discrepancy in the data. Although the Pew Research Center has reported that Senator McCain received 73 percent of the evangelical vote, the Wall Street Journal reported that he received 74 percent. See Naomi Schaefer Riley, “Loyal to the End: Evangelicals Stay the Course,” Wall Street Journal, November 7, 2008.
devastating impact on those in poverty around the world."\(^{23}\)

Issues of the environment are particularly attractive because they stem from religious views of "stewardship," which evangelicals can embrace, and are also a visible manifestation of *tikkun olam*, which is a priority for Jews—certainly for Reform Jews and cultural Jews. It allows the evangelicals to relate to Jews in a religious way and the Jews to relate to evangelicals in a "social action" way. Thus, each group can speak to the other in their "natural" vocabulary.

### II. Future Tensions and Opportunities

In reflecting on the past relationship between evangelicals and Jews, I suggest several issues to keep in mind:

A. Conflict between American Jewish *Realpolitik* in Support of Israel and the Evangelical Tendency to "Moralism" in Foreign Policy

American Jewish organizations place support for Israel at the apex of their foreign-policy agenda and will often approach other foreign-policy issues from the instrumental perspective of how it helps Israel. A recent example of this is the dispute over the Armenian genocide, over which Jewish groups unabashedly shifted from a moralistic approach to foreign affairs to pure *realpolitik*. Thus, Abe Foxman, president of the A.D.L., stated that his organization's seeming ambivalence about recognizing the World War I genocide of Armenians was a specific result of their desire to placate Turkey, an ally of Israel.\(^{24}\)

In the 1980's I well remember the parade of Romanian Jews—led by former Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen—who would descend on Washington yearly to defend Romania's human-rights record. "Rosen was regularly 'mobilized' by government authorities to activate his close ties with American Jewish organizations."\(^{25}\) His goal was to protect "most favored nation" tariff benefits to Romania. Debate over the renewal of Romania's Most Favored Nation status divided the Jewish community.\(^{26}\) In 1979, Jacob Birnbaum, an advocate for Soviet Jews, "wanted Congress to suspend . . . the MFN until Romania increased the number of Jews permitted to emigrate to Israel." In contrast, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations endorsed the extension.\(^{27}\)

Similarly, in 1983, when Romanian leader Nicholae Ceausescu proposed a heavy tax requiring would-be emigrants to pay as much as $20,000, the State


\(^{24}\)Ibid.


\(^{27}\)Ibid.
Department and members of Congress threatened the revocation of Romania’s Most Favored Nation status. 28 This time, the American Jewish community swung into action, muting their historical concerns for religious freedom abroad, to defend Ceausescu and preserve Romania’s tariff concessions. 29

Similar issues arose in confronting the treatment of Christians in China, where evangelicals focused on religious freedom for Christians, and Jewish groups temporized, cognizant of Israel’s growing relationship with China. 30

Whether or not American Jews may have been correct in their foreign-policy perspectives here is not my point. Rather, my point is that American Jewish organizations approached these issues from the perspective of what is best for Israel, while evangelicals approached the issues from a broader commitment to moral values in foreign policy.

This moralism is very important to understanding the evangelical approach to foreign policy. Congressman Frank Wolf led the charge in denouncing the Romanian government’s religious intolerance. In 1985 he co-sponsored a bill to suspend temporarily most-favored-nation treatment to Romania because of “official Romanian harassment” of Christians. 31 Similarly, in 1987 Wolf sponsored an amendment proposing a six-month suspension of MFN status for Romania. 32 The House and Senate approved the measure, but President Reagan ultimately vetoed the proposal, and the Senate failed to override. 33 Finally, when Secretary of State John Whitehead pressured Ceausescu to remedy Romania’s human-rights policies during a meeting in Bucharest in 1988, Romania instead preemptively renounced its most-favored-nation benefits. 34 The move came as Congress was set to scrutinize Romania’s record in renewing that status. 35

It is no surprise that in Wolf’s private office there is a ceiling-to-floor poster of William Wilberforce. Wilberforce, we should recall, was the member of Parliament who single-handedly and for two decades led the fight to end the slave trade in Britain. In doing so he may well have lost the chance to be Prime Minis-

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28 Ibid, p 159
31 See H R 3599, 99th Cong (1985) The bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Trade, but no further action was taken
32 See H AMDT 64 to H R 3, 100th Cong (1987) The amendment was agreed to by the House and Senate See Stuart Auerbach, “Senate Hits Romania with Trade Penalty,” Washington Post, June 27, 1987, p B1 The amendment approving a six-month suspension of trade privileges for Romania passed by a vote of 57 to 36
33 See “Trade with Romania, Hungary, and China,” Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 23 (June 2, 1987), p 624 The White House statement noted “The decision to continue Romania’s MFN status was exceptionally difficult The issue was addressed at the highest levels of the administration All options were considered However, after weighing all the factors, the president decided that we should continue the MFN relationship with Romania as long as it enables us to help substantial numbers of people” A Senate vote of 53 to 44 failed to meet the two-thirds majority required to override a presidential veto See Congressional Record-House, 133 Cong Rec 35059, December 11, 1987
ter, but he succeeded in ending this moral scourge on the British polity.\textsuperscript{36} Wilberforce’s political stance is the lodestar that drives evangelicals in foreign policy—and down the road it may cause tensions with purveyors of Jewish public policy.

B. Jews’ Lack of Focus on the Importance of Reconciliation to Evangelicals

We must also remember that evangelicals place a high premium on values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Many evangelicals approach foreign-policy questions from the “WWJD” perspective: What Would Jesus Do? From that perspective the most important approach to foreign policy is openness to forgiveness and reconciliation in conflict arenas. Notwithstanding the strength of the Christian Zionism trend in the evangelical community, it is clear that the asymmetric power relations between Israel and Palestine have led many evangelicals (how many I leave to the pollsters) to applaud the weaker party’s outstretched hand, whatever its origin. Thus, at a recent lunch as part of the events surrounding the National Prayer Breakfast, two Israeli politicians spoke. Knesset member Gideon Saar from Likud spoke about G-d’s promise to Abraham that the Jews will dwell in the land of Israel. He received a lot of applause. The second, Ahmed Tibi, an Arab Member of Parliament and confidante of the late Yassar Arafat, spoke of how he had grown up with a hatred of Jews because of how he and his family were treated. He went on to say that he realized that he could dwell on his oppression or reconcile and forgive so as to get on with life, and he chose the latter. The applause was deafening.

One more example: I once took Yitzhak Frankenthal, the founder of the Bereaved Parents Circle, to meet with a group of senior evangelical leaders. Bereaved Parents are a group of Israeli and Palestinian parents who have had children killed by either Palestinian “terrorists” or the Israel Defense Forces. Instead of seeking revenge, they chose reconciliation. After Frankenthal spoke about his personal struggle to move beyond revenge, there was not a dry eye in the evangelical house. Spontaneously, people were reaching for their checkbooks and writing the kind of checks I would expect at a United Jewish Appeal “pacesetters” meeting.

We must remember that for evangelicals reconciliation and forgiveness is very important, as important as both zachor—memory—and justice are to Jews.

C. Evangelicals and Reform Judaism

It is perhaps counterintuitive that the Jewish organizations with which evangelicals have had the closest ties over the widest range of issues are those of Reform Judaism. As suggested earlier, there is an asymmetry in the worldview of evangelicals and Jews. Evangelicals presume that a representative of the “people of the Book” must be religious, while the vast majority of Jews are secular in

outlook. In that regard evangelicals and Jews have very different views of the
good life and how to achieve it, and they have very different views of the place
of faith and religion in the public square.

From a traditional perspective, one would imagine that Orthodox Jews
would be the group most likely to join in coalition with evangelicals, since many
of their social values are similar. This has occurred, as already noted, with a
close coalition between Orthodox groups in Israel and Christian Zionists in
America. Rabbi Binyamin ("Benny") Elon, founder of the Moledet party, and
now with the National Religious Party, has found common cause with Christian
Zionists. The Knesset has set up a "Christian Allies Caucus" that recently
marked its fourth anniversary; the Caucus focuses almost exclusively on evan­
gelical churches in the U.S. Most recently, Orthodox groups such as the Or­
thodox Union have worked closely with Christian Zionists on issues related to
the 2007 Annapolis conference, in particular in the creation of a coalition to
oppose any peace efforts that include the sharing of Jerusalem.

In the domestic-policy arena, however, most interaction has been with lib­
eral Jewish groups. The reasons are two-fold. First, as already noted, evangeli­
cals prefer to work with religious organizations than with secular ones. Offered
a partnership with a religious organization such as the Religious Action Com­
mittee or a secular Jewish “defense” organization, evangelicals will instinctively
choose the religiously connected body—even if it is, in the Jewish context, a
liberal religious organization. Thus, it is no surprise that the National Associa­
tion of Evangelicals has worked closely with the Religious Action Committee of
Reform Judaism on a whole range of environmental and global-poverty issues in
Congress. Even the Jewish Council on Public Affairs, often seen as a bastion of
Jewish establishment liberalism, has found common cause with Christians who
“stand with Israel.”

D. Evangelicals and Orthodox Jews

Can Orthodox Jews make common cause with evangelicals? Twenty years
ago I would have doubted it—not because of evangelical hopes, but because of
Jewish fears, especially fears of evangelization. Those fears certainly remain.
Yechiel Eckstein’s International Fellowship of Christians and Jews raises tens of

17Matthew Hamilton, “Armageddon up Their Sleeves: When Liberal Dialogue Fails, Watch
Out for the Christian Zionists,” available at www.preview.org/content/view/45/. Elon has written
about the Evangelical-Jewish alliance in his God’s Covenant with Israel: Establishing Biblical
18Etgar Lefkovits, “Knesset Christian Allies Caucus Marks Its Fifth Anniversary,” Jerusalem Post,
Show-Full&cid=1233304640274. Among other activities, the Caucus and 600 evangelical leaders in 2005
signed the “Jerusalem Accords,” calling for the move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv;
see “US Evangelists, MK’s of Christian Caucus Sign ‘Jerusalem Accords,’” Jerusalem Post, September 11,
2005.
19James D. Besser, “Fast-Track Talks Fuel Communal Passions,” The Jewish Week, November
millions of dollars for Israel annually; still, Orthodox rabbinical councils in Is­rael have forbidden Israeli social-service organizations to accept "gentile" char­ity for fear it is a Trojan horse. (Some take the charity under the table). In the Fall of 2007, a pro-Israel Christian conclave in Jerusalem was shunned by the Chief Rabbinate as having a hidden "conversion" agenda. Those rabbis who support the Christian Zionist alliance attended, notwithstanding the Chief Rabbi's ban.

Thus, while Orthodox Jews would agree with evangelicals on many of the "social issues," full cooperation is difficult. The Orthodox are far less involved in issues of global poverty, health, and the environment than are liberal Jewish groups. Their emphases are more parochial, Israel and religious freedom. Hence, they will work with evangelicals on those issues but much less so on others. There has been some relationship on such social issues as traditional marriage, pornography, abortion, etc., but it is less institutional; that is, less with Agudath Yisrael and more with individual Orthodox haredi rabbis who are concerned with social issues. Further, even though it is politically incorrect to say this, the more Orthodox groups—the "fervently religious" as they are now called—have a deep distrust of the gentile world that also inhibits cooperation.

E. Fighting Islamo-Fascism

Many Jews and evangelicals have found common ground in an aggressive, indeed, confrontational, approach to Islam. There can be little doubt that many evangelical and conservative Jewish groups may well coalesce over the issue of so-called "Islamic-Fascism." Conservative Jewish groups ranging from Daniel Pipes to the Zionist Organization of America have long trumpeted the "clash of civilizations" reflected by a resurgent Islam. Norman Podhoretz, formerly editor of Commentary, has written of the battle with Islamic terrorism as World War IV.

Many Christian leaders have responded in kind. As Haaretz noted:

Televangelist Pat Robertson, explaining his endorsement this week of former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, said "the overriding issue before the
American people is the defense of our population from the bloodlust of Islamic terrorists."

Perhaps the nation’s most influential Evangelical leader, James Dobson, has spotlighted the issue a dozen times over the past year on his Focus on the Family radio show. Dobson has warned that both Republicans and Democrats need to "wake up" to the dangers of militant Islam.

At the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in June [2007], evangelical thinker Charles Colson spoke of a "long war" against Islamofascists.46

While many Christian evangelicals take this view—most prominently perhaps, Franklin Graham47—others ranging from Rick Warren to Doug Coe are far more nuanced. As but one example, in late November, 2007, an unusual coalition of Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick and evangelical groups connected with the National Prayer Breakfast hosted an event at the National Press Club together with the Islamic Society of North America (I.S.N.A.), a Muslim group often criticized—indeed, dare I use the word "blacklisted"—by many Jewish groups. At this event I.S.N.A. presented an anti-terrorist fatwa and Thanksgiving proclamation to the cardinal and participating rabbis. This marked the first of many such interfaith programs in American cities.48 The project is evangelical-led and is an effort to find common ground with American Muslims. If American Jewish public policy is based on Islamo-skepticism, there are at least some evangelicals with whom they will fail to relate.

I will only note the letter to Muslim leaders in November, 2007, responding to the Muslim "Encyclical" on relations between Christians developed by Prince Ghazi of Jordan. It is studded with the names of leading evangelicals,50 including Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, and Rick Warren, author of the Purpose Driven Life and senior pastor of the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. That document seeks out "common ground" between the two religions, pointing out that "the future of the world depends on our ability as Christians and Muslims to live together in peace."51 This is not the language of the "clash of civilizations."

What can we make of all this? What suggestions can one provide for Jewish public policy?

A. No More Caricatures

In my view, much of the present Evangelical-Jewish interaction is based on caricature. Both groups have a one-dimensional understanding of what evangelicals believe and what Jews believe. As but one example, the belief that all (or even most) evangelicals are Christian Zionists may be popular in Jerusalem, but it does not reflect the stippled nature of evangelical worldviews. The “Israel can do no wrong” Christian Zionism of such people as Pastor John Hagee likely reflects less than a majority of evangelicals. Under the radar screen there are significant groups, such as those around the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, that place a premium on relationships with Palestinians.

Similarly, Jews forget that a significant minority of evangelicals vote Democrat and that the range of evangelical thought is rich and nuanced. Further, Jews often forget that evangelicals today are college-educated and middle class.

B. Wider Engagement with Evangelicals

I can’t speak for evangelicals, but one sometimes gets the impression that the Jewish community approaches evangelicals from a cynically instrumentalist perspective. Politically conservative Jews want to use evangelicals to support their vision of eretz yisrael shlema. Evangelicals want to “love” Jews. It is an intrinsically asymmetric relationship. It is hard to imagine that the members of the Israel Christian caucus in the Knesset actually want to engage in a meaningful relationship with evangelicals, and when you read the tenor of discussion in the American Jewish press about evangelicals you sometimes feel that they are holding their noses while accepting their “absolute love” of Israel. It is not a complete surprise to me that evangelicals like Janet Parschall dropped off the Christian Zionist bandwagon when she learned about Israel’s strict anti-evangelism laws.

It seems to me that if we are going to get beyond this asymmetrical relationship the Jewish community must be prepared to engage with evangelicals in a full range of their concerns. This may require that we have greater sensitivity to evangelical concerns that spontaneous religious expression (for example, on the football field) be given First Amendment protection, or that we show greater understanding for the evangelical desire for religious expression in the public sphere. We do not have to agree with them, but we need to have a “relationship”

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52 As but one example, on May 7, 2008, a group of evangelical leaders published “An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment,” urging the faithful to expand their “concern beyond single issue politics”; available at http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/docs/Evangelical_Manifesto.pdf. See also Julia Duin, “‘Manifesto’ Vexes Evangelicals,” Washington Post, May 9, 2008.
with them. In short, if we are to engage with the evangelical community, we need to understand their approach to religion in the public square and appreciate that from their point of view secularism or *laicité* is not a neutral perspective but reflects a worldview akin to a "secular" religion.

In the search for a more moral social order, we may yet find common ground between both religions.

C. Beware Finding Yourself in an Ideological Cul-de-Sac

When it comes to foreign-policy issues, it often appears that the Jewish defense organizations are reading from the "neo-con" playbook, as are many of the Israelis also. I taught in June, 2007, at the Hebrew University and at various points thought I was back at the Heritage Foundation. That may be a correct view of what American policy should be. It may even be a correct view of where the American people are, but I would not be so certain that is the case—even for evangelicals. If the Jewish defense organizations continue in this vein, they may find themselves in a cul-de-sac with not a lot of people following. Although I am not a polling expert, I wonder how much that approach resonates outside of neo-conservative circles if Jews are tagged with the "let's bomb Iran" label. This is a point that is larger than Jewish-Evangelical relations, but it is relevant here as well.

D. Have Theological Discourse

This leads to my ultimate suggestion, one that has not as yet found favor: a serious effort at interreligious dialogue between Jews and evangelicals. I put aside here the views of Rav Soleveitchik on interreligious dialogue that restrict some Orthodox from engaging with evangelicals from a theological perspective. Even among Reform and Conservative Jewish thinkers there has been a deficit of serious theological discussion with Protestant faithful—certainly compared with Catholicism and even Islam. Exploration of our differing views on such topics as evangelization, grace, salvation, and the meaning of a personal relationship with G-d will at minimum lead to a more sophisticated understanding of evangelicals by Jews and *vice versa*. It may lead, as well, to a firmer foundation for political and social coalitions in the domestic and international sphere.

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