

# God's Foreign Policy

*Why the biggest threat to Bush's war strategy isn't coming from Muslims, but from Christians.*

BY JOSHUA GREEN

**S**HORTLY AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 terrorist attack, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, two longtime figureheads of the evangelical movement, appeared together on the Christian Broadcasting Network to suggest the attack might have been caused by God's anger at American liberalism and secularism. "I really believe," Falwell said, with Robertson's concurrence, "that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen.'"

Their message was roundly condemned as hateful and self-righteous. But for the brief moment that it dominated the news cycle, many assumed it to be an accurate reflection of conservative religious sentiment in the wake of the attack. That was far from true.

A day earlier, Steven Snyder of the evangelical activist group International Christian Concern issued an open letter that put forth a very different interpretation: "America is witnessing what Christians in other parts of the world have been enduring for some time. We are at war with an unseen enemy that has demonstrated its resolve to launch a 'jihad' (holy war) on Americans, Christians, and Jews—and will show no mercy for innocent lives. We have turned a new page not only in American history but in the history of the world."

Snyder's response highlights a new and growing strain of evangelical politics—the movement for

Christian solidarity. Since its rapid growth and mobilization five years ago, the Christian solidarity movement has turned evangelical energies toward an ecumenical vision of Christianity as a universal community. Its activists publicize abuses against Christians in Sudan, China, Burma, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, among others. Above all, Christian solidarity activists work to redirect American foreign policy in defense of Christian communities everywhere. In just a few years, they have put their mark on American foreign policy, most notably in Sudan where, over the last decade, two million Christians and animists have been killed by the fundamentalist Islamic government.

As the United States mobilizes against the Taliban, the Christian solidarity movement is rapidly finding new supporters. Despite the best efforts of the Bush administration to frame the current crisis as a non-denominational war between "terrorists" and "the civilized world," that outlook hasn't prevailed. Since the attack, the belief that the war is one of religion has gained currency in churches across the country (while Falwell's ideas conspicuously have not). Many of those, like Snyder, active in the movement to stop the persecution of Christians have concluded that Christianity itself is under attack. After Osama bin Laden stated that he was "at war with Christians and Jews," and after the Taliban foreign minister characterized the U.S. military response against Afghanistan as "a Christian crusade ... under the flag of the Cross," it is not difficult to understand why.

But while the Christian solidarity supporters don't express many moral qualms about using military force, they're surprisingly ambivalent about the administration's general strategy. The reason: In its war against terrorism, the White House has extended the hand of

JOSHUA GREEN is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

friendship to precisely the countries the movement has opposed—notably Sudan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan. The evolving tension between Bush and this key element of his constituency promises to shape the prosecution of the war on terrorism.

The Bush administration assumed power with a well-formed perspective on foreign policy that's been dubbed "realist" by its proponents (who include Vice President Dick Cheney, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, and the president himself). Realist foreign policy is premised on the belief that the world is a nasty place; that it is morally and strategically misguided to try to "police" the world; that military muscle should be used solely to further America's national security interests; and that doing so will sometimes entail exercising power in ways that are themselves nasty and brutal. The Reagan administration's efforts to aid the Nicaraguan *contras* are a defining example.

Not surprisingly, the Bush administration was openly disdainful of what it considered to be the soft humanitarianism of the Clinton administration, and the left-leaning human rights groups that seemed to drive its foreign policy. During the campaign and afterward, Bush disparaged Clinton's willingness to lend American military might to stopping bloodshed and famine in places like Haiti, Kosovo, and Somalia. "If we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions," Bush warned during the campaign, "then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road."

The terrorist attacks presented Bush with an opportunity to put his doctrine into practice. This was a direct strike on the U.S., not some marginal conflict like Kosovo. The administration quickly allied itself with some of the world's most dangerous regimes, including Sudan and Syria, which the State Department classifies as "state sponsors of terrorism." (Sudan made the list for, among other things, providing a safe haven to Osama bin Laden. While operating in Sudan from 1993 to 1996, bin Laden subsidized the ruling Islamic government and, with their protection, built a vast terrorist network.) The idea behind Bush's hardline approach was best characterized by journalist Robert Kaplan in *The Washington Post*: "Foreign policy must return to what it traditionally has been: the diplomatic aspect of national security rather than a branch of Holocaust studies."

Put another way, the U.S. is back to a Cold War foreign policy that willingly engages unsavory regimes to advance national security interests. For the moment, the country is behind this effort. But this nearly uni-

versal support may not last. The growing Christian solidarity movement presents a challenge no Republican administration in memory has had to face: a human rights force on the right openly critical of the morality of the administration's foreign policy. As the war progresses, the Christian solidarity movement is likely to join with administration critics on the left, making Bush's fight against terrorism more complicated, but perhaps more effective.

## Onward Christian Soldiers

On a crisp Sunday morning in late September, Pastor Chris Robinson is delivering a sermon intended to help his congregation at Grace Bible Church put the events of September 11 in perspective. The church is located in the tiny burg of Marshall, tucked among the rolling hills of northwest Virginia's horse country in the heart of the nation's most active Christian solidarity community. Robinson's congregation of 200 consists mostly of young families who have been active in the Christian solidarity movement for years. Recently, members returned from relief missions to isolated communities of Christians in Burma and Sudan.

To members of Grace Bible Church, the attack carried special resonance because it brought home an issue that until now had been, quite literally, a foreign concern. "There are Christians being persecuted all over the world today," Robinson told his congregation. "Now that is true in our own country." One by one, churchgoers rose to testify to this issue. Many offered prayers for fellow Christians who'd perished in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Others expressed hope that the sudden interest in hostile religious regimes overseas would bring national attention to their cause. Quite a few, however, were troubled by the alliance Bush struck with countries like Sudan. "I'm forced to see it as the lesser of two evils," said David Servideo, 24, echoing the comments of others. "But my fear is that it will set back our efforts to help those people."

Robinson's sermon explained how a thoughtful Christian might react to the world that's emerged since the attack. He talked about the Apostle Paul's struggle to revitalize the feuding Christian community in Corinth, and drew a parallel to the need for Christians to revitalize their own faith so they can once again carry their mission to those abroad. Unlike Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, Robinson considers the attack the ultimate confirmation of a worldview that sees Christians as a despised victim group and the current war as one between Christianity and those

who would vanquish it. "Terrorists want change," he told his congregation. "But God wants change, too. And His changes will begin in churches across our land. There are thousands of other churches of like mind. It is a Herculean task that we have before us."

Robinson meant his call to action literally. His congregation is comprised of bedrock Republicans who are politically active. Along with Christian solidarity, Grace Bible Church runs programs for home schoolers and anti-abortion activists. For the last five years, the local congressman, Frank Wolf (R-V.A.), has led an effort in Congress to "remoralize" foreign policy to address religious oppression abroad. Backed by a growing movement of congregations like Grace, Wolf helped put this idea into practical political terms through bills creating an ambassador-at-large for religious freedom, and mandatory sanctions against nations that abuse it. Most recently, they convinced President Bush to appoint a special envoy to Sudan in an effort to help end the state-sponsored persecution of Christians.

## Screaming Me Awake

Many of today's activists view their mission as the natural continuation of the work of such figures as William Wilberforce, a devout evangelical Christian who fought to outlaw the slave trade in the British Empire in the late 18th and early 19th century. The few groups doing this work in the 1970s, like Christian Solidarity International-U.S.A., focused mostly on publicizing religious oppression behind the Iron Curtain. But for the most part, mainstream human rights groups of the day were concerned about human rights in general, not Christian persecution in particular. About the only mainstream human rights activist who took an early interest in the persecution of Christians was Nina Shea. In the 1980s, Shea witnessed how Sandinista abuses in Nicaragua often singled out priests. Shea was inspired by her experience, and helped form the Puebla Institute to document religious oppression (since absorbed by the human rights group, Freedom House). To Shea and other conservatives, the reluctance of the human rights establishment to adopt this cause revealed the powerful mainstream disdain for religious conservatives.

Their frustration must have been magnified by the achievements of the left-leaning human rights establishment. The '80s and early '90s were a robust time for human rights activists, whose campaigns to end South African apartheid, the Ethiopian famine, and oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union each gained public attention. The human rights movement

of this period was essentially pacifistic and usually averse to U.S. military action. The Reagan administration's support of often-brutal anti-Communist regimes in Latin America and Africa provided a target-rich environment.

But the U.S. experience in the Balkans in the 1990s caused a fundamental shift in outlook. Many of the humanitarian groups on the ground in places like Bosnia witnessed firsthand the failure of United Nations efforts to stop Serb atrocities against Muslims, which eventually drove a large portion of them to advocate U.S. military intervention. Partly through their clout with key Clinton administration officials such as Richard Holbrooke and Madeleine Albright, the White House, initially averse to military engagement, armed the Bosnian Muslims and Croats and bombed the Bosnian Serbs in 1995, helping to end the Bosnian civil war. Another bombing campaign against Serb forces in Kosovo and Serbia in 1999 ended the war in Kosovo, and paved the way for the downfall of the Milosevic regime.

As establishment human rights groups were becoming hawkish, a nascent movement on the right began to emerge. Most observers trace the beginning of this movement to July 5, 1995, when Michael Horowitz, former general counsel in Reagan's Office of Management and Budget, published an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* entitled, "New Intolerance Between the Crescent and the Cross." Horowitz, a Jewish neoconservative and a senior fellow at the conservative Hudson Institute, detailed the plight of persecuted Christians in Africa and the Middle East. He concluded by calling for intervention. "For American Jews, who owe our very lives to the open door of the blessed land," he wrote, "silence should not be an option in the face of persecutions eerily parallel to those committed by Adolf Hitler." Horowitz says his editorial did not elicit a single response.

Shea and Horowitz connected that same year and began working to put the issue of Christian persecution on the map. Undaunted by the initial lack of interest, Horowitz wrote to 150 mission boards alerting them to the crisis. In January 1996, the pair hosted a conference on "Global Persecution of Christians" in Washington, D.C., which drew religious leaders from across the country. This time, the issue hit big. The National Association of Evangelicals issued a statement of conscience supporting the fight against Christian persecution. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Southern Baptists each lent their support. Horowitz also helped establish an International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church to raise public

awareness, an idea he says came to him one morning in the shower.

With much of the intellectual leadership coming from Washington, the Christian persecution movement began spreading a simple message: Millions of Christians face terrible persecution from oppressive regimes in China and in many Muslim countries. But American foreign policy is so concerned with opening new markets that these abuses have been ignored. "Christians are the Jews of the 21st century," says Horowitz, repeating a favorite soundbite.

To the surprise of many, the issue of persecuted Christians captured the concern of evangelical Protestants. For churches like Grace Bible Church, which became active in the Christian solidarity movement five years ago, it complemented their own efforts to evangelize overseas. One of the groups Grace is committed to helping is an isolated community of Christians living in the jungles of Burma. Converted to Christianity by missionaries in the 19th century, the Burmese community is a target of frequent government attacks. Evangelicals who took up the cause of persecution began sending relief workers there in the 1990s. Several of Robinson's parishioners—men and women mainly in their twenties—make regular journeys into the jungle. Protected by armed guards, they build mobile hospitals and schools, which often last only a few months before they're burned to the ground by the Burmese army.

As it spread among evangelicals, the movement also came to include conservative Jews and Catholics, Southern Baptists and some of the more open-minded liberal activists like Rabbi David Saperstein, of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. But the issue seemed particularly appealing to evangelicals for whom Reagan conservatism was primarily a moral—rather than an economic—political movement. In was the involvement of this group, whose foot soldiers had turned abortion and school choice into national political issues, that helped popularize the issue of Christian persecution.

While the grassroots of the movement was learning about Christian persecution firsthand, Horowitz enlisted Beltway heavyweights like Chuck Colson, James Dobson, and William Bennett, and appealed to members of Congress like Frank Wolf and Chris Smith (R-N.J.) in the House, and Arlen Specter (R-

P.A.) and Sam Brownback (R-K.S.) in the Senate. Working outside mainstream media outlets, this group disseminated its message through religious channels like radio broadcasts and denominational newsletters. Horowitz found a valuable ally in *New York Times* columnist Abe Rosenthal, who admitted that Horowitz "screamed me awake" on the issue of Christian persecution. "What happened was done beneath

## The same foot soldiers who turned abortion and school choice into national political issues are today lobbying on behalf of persecuted Christians.

the radar screen of official Washington," Horowitz says. "Yet when members would get back home to their districts, ministers would approach them and say, What are you doing about Sudan and Christian persecution?"

### Just Ain't My Cross to Bear

The movement first took legislative shape when Wolf and Specter introduced The Freedom from Religious Persecution Act in 1997. Modeled after legislation from the 1970s designed to penalize the Soviet Union for denying Jews the right to emigrate, the Wolf-Specter bill established an ambassador-at-large position for religious freedom, required the State Department to issue a detailed annual report on the status of religious liberties around the world and, most controversially, required the president to take one of 15 diplomatic actions against any country designated an especially egregious violator of religious rights. The bill was so upsetting to the State Department that Horowitz claims Madeleine Albright accosted him in a restaurant shortly after its introduction. "She launched into a diatribe about how the Wolf-Specter bill would destroy her capacity to conduct foreign policy," he says.

The Christian lobbyists did not just irritate the Clinton administration, but also powerful Republicans in Congress more interested in getting at Sudan's oil reserves than ending Christian persecution. The religious and business wings of the Republican Party had clashed a year earlier over giving China, another abuser of Christians, most-favored-nation trading status. Religious conservatives lost that battle outright.

They did better with Wolf-Specter. Business lob-



byists weakened the bill by giving the president considerable flexibility to waive sanctions. Nonetheless, passage of what became the International Religious Freedom Act was an important symbolic victory. The ambassador-at-large for religious freedom and the State Department's annual report on the status of religious liberties ensured that the issue of Christian persecution would stick around. While many in the human rights community, including some churches, argued that there should be "no hierarchy of rights"—

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that any violation of a fundamental protection counts as much as any other—both sides recognized that a right with its own \$2 million-dollar line item in the federal budget is more equal than others.

Religious persecution generated enough interest among conservative and, increasingly, mainstream congregations to launch a new special-interest community. Congregations heard about—and told Congress about—ministers jailed and churches bulldozed in China, as well as Christians enslaved in southern Sudan, slaughtered in Burma, beheaded in Saudi Arabia, and hounded in Iran and Iraq. Sympathetic observers estimated that in 1997, 60,000 American congregations participated in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, and that 100,000 joined in the following year.

### Karl Rove and Rev. Al

In the last two decades, two million black Christians and animists in southern Sudan have died of starvation, disease, or ethnic cleansing at the hands of the fundamentalist Islamic government in the north. News that slavery persists in Sudan has helped bring wider public awareness to the area. President Bush took office with a veteran foreign policy team that had little desire to become entangled in a messy humanitarian mission to Africa. So narrow were Bush's foreign policy goals that a group of two dozen influential conservatives (including Elliot Abrams, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, and Marvin Olasky) admonished the president to make priorities of religious freedom and human rights in a letter that also carried this subtle threat: "As America's religious com-

munities join forces with traditional human rights groups in calls for robust human rights and pro-democracy policies, any administration indifferent to those concerns risks serious loss of their support and broad public support in general." The letter listed several places that Bush was encouraged to address. Topping the list was Sudan.

In a sense this was nothing new. Neocons convinced Ronald Reagan to use the language of human rights in his battle against the Soviets. (Reagan first invoked the term "evil empire" to describe the Soviet Union at an evangelical convention.) What's changed is the conservative human rights coalition's relationship to the administration in power. During the

Reagan years, conservative moralists and conservative realists wanted the same thing: a rollback of Communist oppression, by military means if necessary. But under Bush their interests diverged. The moralists wanted the White House to address Sudan. That was the last thing the administration wanted to do.

Despite the White House's considerable efforts to please the religious right, the Christian persecution activists had little early success apart from token mentions in speeches. Even Karl Rove, who masterminded Bush's ties to religious conservatives, did not respond immediately. "Rove needed some persuading [to give Christian persecution] the kind of attention seen with Catholics," says a Republican legislative aide. Persuasion came from Frank Wolf, who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the State Department's budget. "Rove soon saw the politics of it and [found] a way to make it happen," says the aide.

To the realists driving the Bush administration's foreign policy, the conservative human rights crowd was a headache. But it was one Bush could ignore at his own peril. In March, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which stemmed from the Wolf-Specter bill, issued a report calling Sudan "the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief" and called on the Bush administration to step in. Rather than let him repeat his father's mistakes, Rove listened and the administration grudgingly made concessions. It helped that the Christian right had supporters in key positions within the administration, including Elliot Abrams, human rights director of the National Security Council, and John Bolton, Under Secretary of State.

It also helped that the victims of persecution were black, since outreach to blacks was part of Rove's political strategy. With groups like the National Black Leadership Committee and the NAACP joining the chorus against Sudan, the Christian persecution movement became a considerable political force. Horowitz and black leaders made a conscious effort to model their campaign on the struggle against South African apartheid. In March, Colin Powell, America's first black secretary of state, testified before Congress that "there is perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the earth today than the tragedy that is unfolding in Sudan."

Taking another page from the left, movement leaders also attracted celebrities. Franklin Graham (son of the Rev. Billy Graham), who runs a relief mission in southern Sudan, lobbied Bush personally. In April, Horowitz was arrested, along with a black D.C. minister, Walter Fauntroy, and radio talk-show host Joe Madison, for chaining himself to the Sudanese embassy in Washington. In a show of support, Johnnie Cochran defended Horowitz in court, while Fauntroy and Madison enjoyed the services of Ken Starr. (Charges were dropped.) That same month, the Rev. Al Sharpton visited Sudan, announcing upon return that he planned to revisit the troubled country with, among others, pop star Michael Jackson.

Early in the administration, the White House announced it was ending the practice of assigning special envoys—a none-too-subtle indication that it would not be drawn, as the Clinton administration had been, into endless diplomatic negotiations over marginal ethnic and religious disputes. But last summer the administration began plans to appoint a special envoy to Sudan. Even this proved difficult. Powell's initial choice, Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs under Reagan, turned the job down, citing the growing anti-Sudan coalition. Others mentioned for the job included William Bennett, James Baker, Al Gore, Newt Gingrich, and Jimmy Carter. On Sept. 7, the administration settled on former Missouri Sen. John Danforth. The issue appeared to have reached critical mass.

Over the summer, a Republican Party showdown over Sudan between business interests and religious conservatives appeared imminent. Both sides had been pushing the administration to end the Sudanese civil war, the business crowd because of Sudan's oil interests. In June, the House passed the Sudan Peace Act (the Senate passed it in July), which condemned slavery and human rights abuses and sought to put economic pressure on Sudan. But the House version was stronger. It included an amendment by Rep. Spencer

Bachus prohibiting oil companies doing business in Sudan from raising capital or being listed on U.S. capital markets. Under pressure from corporate interests in the U.S., the Bush administration threatened to veto the bill. To the outrage of religious conservatives and many in the black community, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher announced in August that sanctions "would undermine our financial market competitiveness and end up impeding the free flow of capital worldwide."

On September 11, at nine in the morning, Horowitz arrived in Sen. Brownback's office to plot a counterstrategy. They settled on a dozen ideas they could send along that both were comfortable with and believed they could sell to activists around the country. "As I was sitting there," says Horowitz, "Sam was literally about to pick up the phone to call Karl Rove and say, 'We're out of the dilemma,' when suddenly aides rushed in, hustled us out of the building and told us that the country was under attack."

### **Suddenly Sudan**

In the wake of the attack, Christian solidarity leaders recognized that the foreign policy ground had fundamentally shifted. Countries such as Sudan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan suddenly were of great interest to the administration, not because they persecuted Christians, but because they possessed intelligence vital in the new struggle. But rather than get tough on these countries, Bush embraced them. Christian solidarity activists were furious. "Our entire foreign policy had been on this litmus case of Sudan," says Shea. "That's where the human rights action had been. Now our entire foreign policy has been subjugated to the war on Osama bin Laden."

Even so, Horowitz saw an opportunity. On Sept. 12, as Bush was scrambling for language that would frame the attacks and the U.S. response in acceptable terms, Horowitz faxed his allies in the administration the work of David Forte, a law professor at Cleveland State University and conservative Catholic who's written extensively on the issue of Christian persecution (including contributing a chapter to Nina Shea's 1997 treatise, *In the Lion's Den: Persecuted Christians and What the Western Church Can Do About It*). Forte argued that modern Islam had been hijacked by an ancient strain of radical fundamentalism that was closer to fascism than to the spirit of tolerance preached by the Koran. In a sense, his argument fit the administration's desire to cast the fight in a way that wouldn't alienate moderate Muslims. White House speechwriters transformed Forte's thesis into the most pivotal

passage of Bush's Sept. 20 joint address to Congress: "We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety ... They follow the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."

"By borrowing from the language [of the Christian persecution movement], they're tuning in on the people that they want to reassure with the words necessary to do so," says an aide on the House Foreign Relations Committee. But by ignoring the rest of Forte's argument—that radicalized Islamic governments and the millions who share their views are persecuting millions of Christians worldwide—Bush essentially secularized the movement's theology, to the dismay of its proponents.

Christian activists were further alarmed when the U.S. allowed the U.N. to lift travel sanctions from Sudan on Sept. 28. U.N. efforts to end economic sanc-

tions also appear to have White House backing. On Sept. 19, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-C.O.) was on the floor of the House about to call for a conference committee on the Sudan Peace Act, when he was intercepted by administration officials. The Sudan Peace Act has since been shelved. State Department Policy Planning Director Richard Haass has privately told colleagues that at this point the administration has no interest in human rights considerations.

While the State Department has attempted to portray renewed diplomatic relations with Khartoum as a sign of the wayward government's having foresworn terrorism—"Their cooperation was really terrific," Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said on Oct. 12—the Sudanese government believes otherwise. Even before Armitage's sunny assessment, an adviser to the Sudanese president denied his regime was part of any alliance, telling *The Wall Street Journal*, "In the government, the main feeling is that we want to get America off our backs. We are not so concerned about their friendship; we just don't want them as enemies."

Apparently, the Sudanese have succeeded. In early October, the government of Sudan bombed U.N. aid workers in southern Sudan for three days, prompting the enraged U.N. to close its food distribution program and pull out. The awkwardness of the new U.S. position was best captured in a Reuters headline on the attacks: "U.S. Slams Sudan For Bombings, Still Wants Its Help."

With Sudan no longer a pariah, Christians' strategy of economic isolation was suddenly obsolete. On Oct. 11, religious leaders and representatives of human rights groups met in a cramped basement meeting room at Freedom House to devise new tactics. The group included not only evangelical leaders, but also representatives of the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Southern Baptist churches, and black civic and religious organizations. At a time when most Americans were singing Bush's praises, those at this meeting were astonished and angry. As activists traded rumors over Sprite and cookies, the hottest commodities were the cell phone numbers for key State Department officials.

Three decisions emerged from the meeting. First, the group agreed to publicize the ongoing Sudanese attacks on Christians and U.N. workers. Second, it decided to push for a cease-fire in the Sudanese civil war and for oil profits to be placed in a trust fund where they couldn't be used to arm the government. Finally, the groups agreed to shift their lobbying effort from the State Department to the president himself.

Their first opportunity to employ this pressure

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will come on Nov. 4, at this year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. The event will be simulcast to Christian radio stations across the country. The major networks, as well as the president, have been invited to attend. Not coincidentally, the event will be held in Bush's hometown of Midland, Texas.

### **In a Free State**

This is not the first time Christian conservatives have found themselves frustrated by terrorism and their own politics. In 1998, President Clinton launched cruise missiles at Sudan in retaliation for bin Laden's bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. "At that time I thought we'd reached critical mass," Horowitz says, "until Clinton bombed Sudan. After that, any criticism of Khartoum on our part would have looked like 'wag the dog' support of Clinton. It set our movement back at least a year."

In addition to its right-wing ideology, what's prevented the Christian persecution movement from becoming a bigger force in American politics—even in conservative circles—has been the average American's general lack of interest in foreign policy. That problem disappeared on the morning of September 11. Furthermore, the attack confers a new significance on the issue of religious persecution, especially in fundamentalist Islamic states. In the weeks since the attack, Bush repeated to American voters and Muslims worldwide that this is not a religious war. But more and more observers, especially conservatives, aren't buying it. ("This is a Religious War," screamed the headline of an essay by conservative writer Andrew Sullivan in *The New York Times Magazine* last month.)

The Christian solidarity movement is on its way to becoming a powerful vehicle for this line of thinking—a nightmare scenario for an administration desperately trying to include Muslims in an anti-terrorist coalition. Unlike human rights groups on the left, which don't have a broad popular base, Christian solidarity can draw on an army of foot soldiers from places like Grace Bible Church. It is not hard to imagine tens of thousands of Christians amassing on the Mall to denounce the administration's outreach to repressive Muslim states.

The Christian solidarity movement could be even more formidable were it to join forces with human rights groups on the left. Last year, a left-right alliance forced the passage of a Third World debt relief bill through a Republican Congress normally hostile to such causes. And it was the Christian right's partnership with black groups that forced the Bush administration to address Sudan. Such an alliance almost

occurred last month over American foreign policy. A group of liberal human rights organizations sought Christian solidarity leaders' support for a declaration condemning the administration for ignoring human rights in its war against terrorism. The Christian groups declined because liberals rejected language that characterized the September 11 attackers as "terrorists" (they insisted on "perpetrators"). Despite the setback, common goals and the recent history of cooperation suggest that an eventual foreign policy alliance may be inevitable.

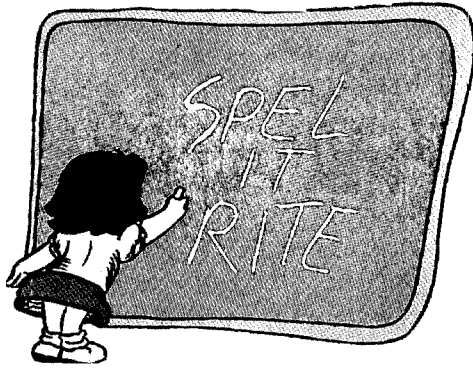
Such an alliance could significantly undermine support for Bush's war strategy. But that could be a good thing, since the strategy needs some rethinking. The administration has declared that states such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and even Sudan are "cooperating" with the fight against terrorism for sharing intelligence data and agreeing to end ongoing sponsorship of terrorism. Though it may be necessary in a time of war for the U.S. to sympathize with the internal pressures in these regimes, the price of compromise needn't include millions more innocent lives. "Cooperating" with the U.S. should also include an easing of religious and political oppression.

The reason is simple. Terrorism and religious fanaticism fester in these countries in part because repressive regimes limit political dissent to the Mosque. As *Newsweek's* Fareed Zakaria has noted, Arab countries such as Jordan, Morocco, Oman, and Qatar, produce fewer terrorists and less fanaticism because their governments, though hardly democratic, "have opened up a little political and civil space and tried to show that Islam is compatible with modernity." A commitment by the Bush administration to ending religious persecution might push long-time allies like Saudi Arabia and Egypt to follow suit and perhaps improve our image in the Muslim world.

Such an effort isn't incompatible with the pressing need to fight terrorism. President Clinton pushed hard for closer economic ties to China. But thanks in part to pressure from liberal human rights groups, during his visit to China he spoke openly about U.S. opposition to the government's mistreatment of religious minorities, including Christians. Bush should strive to be similarly outspoken—more so, in fact—with our Islamic allies in the Middle East. Demanding human rights concessions from regimes like Sudan isn't inconsistent with Bush's moral justification for war. On the contrary, it reinforces his very point. If pressure from religious conservatives and other human rights organizations bring about this realization, they'll be doing America's war effort a great service. ●



# Tidbits & Outrages



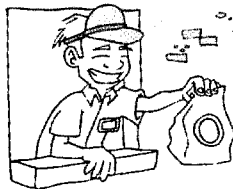
## Aggressive Fiscal Policy

**Texas Senator Phil Gramm killed a bill banning foreign banks from U.S. financial markets if they didn't cooperate with money laundering investigations. Gramm called the bill "totalitarian" and added, "The way to deal with terrorists is to hunt them down and kill them."**

## McDonald's drive-thru is the real plum

"The sad news is our screeners look at going to work at Cinnabon as a promotion."

**LATE NITE DRIVE THRU**



—**Georgia Senator Max Cleland** on the low regard airport baggage screeners have for their job.

## A Foreign Relation?

In the wake of the attack, the mayor of a small Mexican town sent President Bush a letter urging him not to bomb "Apatzingan." Informed that "Afghanistan" was the country in peril, the mayor was not dissuaded. "I did send it off," he said. "Just in case."

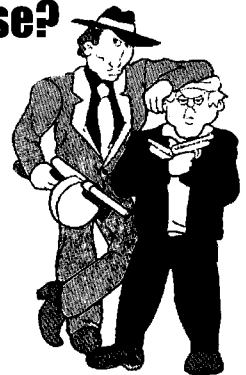
## BUSH MAY BE THE GREAT SATAN, BUT AT LEAST HE'S NO CLINTON

*"Clinton is a bad person and a confessed sinner. It is absolutely not possible to negotiate with such a person and he should be removed from power and stoned to death."*

—**Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar**

## An offer he can't refuse?

An alleged member of the Gambino crime family, jailed since March 2000, offered New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani use of a \$6 million steel-shredding machine to help with the World Trade Center cleanup. "This is a real offer," his attorney said. "I hope the mayor takes it seriously."



## BRAIN FREEZE

Alaska Representative Don Young, an avowed enemy of environmentalists, suggested that the World Trade Center attack may have been the work of "eco-terrorists."