

# faith & freedom

*Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness*

Summer 2007

## Looking South

As western Christian renewal movements look to the Global South in their time of crisis, they see sister churches tempered by conflict, strengthened by traditional faith, and willing to take the reins of leadership.

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- A THRILLER TO STIR THE INDIFFERENT

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- WILL IT STOP AT THE ANGLICANS?

PHILIP JENKINS

- UNITED METHODISTS TURN TO AFRICA

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The Institute on Religion and Democracy is an ecumenical alliance of U.S. Christians working to reform their churches' social witness, in accord with biblical and historic teachings, thereby contributing to the renewal of democratic society at home and abroad.

IRD committees work for reform in the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The IRD also sponsors the Church Alliance for a New Sudan and the Liberty Initiative for North Korea.

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VOLUME 26 NUMBER 2

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*As part of our Legacy League you will continue receiving literature from the IRD, even if you don't have discretionary income to send regular support.*

IRD's  
**LEGACY  
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**COVER** The Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns, newly invested bishop of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANa), embraces the Most Rev. Peter Akinola at Minns' consecration in May. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

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# Separation Anxiety

Most people, when they hear the word “democracy,” do not immediately think “religion.” In fact, based on questions we receive here at the IRD, many people seem to think that to bring the two words into contact with one another is to commit one of the great sins of the modern era: a breach in the much vaunted “wall of separation” between church and state.

One woman, after receiving an IRD mailing, went so far as to accuse us of violating church/state law because we sent the information via the U.S. Postal Service. Religious mailing (at least conservative Christian religious mailing) is, from her point of view, a constitutional taboo.

So let us begin at the beginning. The First Amendment to the Constitution reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

In writing this the framers were attempting to solve two problems. They wanted to prevent the federal government from creating an official Church of America (“no law respecting an establishment of religion”) and they wanted to protect everyone’s conscience from government coercion (“no law... prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]”).

The phrase “wall of separation” is conspicuous by its absence. Rather than appearing in the Constitution, it comes from a letter then-President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, in 1802.

The Danbury Baptists were a religious and political minority. While Congress could not establish a national religion, state legislatures could establish official state religions. In Connecticut, the state religion was Congregationalism. Baptists were on the outside and subject to discrimination.

Politically, the Congregationalists were Federalists who had campaigned against Jefferson in the hard-fought and contentious presidential campaign of 1800. The dissenting Baptists were Republicans who supported Jefferson, who then wrote assuring them of their right to follow their consciences in matters of religion.

And “wall of separation” has been problematic ever since. Even the Danbury Baptists were uncomfortable with the metaphor since even then it seemed to divide religion from the public square.

American University professor and Jefferson expert Daniel Dreisbach notes that for many the notion of a “wall” seems to reconceptualize the First Amendment. After all, a wall works both ways. A wall would keep the government from interfering in religion while it keeps religion from interfering with the government, thereby radically privatizing faith and preventing religious believers

from speaking and acting their consciences in a way that influences the democratic process.

Dreisbach goes on to note that an argument against this point of view can be made from the remainder of the amendment.

The various First Amendment guarantees... were entirely a check or restraint on civil government, specifically Congress. The free press guarantee, for example, was not written to protect the civil state from the press; rather, it was designed to protect a free and independent press from control by the federal government. Similarly, the religion provisions were added to the Constitution to protect religion and religious institutions from interference by the federal government—not to protect the civil state from the influence of religion.

No journalist would accept eviction from the public square, and no religious believer should either. The press should be prominent in the public debate and so should religion.

And President Jefferson said as much:

No nation has ever yet existed or been governed without religion. Nor can it be. The Christian religion is the best religion that has ever been given to man, and I as chief Magistrate of this nation am bound to give it the sanction of my example.

Jefferson was no orthodox Christian. Nevertheless he argued that religion in the public square—specifically the Christian religion—was not merely constitutionally permissible, but a necessary precondition for a healthy political order.

In his book *On Two Wings*, American Enterprise Institute scholar and IRD board member Michael Novak notes that the American founders understood, “Faith not only teaches examination of all things in the light of conscience. It also teaches love for the larger community, regard for the public good, and the identification of personal good with the good of all.”

Rather than being in conflict, religion and democracy go together like a hand in a glove.

The IRD will continue to point this out, and we will continue to spread the news using—among other means—the U.S. Postal Service.

*Jim Tonkovich*



**James W. Tonkovich** is the President of the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



## International Briefs

### Chinese Christians Take Legal Action Against Government

Three Chinese Christians recently arrested have filed suit against the Chinese government, complaining of false arrest and the alleged illegal confiscation of their property during detainment, human rights group China Aid reports.

Pastor Dong Quanyu of Henan province was arrested on March 6, 2007, for hosting an “illegal gathering” of 33 Chinese “house church” leaders and three South Korean pastors. Bibles, computers, cell phones, cameras, and 400 yuan (\$52) in cash were confiscated by police. Pastor Dong was detained for ten days. Dong’s wife, Li Huage, was also arrested and detained for ten days, charged with “disturbing public order” by inviting the South Korean clergy. The confiscated property was not returned upon their release.

Pastor Dong and his wife have filed suit in the People’s Court of Nanyang City, charging the violation of several articles of the “Law of Administrative Penalty of the People’s Republic of China.” The couple claim that the police in the initial raid did not provide proper identification, and that the confiscation of property was also a violation of the law. The court has not yet determined if it will take the case.

In a separate case, house church leader Sister Zhi Ruiping was arrested for hosting an illegal Christmas gathering in Naoer. The local Religious Affairs Administrative Council determined that since the church was not registered and its event had not been approved, the gathering was illegal. When church members refused to leave, they were dispersed by force, with eight attendees being arrested. Organizers of the event, including Zhi, were detained for 15 days.

Zhi has filed suit in the People’s Court of Duolun County, claiming that the gathering was a “traditional family church” and therefore not required to

### Pakistan Rejects Amendment to Blasphemy Law

The National Assembly of Pakistan has rejected attempts by minority religious groups to reform the nation’s blasphemy law. Pakistani law imposes a mandatory death sentence on anyone found guilty of blasphemy against Islam or the prophet Muhammad.

“We are disappointed once again,” Victor Azariah, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Pakistan, told Ecumenical News International, following a meeting by church officials in the aftermath of the Assembly’s decision.

Although no individuals have been executed by the state as a result of the blasphemy law, critics have argued that the law has been used disproportionately against Christians in property and personal disputes. Twenty individuals on trial for blasphemy have been killed during the legal process, and many Christians that have been acquitted in court have been forced to emigrate as a result. In at least one instance, a judge ruling in favor of acquittal in a blasphemy case was murdered.

The proposed amendment sought to prohibit the dishonoring of the prophets and holy books of all religions, including Islam. Those found to have brought false charges in court would be subject to imprisonment. M. P. Bhandara, a member of the minority Parsi sect, introduced the amendment in an attempt to make the law “non-discriminatory and equally protective of all citizens and their religious beliefs according to the constitution.” President Pervez Musharraf had vowed to amend the blasphemy law when he came to power in 1999, but has since changed his position on the matter.

Sher Afgan Niazi, minister for parliamentary affairs, argued against the proposed changes. “This is not a secular state, but the Islamic Republic of Pakistan,” he said. Claiming the amendment was “repugnant” to Islam, Niazi said, “Islam is our religion, and such bills hurt our feelings.”

Babar Shah/PPI Photo



**FREEING SPEECH** Pakistani women protest against their nation’s brutal blasphemy laws which mandate death for those found guilty of insulting Islam or the prophet Muhammad.

register under Chinese law. She is seeking a repeal of the earlier court decision, and requesting that the County Public Security Bureau pay one yuan (\$0.13) as compensation. The court has accepted the case, although there is not yet a scheduled trial date. 📖

### Polish Nuns “Tougher” Against Secret Police than Priests

New research indicates that Roman Catholic nuns were more determined in their resistance to pressure and intimidation by the communist-era secret police than were their male counterparts.

“It’s obviously hard to make

comparisons,” Jolanta Olech, the president of Poland’s Conference of Superiors of Female Religious Orders, told Ecu-menical News International. “But the documentation shows nuns proved much tougher than priests. We can certainly say that, in this very difficult situation, the sisters passed the test.”

While efforts were made to recruit agents among Poland’s 27,000 nuns, evidence suggests that no more than 30 nuns actually assisted the secret police. Poland’s National Remembrance Institute estimates that at least ten percent of Catholic priests served as informers for the Communist Party from 1947 to 1989.

“[The secret police] were interested in absolutely everything, from the color of someone’s stockings and what they ate for breakfast, to really important things, such as attitude to the Second Vatican Council,” said Olech. “They tried to catch anyone of importance—superiors, catechists, sisters working for church institutions, even nuns from closed orders who seldom left their convents. But they didn’t succeed. Even when nuns had to meet government officials to obtain passports or other documents, they reported any approach to their superiors, thus ruling themselves out as candidates for secret collaboration.” 📖

### Tensions between Mugabe, Christian Leaders in Zimbabwe

President Robert Mugabe is receiving increased criticism from Christian leaders in Zimbabwe on matters of human rights and corruption in the Southern African nation, including the arrest and beating of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

On Palm Sunday (April 1, 2007), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference released a pastoral letter that was read during worship services. The letter was critical of the national political leadership, although the president was not mentioned by name.

“The people of Zimbabwe are suffering,” the bishops’ letter said. “More and more people are getting angry, even from among those who had seemed to be doing reasonably well under the

circumstances. The reasons for the anger are many, among them, bad governance and corruption. A tiny minority of the people have become very rich overnight, while the majority are languishing in poverty, creating a huge gap between the rich and the poor.”

In response, Mugabe warned that it was a “dangerous path” that the bishops were walking. “If I had gone to church and the priest had read the so-called pastoral letter, I would have stood up and said ‘Nonsense!’” the longtime president declared. “It’s not something spiritual. It’s not religious. The bishops have decided to turn political. Once they turn political, we regard them as no longer being spiritual, and our relations with them would be conducted as if we are dealing with political entities.”

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches have joined the Catholic bishops in calling Christians “to bring the nation, its challenges, and its people before God Almighty.” The Christian Alliance, in an appeal for prayer, asked, “May God save us from these trials and tribulations. Prayer is one tool we believe will bring healing and transformation in a peaceful manner in this nation.” The Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches have both called for an increased presence by the African Union in Zimbabwe

Mugabe has received some support from Anglican bishops in the region. Bishops of the Anglican Province of Central Africa have urged the lifting of sanctions placed on Zimbabwe by the European Union and the United States. The Very Rev. Nolbert Kunonga, Anglican Bishop of Harare, has been a vocal supporter of President Mugabe, referring to the president’s critics as “dogs barking at an elephant.” 📖

Stringer/AFP/Getty Images



**ASSAULT** Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zimbabwe, was arrested and beaten by supporters of Robert Mugabe. Mugabe’s rule has been marked by human rights abuses and corruption.



# Church News

## Four More Years for Presbyterian Leader?

In a February interview with the Presbyterian News Service, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Stated Clerk hinted that he might seek a fourth four-year term as the denomination's most visible top official. Clifton Kirkpatrick saw happy days ahead, as he declared the PCUSA to be "in a potential tipping point of renewed growth and vitality."

In response, the Steering Committee of IRD's Presbyterian Action program issued a March 12 appeal for Kirkpatrick to "decline nomination for a fourth term in 2008, for the good of the denomination." The Steering Committee concluded, "Sadly, we have lost confidence in Clifton Kirkpatrick's ability to help lead our denomination out of the demoralizing state of disorganization, decline, and even disintegration into which it has fallen."

Kirkpatrick's time in office has hardly been distinguished by "growth and

vitality." Since he became Stated Clerk in 1996, the PCUSA has lost over 400,000 (15 percent) of its members. His leadership has been characterized by repeated refusals to enforce the denomination's ordination standards and open meeting policy, ambiguous statements creating confusion about the denomination's positions on homosexuality and other issues, and political advocacy for divisive left-wing causes. A few days after his "tipping point" interview, financial shortfalls forced Kirkpatrick to announce a staff cut of 11 percent. ☛

## Papal Warning Draws Congressional Protest

In a May 9 conversation with reporters, Pope Benedict XVI repeated church teaching that "the killing of an innocent baby is incompatible with going to Communion." The Pope was responding to a reporter's question about the possibility of Mexican bishops excommunicating legislators who had recently voted to

decriminalize abortion in Mexico City.

A group of 18 Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representatives took offense. They released a letter expressing distress over "the Pope's recent statement warning Catholic elected officials that they risk excommunication and would not receive communion for their pro-choice views." According to the lawmakers, the threat of such ecclesial discipline would "offend the very nature of the American experiment and do a great disservice to the centuries of good work the church has done." The group was led by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), who has supported taxpayer-funded abortions, as well as the availability of partial-birth abortions for late-term babies.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops responded with a statement accusing the 18 House members of "misrepresent[ing] the Holy Father's remarks." The bishops noted that "neither the Mexican bishops nor the Holy Father have excommunicated

**ANTI-WAR OR ANTI-BUSH?** One anti-war protester makes his views known while participating in the March 16 anti-war protest which marched from the National Cathedral to the White House.

Nicholas Kamm/AFP/Getty Images

## Anti-War Activists Rally at National Cathedral

On March 16, some 3,000 activists gathered in the National Cathedral for an anti-war service. Sojourners/Call to Renewal chief Jim Wallis told them: "This war, from a Christian point of view, is morally wrong—and was from the very start.... This war is also an offense against God." Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, fulminated, "This war is nothing short of evil."

Wallis charged that "this endless War in Iraq is based ultimately on fear"—which he called a "demon" that "must be cast out!" He called for "a revolution of love to end it [the war]." Also, the religious left activist wanted to "generate a flood of public pressure that can wash away the blind intransigence of our White House and the cautious procrastination of our divided Congress."

Other prominent participants in the anti-war worship were National Council of Churches General Secretary Bob Edgar, United Methodist Bishop John Schol, World Council of Churches official Bernice Powell Jackson, and six former Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) moderators. After the service, many participants marched outside the White House, with 200 being arrested for "civil disobedience." ☛

IMPEACH  
GEORGE W.  
BUSH!



any legislator.” But they urged the lawmakers to examine their own consciences. The U.S. bishops declared that “[s]peaking and acting against abortion is not a matter of partisan politics” but “a matter of life and death.” ☒

### **NCC Chief Moves to Liberal Advocacy Group**

The Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, whose term as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCC) ends at the close of the year, has been elected as the new President of Common Cause. Nonpartisan but generally left-leaning, Common Cause is best known for its support of measures to restrict private funding and expand taxpayer funding of political campaigns. It has also sometimes taken stands on substantive issues, such as supporting the Equal Rights Amendment, criticizing U.S. military actions from Vietnam to Iraq, and opposing a balanced budget amendment.

Common Cause’s announcement of Edgar’s election highlighted the NCC’s focus on left-wing political causes under his leadership, as well as his former career as a Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania. The announcement noted that Edgar, in his unsuccessful 1986 Senate race, “grew frustrated ... with the undue influence of money in politics and became

an active supporter of clean elections and campaign finance reform, issues that have been Common Cause’s hallmark.” Edgar will succeed fellow Democratic politician Chellie Pingree. He seems to have taken the helm promptly at Common Cause, as his signature appears on a May 30 letter calling for the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

Under Edgar’s leadership, the NCC’s focus on partisan political causes increasingly alienated the council from its claimed church constituency. While contributions from member communions dropped by 37 percent, Edgar turned to primarily secular, liberal foundations to make up the shortfall. Despite expressions of concern from some NCC denominations about the increased leverage of non-church groups over the church council, Edgar boasted that he had fulfilled his assignment to “raise money, raise money, and raise money.” ☒

### **Evangelical Association Fails to Restrain Lobbyist**

Tensions within the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) came to a head at the association’s March 8-9 board meeting in Eden Prairie, MN. Controversy about the political advocacy of NAE Vice President for Governmental Affairs Richard Cizik generated an extended board discussion in executive session.

But no official actions were taken regarding Cizik’s high-profile championing of government regulations to forestall predicted global warming (see articles in Summer 2006 and Spring 2007 issues of *Faith & Freedom*).

The NAE board reaffirmed the association’s 2005 “Call to Civic Responsibility,” which promotes environmental stewardship while taking no position on global warming. In January 2006 the NAE Executive Committee had instructed staff to “stand by and not exceed in any fashion our approved and adopted statements concerning the environment.” But Cizik continued to appear in numerous media outlets proclaiming that “climate change is real and induced and calls for action.”

A week before the Eden Prairie meeting, all board members received a public letter from 25 evangelical leaders, including James Dobson of Focus on the Family and Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council. The signatories decried Cizik’s “relentless campaign” against global warming as “a threat to the unity and integrity of the Association,” misrepresenting to “the liberal media” the views of a constituency that was divided on the climate change question. They asked for Cizik’s resignation “[i]f he cannot be trusted to articulate the views of American evangelicals on environmental issues.”

Cizik’s defenders portrayed the board’s inaction as a victory for his brand of advocacy. “There was a lot of affirmation of Rich Cizik at the board meeting,” reported NAE Interim President Leith Anderson.

It was also significant that the board, at Cizik’s urging, took a stance on another controversial issue on which evangelicals are divided. The resolution adopted on torture seemed to assume the guilt of the U.S. government for employing that heinous practice. “There is a perception out there in the Middle East that we’re willing to accept any action in order to fight this war against terrorism,” Cizik told the Associated Press. ☒

## **Outrageous Quotes**

“The way I understand Jesus is compatible with Islam. And although there are Christians and Muslims who think I must convert from one to another, the more I go down this path, the more excited I am about both Christianity and Islam. ...I agree with both [Islam and Christianity] because I do want to say that Jesus is unique, and for me, Jesus is my spiritual master. Muslims say Mohammed is the most perfect. Well, it depends on who you fall in love with.... I was following Jesus, and he led me into Islam, and he didn’t drop me off at the door. He’s there, too.”

*The Rev. Dr. Ann Holmes Redding, speaking on her dual role as practicing Muslim and Episcopal priest, in an interview in the June 2007 Episcopal Voice, an official publication of the Episcopal Church in western Washington (state).*

“‘Lord’ has become a loaded word conveying hierarchical power over things, which in what we have recorded in our sacred texts, is not who Jesus understood himself to be.”

*The Rev. Susan Anderson-Smith, associate rector at St. Philips in the Hills Episcopal Church in Tucson, AZ. Anderson-Smith is quoted in an article in the Arizona Daily Star explaining why the use of the term “Lord” is being restricted at her church.*



# A Thriller to Stir the Indifferent

A Review of Faith J.H. McDonnell and Grace Akallo's *Girl Soldier*

by Nina Shea

Faith J.H. McDonnell and Grace Akallo, *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2007).

Joseph Kony may not have name recognition beyond the borders of his Ugandan homeland, but he rivals his infamous compatriot and fellow psychopath Idi Amin in the sheer depravity of his diabolical enterprise. For the past 20 years, the 45-year-old Kony,

who believes he's a spiritual medium who has channeled the spirit of one of Amin's generals among numerous others, has led a guerrilla paramilitary group that he calls the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA's ostensible aim is to seize power and rule Uganda by the

Ten Commandments.

For now the Commandments have been put aside. The LRA exists solely to perpetuate Kony's personal power and does so through a surreal nightmare of the most merciless means. His principal targets are civilian villages of the Acholi, a Nilotic ethnic group in northern Uganda. The LRA army loots the villages for provisions,

shooting or hacking to death the adults and abducting the children.

Kony's strategy is to cleanse the land of adults, whom he deems untrustworthy, and start a new society with children. More than 85 percent of LRA captives are children, most between the ages of 11 and 16. Young males are indoctrinated and trained for combat, and girls are used as sex slaves and beasts of burden for Kony and his commanders.

UNICEF reports a conservative estimate of 25,000 children who have been kidnapped in LRA attacks on homes and schools—including, once, the student body of a convent girls' middle school. Ninety percent of the 1.7 million Acholis have fled the LRA into refugee camps, which are themselves periodically terrorized by the LRA. Some 50,000 children are "night commuters," walking five miles or more each night to seek shelter in urban centers, to seek refuge away from the refugee camps.

Discipline among the LRA children soldiers is maintained by fear and guilt. The deeply traumatized children who have managed to escape, who number in the thousands, tell of witnessing and participating in many brutal murders and suffering repeated rapes, beatings, and deprivations of every kind. As a central part of their conditioning, the children are forced to torture and kill their own parents and siblings and other children caught trying to escape.

Kony's rituals include elements of Christianity, Islam, and black magic. He boasts that he cuts off the lips and ears of those who refuse to acknowledge him as a divine leader. He also decreed the amputation of

Joseph Kony rivals his infamous compatriot and fellow psychopath Idi Amin in sheer depravity.

**REDEEMED (ABOVE)** A former child soldier at the GUSCO (Gulu Support the Children Organization) Child Soldier Rehabilitation Center in Gulu, Northern Uganda. Joseph Kony's rebel Lord's Resistance Army has abducted over 25,000 children for use as soldiers over nearly two decades of war. (Bea Ahbeck/Fremont Argus)



feet of those who ride bicycles, or who eat white-feathered chickens. The LRA acquired new virulence after Sudan's President Bashir (the same president who is presiding over genocide in Darfur and was responsible for the earlier genocide in southern Sudan) began supplying Kony with arms in the 1990s and gave the LRA sanctuary in southern Sudan.

While the LRA's primary area of operations is northern Uganda, it has in recent years expanded into the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as into southern Sudan. According to international reports, the LRA has caused as many as 200,000 deaths, most from disease and malnutrition. The Ugandan government's efforts to stop the LRA have been complicated by the fact that the combatants are often children, who are also victims. In 2005, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Joseph Kony and his top commanders for crimes against humanity. But so far they remain at large and free to continue their reign of terror.

The UN and international relief groups have called the LRA depredations one of the world's most underreported humanitarian crises. Thankfully, two women with the providential names of Faith and Grace—Faith McDonnell and Grace Akallo—have written the book *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children* to raise awareness. McDonnell is a human rights activist with the Washington, DC-based Institute on

Religion and Democracy. Akallo is an escaped girl soldier who had been abducted by the LRA in 1996.


Together, each from her own unique background and experience, but with a shared Christian faith, the co-authors tell the whole story in alternating chapters. McDonnell writes about the LRA, its history and political context. Akallo gives a personal account of the unfathomable human toll from the survivor's point of view, bringing to life the mind-numbing statistics with which the international community customarily quantifies such horror.

Akallo was a new student at St. Mary's College, a Roman Catholic boarding school for girls aged 13 through 16 in the town of Aboke, when it was raided one night by LRA children soldiers. The frantic deputy headmistress, an Italian nun, followed the band and pleaded for the Aboke girls' release. Soon 109 of the 139 captive Aboke girls were allowed to go home, but Akallo was not among them.

"Led like slaves, we were taken toward a life of torment," writes Akallo. The ensuing seven months were ones of relentless physical and psychological abuse at the hands of the LRA. The abducted girl learned the truth of the words of a LRA commander. Thrusting an AK-47 assault weapon into her hands, he had said, "Hunger will teach you how to shoot." She prayed for own death as the only apparent way out. Her prayers were answered but not as she expected.

The story is part thriller as we follow Akallo in captivity and through her escape. But even more, her tale is about her journey of faith. It is a testament to her faith that she not only survived the ordeal but went on to complete her education with a college degree and now, haunted by the memories of the children she left behind in captivity, is dedicating her life to rescue them.

Compelling too is the larger story told by McDonnell of the Acholi, whose family and tribal structures have virtually disintegrated in the refugee camps. Once the breadbasket of Uganda, the Acholi region is now desolate and barren. Its people, huddled for protection in camps, have become mendicants, dependent on food and medical aid, suffering exceedingly high mortality rates and growing lawlessness. McDonnell draws from her expertise as a human rights advocate to provide specific action steps for readers who are moved to help.

While shocking, at its core this valuable account is inspirational. It offers hope that the abomination of the Lord's Resistance Army will one day be stopped and that the forgotten Acholi and their children will be delivered from their torment. And it offers hope that those of us living in freedom and plenty will end our indifference. 

**Nina Shea** is the Director of the Center for Religious Freedom at the Hudson Institute.

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# Will It Stop at the Anglicans?

The Prospects for Global Christian Schisms

by Philip Jenkins

*The following is a partial transcript of a lecture given by Dr. Philip Jenkins to the Board of Directors of the Institute on Religion & Democracy on March 26, 2007. Dr. Jenkins is the author of The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity. For a full transcript, contact IRD by phone at 202-682-4131, or by e-mail at mail@ird-renew.org.*

It's a great honor to be speaking at IRD. It's an organization that I've known about for a great many years and am a great admirer of the work.

Let me say right away I've deliberately chosen a very broad topic and I will speak for a while, but I'm sure

there will be a lot more questions to surface.

When I think as a historian of schisms, I suppose the obvious one I think about is the Great Schism which

began in 1054 between East and West and which remains unhealed today, close on a thousand years later. And if you look at that schism which seems to come from a totally different world, a different universe, in fact, there are rather more parallels than you may think. I always like to quote a conversation of a Westerner—that is, a European, one of these upstart new mission churches—

Are we facing an Anglican schism? Yes, I think we are. I think it's virtually certain.

visiting the heart of the Empire in Constantinople a few years before the schism.

And the conversation between the Patriarch of Constantinople and this emissary from the upstart church from Nigeria—oh, excuse me, I mean from Germany—has a very modern feel to it. And the patriarch basically says—I summarize—“Look, we have the theological education. You don't understand these matters. Your faith is too young.”

And the person from the new church, the upstart church from Western Europe, replies: “Well, yes, our faith is young. That is, the faith of Christ should not be like a tacky worn-out garment. It should always be new. And, furthermore, heresies originate with you and are stamped out by us.” [Laughter]

And then you look at the issues that cause the schism, and what strikes you is how many of them revolve around what you can only call issues of culture, issues of approach, as opposed to very specific theological matters. And as I said, I think there are a number of parallels there.

Are we facing an Anglican schism? Yes, I think we are. I think it's virtually certain. The type of language which has emerged in the last three years has become so stark. Bishop Nazir-Ali, an English Bishop of Rochester—by the way, Bishop Nazir-Ali [is] from a Pakistani Shiite family—has made the remark if you have two different religions in the same church, something has to give at some point. That's a very interesting comment: not two different approaches, two different religions.

Archbishop Nzambi of Kenya has said our [African]

**SCHISM? (ABOVE)** Dr. Philip Jenkins believes something more complicated than mere schism is occurring between the West and South, namely the “southernization” of the western churches. (IRD)



understanding of the Bible is totally different from theirs [western progressives]. We are two different churches. And I don't know which is the least Christian example of language I have seen. Certainly there's a lack of charity perhaps in the Nigerian statement about the U.S. Episcopal Church, which said: when a cancerous lump in the body has defied all treatment, the time has come for it to be excised. That's harsh.

I don't know that it's any more harsh, though, than the statement of the gay pressure group in the Episcopal Church which urged the African bishops to stop monkeying around with the church and go back to the jungle they came from. I suspect the palm goes to the latter.

The splits that we see within the Anglican Church are emerging in other denominations. When you look at the Anglican world, you're not surprised to read a quote like this, where an African bishop, for example, denounces the official church for practicing "a secular, intolerant, bureaucratic fundamentalism inimical to the Word of God and familiar from various church struggles against totalitarian ideologies during the 20th century." Again, very harsh language, but it's not Anglican. It's from a Kenyan Lutheran bishop denouncing the Lutheran churches in Europe.

And when you look at Africa, for example, the denominations that we are familiar with in the West do not make the same kind of sense, are not the same hard divisions. I often choose the Lutherans as an example for that. When the leading figure in the Lutheran Church in East Africa is a healer, a charismatic leader in the strict sense, and a prophet, you know this is not the Lutheranism of Garrison Keillor. [Laughter] This is a very different kind of world.

And just as American Episcopalians have turned to African allies, so have conservative European Christians. Yes, there are conservative European Christians. I sometimes tell people I'm writing a book on European religion, and the standard joke which I've heard many times is:

"Must be a very short book."

Well, actually no. There is more conservatism and orthodoxy in European religion than you may think. In issues of gay ordination, for example, Scandinavian Lutherans have turned to a Kenyan bishop called Walter Obare Omwanza. And you have a very similar kind of issue to what's prevailing in the Anglican world.

So, we've seen this sort of division around the world and just as in the Anglican world, all the numbers, all the growth is in the Global South.

You think of the poverty and prevalence of death, epidemic, and the phenomenal church growth. It's a very different kind of world.

[Among] Methodists, Presbyterians, different denominations, orthodox, traditional believers look to the Global South, and what I want to do today is to suggest how realistic—or perhaps not—some of

In some ways, I see less of a chance of schism than what you might call the "southernization" of Global North churches.

these expectations are. So, I come bearing bad news, but mainly I think good news.

First of all, if I look within the Anglican Church proper, I'm not sure how far the Anglican realignment will affect the Episcopal Church, how many people would succeed in joining a new denomination.

For example, I attend an Episcopal church in Pennsylvania—a remarkably successful Episcopal church. Just two weeks ago we went from two Sunday services to three, which is not a common event in the Episcopal tradition in this country. And there is certainly a good number of people there who are deeply unhappy about the direction that the Episcopal Church is taking nationally.

They would, however, never consider breaking away because so many of them would come from broadly a liturgical—if you like, Anglo-Catholic—kind of direction. They are tied to the building, to bricks and mortar. And they do not come from a tradition where it would be very

easy to break away and worship in a high school gym.

And that is a problem. I think a number of them would also be a little uncomfortable with the charismatic directions of some of the more conservative Anglican churches. So really they must face a serious difficulty of being in a church where what the leadership says runs very contrary to their deepest convictions, but it is hard to break away.

And I think that's a limitation on the potential on any kind of new denomination, at least numerically. If I was projecting the future of ECUSA, I would look at a slow, elegant Episcopal swan dive in terms of members.

But what are the prospects for other splits globally? In some ways, I see less of a chance of schism than what you might call the "southernization" of Global North churches.

When you look at the schism of the Middle Ages, East and West were separate worlds. It took months to travel from one to the other. People did not know what was happening in the other part of the world. Clearly, that's not true today.

The North is in the South in the form of money, media, academia, soft power. The South is in the North in many interesting ways. Here are a couple of figures for you. Of the [Roman Catholic] priests in the United States today, 16 percent—one in six—are foreign born. If you look at the seminaries, nearly 30 percent are foreign born. They are Mexican, they are Nigerian, they are Vietnamese. If you want to look at a truly, truly conservative Catholic community, look at the Vietnamese. Look at some of the most important Catholic seminaries in California and the West Coast, some of which are nearly half Vietnamese in composition.

In terms of South and the North, let me say something about Europe. We're all familiar with many of the controversies in the United States. Can I urge you to look at the "southernization" of Christianity in Europe?

What's the largest Christian



**MISAPPLIED LABELS** Jenkins warned attendees about the inadequacy of ideological labels (such as “conservative” or “liberal”) for describing the positions of leaders in the Global South, which do not necessarily fit into Western concepts of “left” and “right.” (IRD)

of homosexuality.

If the Kenyan church, say, announced a position like that of ECUSA—if it ordained an openly gay bishop, for example—that would be a catastrophe in terms of the confrontation with Islam. Muslims would lose not a

social and economic issues, might be very willing to consider a great deal of state intervention, might be hostile to the kind of free enterprise capitalism which would go with American conservatism.

Issues of development seen in a global statist, bureaucratic, United Nations context are very widely accepted in the [African] churches. And this actually has quite a sound theological basis from their approach in this way:

In the West we tend to have a left/right division. [On the one hand] we think of liberation theology, social activism, political activism, overthrowing unjust political structures. [On the other hand] we think of deliverance, spiritual warfare, casting out demons, healing.

A key to understanding most African, or Indian, or Chinese Christianity is that that division does not exist. The two are one. Liberation is deliverance. If there is a life verse of African Christianity, it is John 10:10, which is “I am come so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly”—life defined as trying to improve material life often through state, public intervention. So there are a number of potential areas of conflict over economic affairs.

So let me suggest that there are many reasons why orthodox believers in the Global North can look with great hope at Global South churches, but there are some pressure points. There are some issues of danger, and in terms of economics, the splits are potentially quite serious.

So, the time has come to consider a response. Will we see global schisms? Yes, I think so. But more encouragingly in the long run, I think we stand the potential of enormous significant Christian growth around the world, and especially in what we’ve long regarded as that malarial swamp of religion which is Europe. 📖

congregation in Europe? Fascinating story—of course, it’s in Kiev, Ukraine. Of course, it’s run by a Nigerian. What else would one expect? [The Nigerian was] one of these young men whom the Soviet Union brought over in the 1980s to be taught the ways of communism and to go back and revolutionize the Third World. Then the Soviet Union collapsed. Sunday Adelaja set up his church in Kiev with seven members; there are 30,000 presently. It’s an organization called these days the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God. It is becoming a denomination in many countries.

Oh, and in case you’re wondering, “What do you do with congregations of 20,000 and 30,000? Are there not practical difficulties?” Well, fortunately no. This is the former Soviet Union.

The former Soviet Union built all these splendid halls for union gatherings and party congresses. So, in case you ever wondered what the historic role of communism was, it was to build buildings large enough for Pentecostal churches. [Laughter]

There are a number of forces which are making for orthodoxy. One of them is Islam. The presence of Islam—in Nigeria especially, but in many of the other countries, in Kenya, in Uganda—means that it becomes extremely difficult for Christians to adopt what would be seen as decadent, western positions, especially on the issue

second in pointing out everything we always said about the Western, corrupt nature of this church is now proven.

This is not a time for Christians in Africa to be going soft on some of these issues. Homosexuality is the key. And if you think about it, the more that remains a touchstone issue in Africa—at the same time attitudes are changing so fast in the West. So any criticism of homosexuality is becoming as unacceptable [in the West] as any manifestation of racism has become.

Let me suggest a number of what you might call areas of danger, areas of concern for orthodox, traditional believers in the North who hope that the Global South will continue to be a mainstay of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy on what? A number of issues.

I cannot stress the following sufficiently: so many of the partisan labels that we are used to in the Global North do not make sense in the Global South. When you call somebody a conservative, when you call somebody a liberal, very often those ideas are associated with packages.

If you tell me somebody’s views on gun control in this country, I make a pretty good guess about where they stand on issues of immigration and gay marriage. Ideas go in packages. If you say somebody’s a conservative in Africa, the question then is: “On what?” Somebody who is extremely conservative on gay issues, women’s issues, moral issues might by our terms be extremely liberal on

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**Dr. Philip Jenkins** is the Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University.



# Partial-Birth Abortion Ruling Highlights Gap Between Church Policies and Church-Supported Abortion Coalition

by John S.A. Lomperis

The April 18 Supreme Court decision upholding the federal ban on partial-birth abortions was celebrated by many church members. Even though the ban affects only a few thousand cases—where a particularly gruesome procedure is used to kill late-term babies, some of which might be able to live outside the womb—the court’s decision affirmed the principle that society has an interest in protecting unborn lives.

Even the oldline denominations, often identified as “pro-choice,” typically profess some degree of respect for the value of unborn life. And most of those denominations have expressed concern about late-term abortions that target viable babies.

So one would have expected the officials of such denominations to have given the Supreme Court decision at least a lukewarm welcome. One would have been disappointed. Those officials who addressed the decision were notably negative. And their criticisms were amplified by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), a coalition claiming four leading oldline denominations among its constituency.

RCRC rushed to denounce the court ruling as “a devastating setback” and “the thing we’ve most feared.” The coalition was “alarmed that the Court has taken a step toward valuing a potential person over the woman whose life may be at risk.” RCRC purports to represent the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Episcopal Church, and United Church of Christ, as well as various Jewish, humanist, Unitarian, and other groups.

RCRC had lobbied Congress against the 2003 partial-birth abortion ban. Then it filed a brief with the Supreme Court urging the court to invalidate the law. The RCRC brief asserted that there was no consensus of Christian or other religious

teaching on abortion. It argued, therefore, that any law to protect viable unborn babies would violate the religious freedom of those who deny the personhood of such babies.

The RCRC brief avoided acknowledging the long history of Christian opposition to abortion, or the broad opposition today to late-term abortions. It selectively quoted various denominational policy positions in order to portray the denominations as sharing RCRC’s extreme, unconditional affirmation of unrestricted abortion for any reason, at any stage in the pregnancy.

Yet a 2006 Pew Forum survey revealed solid majorities in every major Christian group that would like to see abortion more restricted. Fifty-nine percent of white mainline Protestants favored tighter limits on abortions, as did 71 percent of Catholics, 70 percent of black Protestants, and 84 percent of white evangelicals.

These sentiments have slowly seeped into official oldline denominational policies. Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of the United Methodist Church overwhelmingly approved a resolution adding this sentence to the denomination’s position on abortion: “We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life.”

At its 2006 General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted a new resolution declaring that “viable unborn babies ... ought to be preserved and cared for and not aborted.” Even in difficult pregnancies, the PCUSA Assembly “supports efforts to protect the life and health of both the mother and the baby.”

The Episcopal General Convention has “express[ed] grave concern” about partial-birth abortions performed in the third trimester, except in unspecified “extreme situations.” The convention also “strongly condemns” abortion for “non-serious or trivial abnormalities.” Such reservations, however, are never reflected in RCRC’s pronouncements and literature.

Even worse, the Washington lobby offices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Methodist Church released statements on the recent Supreme Court decision that side-stepped their own denominations’ policies. Elenora Ivory of the PCUSA Washington Office reported, “Advocates of a woman’s right [to abortion] ... have indicated that the decision is vague and may cause confusion as written.” She cited several criticisms of the decision, but never mentioned the 2006 General Assembly resolution.

Likewise, Linda Bales of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society spent four paragraphs pointing out alleged flaws in the decision. Only in her final sentence did she make a slight concession: “This decision of the Court is consistent with our [United Methodist] *Social Principles* except that there is no provision made by this decision for cases where the fetus has severe anomalies.”

Both Ivory and Bales serve on RCRC’s Council of Governors. They seem to be more devoted to the coalition’s extreme pro-abortion rights advocacy than to the stated positions of their own denominations. ■



**John S.A. Lomperis** is a Research Associate for the UMAAction Program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



# United Methodists Turn to Africa

Explosive growth of Methodism in the Global South has forced the church to recognize its global identity.

by Rebekah Sharpe

**T**he recent explosion of sub-Saharan Christianity is, for believers disheartened by trends in the western churches, a genuinely thrilling phenomenon. Despite the burdens of dictatorships, civil wars, conflicts with Islam, and the prevalence of poverty and infectious diseases, Christianity has spread rapidly throughout Africa.

This trend is an inspiration for many U.S. Christians.

Could it be that, in the United Methodist Church, Jesus' saying about "the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16) will soon be demonstrated?

But perhaps the most direct effect has been felt, and will be felt, in the United Methodist Church. While other U.S. churches have "partnerships" and "fraternal ties" with

African religious bodies, United Methodism actually includes African and other overseas "central conferences" as an integral part of the denomination. African delegates come to United Methodist meetings not as foreign guests but as full voting members.

United Methodism is truly a "global church," and becoming more so every day. The Africans are leading the way. According to a recent report from the United

Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration, 28 percent of the 11.5 million professing United Methodists live in Africa. This total now exceeds the membership in any single region of the United States.

The African proportion is steadily growing. While U.S. membership declined by 20 percent over the past 30 years, membership in the various African United Methodist regions skyrocketed between 1995-2005 at rates ranging from 129 percent to 415 percent. (See table on p. 17.) The largest influx came with the admission of the 700,000-member United Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire at the 2004 General Conference.

Could it be that, in the United Methodist Church, Jesus' saying about "the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16) will soon be demonstrated?

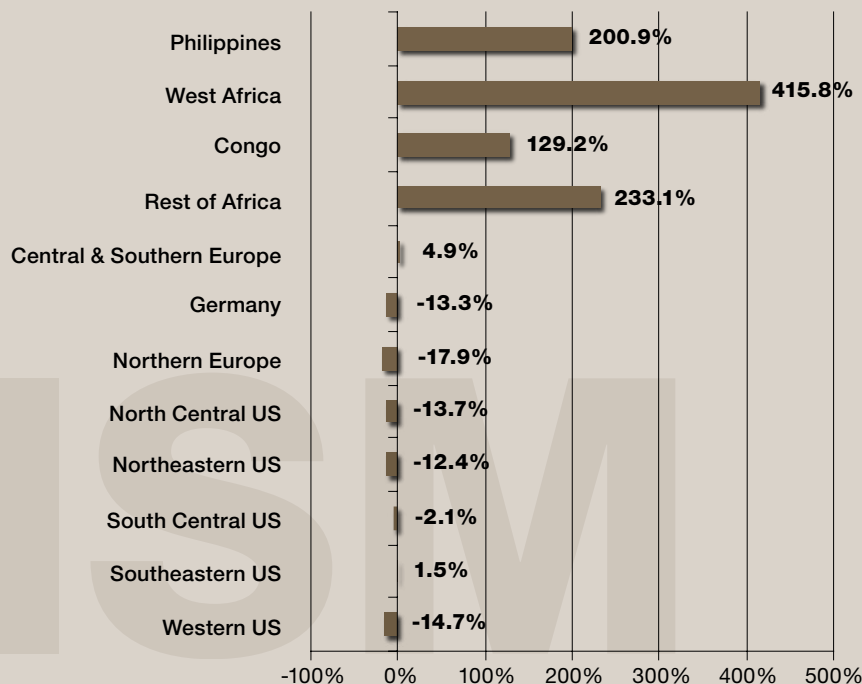
These statistics could have very serious implications for the governance and direction of the United Methodist Church. Denominational institutions have been largely controlled by U.S. liberals since the early 20th century. But the African United Methodists are more orthodox, more evangelical in their theology, and more conservative socially and morally. At recent General Conferences, they have voted almost unanimously against the left's push to legitimize homosexual relations. Some of the key speeches against that agenda have also come from the Africans.

Joined with their theologically conservative counterparts inside the United States, the quantitative weight African delegations could bring to bear on these votes is unquestionably significant. The three African central conferences had 108 delegates out of 998 total

**INCLUSION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION (ABOVE)** Bishop Benjamin Boni of the Côte d'Ivoire speaks before a large audience in Abidjan. The 700,000-member jurisdiction Boni leads has yet to be apportioned full representation by the United Methodist Church at its General Conference. (Eleanor Colvin/UMNS)



## GROWTH IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WORLDWIDE, 1995-2005



Source: United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) report, 2007.

**EXPLOSIVE GROWTH** The United Methodist Church is growing by leaps and bounds in Africa and the Philippines, but is moribund and declining in the West.

at the 2004 General Conference. In 2008 the African contingent will comprise 192 delegates of the 990 total. This number will go sharply upward when Côte d'Ivoire is finally granted its full representation.

### Sudden Liberal Doubts about a Global Church

To this point, United Methodist liberals have generally been proud to boast of the diversity of their "global church." But suddenly, in the face of the new political calculus in the denomination, they have had second thoughts. These were stated most directly in a speech last fall by Dr. Janice Love, the outgoing director of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Love warned of a "potentially intentional and counterproductive politicization of our church's geographic differences and an 'us versus them' mentality that has nothing to do with the substance

of any issue." In particular, she cited with grave concern a journalist's discernment of "an increasing alliance between conservative Americans and conservative Africans." And she suspected an IRD plot aimed at "saving the church from the so-called unfaithful voting tenden-

**Suddenly, in the face of the new political calculus in the denomination, progressives have had second thoughts about a global church.**

cies of delegates from the United States."

In light of such political considerations, it seemed quite convenient for Love to argue that "we are not a global church and not likely to become one in the decades to come." Indeed, she implied, being a global church might not be such a good idea. The Women's Division head was worried about possible U.S. imperialism driving "a vision of the United Methodist Church's global domination among all Methodists in the world."

Moreover, she was struck that "issues of power, control and justice inevitably arise when people and institutions with more money attempt to form partnerships and/or Christian community with those who have less money."

These concerns had not appeared so gripping during the long decades when a relatively wealthier and more numerous U.S.-based denomination had acted as elder sibling to the non-American central conferences. But now that the Africans were growing in numbers and influence, suddenly ecclesiastical imperialism loomed as a grave threat in the eyes of this top denominational official.

Love insisted that the "integrity and honesty" of U.S. and overseas Methodists was not "dependent on being institutionally integrated." On the contrary, she looked to United Methodist women as a positive example of separation between U.S. and overseas Methodists. "Almost all women's organizations in the Methodist tradition are organized nationally," Love remarked, and "we like it that way."

Love was even distressed about the expense and practical complexities of providing translation and interpretation services for the non-English speaking Africans at United Methodist meetings.

## An Angolan Bishop's Perspective

In a recent interview, Angolan United Methodist Bishop José Quipungo shared his thoughts with IRD. He described some of his church's specific challenges: "My church in my country is going well.... Five years ago, the [Angolan civil] war finished. So we have many things to do. We have many infrastructures to rebuild. We are making arrangements to give a good education to our new generation, men and women. We are preparing pastors, men and women, to continue the Gospel, to share God's message." The bishop said that Angola was dealing with "the problem of health, HIV/AIDS. We have the problem of malaria, you know—all things that give pressure in our worldview." Quipungo added positively, "We know we are sure that God is with us, and that He helps us to go.... This is our hope."

When asked about the decline of Methodism in some U.S. jurisdictions, Quipungo theorized: "The United States is a developed country. The religion here—this is my point of view, you understand—the religion here in the United States is social, like a social commitment. Our people [Angolan Methodists] ... know what it means to get the vision, to have faith, to believe in God. We've got the faith in the central conferences [United Methodist jurisdictions outside the United States]. We have this urge to bring God's Word."

The homosexuality debate "is a question of culture," according to the bishop. "In my culture, in my society, in my church, we don't talk about it. When you talk about homosexuality, you are talking about a sinner." He stated that in the rare occasion that one encounters an Angolan with homosexual tendencies, "people know, 'Yes, I am in this condition but in Jesus Christ, it is not a normal condition.'" Despite the rarity of the issue in African nations, Quipungo offered, "We are ready to help our brothers and sisters decide what best we can do about this mission."



She asked, "But does our denomination really want to assume this responsibility and the costs for such inclusiveness?" Coming from an ideological perspective that exalts "inclusiveness" as the ultimate value, this question represented a truly stunning turnabout.

The same sort of effort to check rising African power may lie behind the actions taken regarding the Côte d'Ivoire Methodist Church. The 2004 General Conference admitted that church to the denomination, but dictated that its representation in 2008 should be limited to a token two delegates. This latter restriction was appealed as a violation of the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*. But in October 2006 and April 2007 the denomination's Judicial Council—in narrow votes carried by the more liberal members—upheld the temporary disenfranchisement of Côte d'Ivoire. If that church had been granted its full representation, the African Methodists would have had 272 delegates at the 2008 General Conference rather than the 192 now projected.

### The New Liberal Doctrine: Separate but Equal

In 2012, Côte d'Ivoire is scheduled to receive full representation, resulting in an overwhelming African legislative presence. But opponents have already begun to submit measures that would limit central conference participation in the government of the denomination's U.S. jurisdictions.

Proposals backed by a church-wide commission, to separate the decision-making processes for the U.S. jurisdictions from those of the central conferences, made their debut in 2004. More recently, the Council of Bishops approved five petitions to the 2008 General Conference. If adopted by the 2008 Conference, these petitions would eventually lead to a new separate General Conference for the U.S. church, in 2012. It is currently unclear how much autonomy this proposal would give to the U.S. United Methodist Church.

Some Methodists worry that separation from the Africans would permit the U.S. church to create its own more liberal

policies, especially on sexuality issues. Excessive autonomy would not only result in a more liberal American church with reduced accountability, but would also present a divided United Methodist face to the world. The division would suggest that Methodist behavioral and belief standards varied from one country to the next, as opposed to being firmly established by our shared scriptures and church history.

The great danger is that the United Methodist Church might follow the same schismatic path as the U.S. Episcopal Church, which has risked its relationship with the rest of the global Anglican Communion in order to pursue an American vision of moral autonomy. ☒



**Rebekah Sharpe** is an Administrative Assistant for the UMAction Program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



# Called from the Heart of Texas

by Lorelei G. Coyle

I am a Texan. This fact in many ways defines me. I love the Lone Star State and feel it is the most wonderful place in the world to live.

Yet in 1995 I had a telephone conversation with my mother, trying to explain to her why I had moved halfway across the country—farther away from home than any other family member. My mother was enjoying a warm March afternoon in San Antonio, while I was suffering through my first snowstorm in Washington, DC. How could I have left Eden on earth for this crazed eastern city? I explained that DC is where I had to be to serve the calling that I felt. I believe in vocations, and this is mine.

Since 1995 I have been working as a public relations specialist or communications professional for predominantly Christian-based public policy organizations. I spent two tours of duty with the Family Research Council—three and a half years under Gary Bauer's leadership and two and a half years under Tony Perkins. Most of my career has been working on social issues. I also spent a couple of years working with a conservative environmental organization. That time has proven to be invaluable as more Christians are entering the public debate on the environment.

After working several years in the public policy arena and with grassroots activists, I believe that we as Christians influence this nation. We influence society. We influence lawmakers. The Institute on Religion & Democracy has for years been called the watchdog group of this or that denomination. Maybe that is a fair assessment, but what I admire about the men and women with whom I work daily is their desire that their churches stay true to biblical principles and that religious leaders present orthodox teachings about the issues facing our society today. Christians in the pew need to have the tools to be prepared for the public debate that rages daily in our world. The IRD has been and continues to be a resource, a tool for fellow Christians.

I am thrilled to be working with the IRD to promote the work of these amazing men and women. The IRD has never had a communications director before. I don't think I can convey how exciting it is to be with IRD at this time of growth and opportunity. We've made significant changes to our publications, such as this very *Faith & Freedom*. We are in the process of updating our website. Website technology gives us the ability to distribute our materials not only here in

the United States but globally as we take our work to the international arena. We have already sent out almost three times as many press releases as we did last year. We are spreading the message of IRD far and wide.

The IRD mission statement describes the institute as an ecumenical alliance of U.S. Christians. This is a true statement in describing our staff. We come from different denominational and cultural backgrounds working within the *Corpus Christi*, the body of Christ, to make a difference, to contribute to the renewal of a democratic society. It is an honor and a huge blessing on my family to hold this position.

My Scottish husband, Allan, likes to say in regard to most everything, "We invented that." I like to say, "Pray for me; I married a Scot." Kidding aside, I do covet your prayers. The IRD has many goals for the rest of '07 and '08. Please pray for our success. ☞



**Lorelei G. Coyle**  
is the Director of  
Communications at the  
Institute on Religion &  
Democracy.

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Please consult your professional advisor regarding this new charitable IRA provision to determine if this is a good option for your situation.

### Questions?

Contact David Sheaffer, 202-904-6195, [davids@ird-renew.org](mailto:davids@ird-renew.org).





# The Politics of Antagonism in the Anglican Communion

by Ralph A. Webb

As the conservative, biblically orthodox Global South exerts ever-growing influence upon like-minded American Anglicans, it faces increased opposition from liberal U.S. church leaders.

**“W**e are not here for politics ... we are here to ensure that God’s people have a home.” With these words, Archbishop Peter Akinola, Anglican primate of the Church of Nigeria, addressed the thousands of Anglicans in attendance at the 3,500-seat Hylton Chapel in Woodbridge, VA. Archbishop Akinola was present on May 5 to install the Rt. Rev. Canon Martyn Minns as missionary bishop of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), a structure of

North American Anglican parishes under the Church of Nigeria.

But politics of an ecclesiastical sort were impossible to quell. The installation itself produced a slew of controversy earlier that same week, with first Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and later

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams writing letters to Akinola asking him not to install Minns. Later that same month, when invitations were sent out for the 2008 Lambeth conference, a once-a-decade gathering of Anglican bishops, Minns did not receive one.

The controversy is unlikely to abate any time soon. In the Anglican Communion, the prosperous but

numerically declining Western mainline churches are meeting the largely poor but growing-by-leaps-and-bounds churches of the Global South. And as these groups meet, a clash of worldviews is creating a war for the soul of the entire communion.

American Anglicans committed to maintaining an orthodox faith are in a difficult position and have responded several ways (statistics are current as of early June 2007):

- The original Nigerian parishes of the 37 CANA congregations have been joined by others that have chosen to leave the Episcopal Church.
- Over 100 congregations in the United States and a dozen in Canada are part of the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA), a missionary arm of the Church of Rwanda founded in August 2000.
- Reportedly close to 100 former Episcopal Church parishes have affiliated independently with a foreign province of their choosing (not with a group such as CANA or AMiA).
- Many other orthodox Anglicans still are uncomfortably inside the Episcopal Church, hoping for its repentance or for some relief from the Anglican Communion.

CANA, then, is only one example of a larger trend in which orthodox Anglicans are aligning themselves with Global South Anglicans. It has, however, attracted the most media attention

**In the Anglican Communion, the prosperous but declining Western mainline churches are meeting the largely poor but growing churches of the Global South.**

**SOUTH BY WEST (ABOVE)** The Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns gives the sermon at the service consecrating him as a bishop, while the Most Rev. Peter Akinola listens intently. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

## The Beginnings of a Movement

CANA was birthed out of the current difficulties afflicting the Anglican Communion. In August 2003, the Episcopal Church's 74th General Convention consented to the consecration of Gene Robinson as the bishop of New Hampshire—and as the first openly gay, non-celibate bishop in the Anglican Communion. The consecration took place three months later.

This action went against traditional, orthodox Christian views of sexuality that are commonly and strongly held in the Global South. "[O]verwhelmingly, [Anglican] African ... leaders denounced the U.S. church for abandoning the clear principles of the Bible," Dr. Philip Jenkins comments in his book, *The New Faces of Christianity*. The North American actions also offended deeply held African social values. In his earlier book *The Next Christendom*, Jenkins noted that despite a lack of uniformity in African stances on homosexuality over the centuries, "widespread populist opinion" holds the practice to be immoral.

One person deeply distressed by the Episcopal Church's actions was Akinola. Reportedly, he and then-Presidenting Bishop Frank Griswold once had a strong friendship. But in October 2003, when the Anglican primates (i.e., leaders of Anglican provinces) met at Lambeth Palace in England, the Nigerian implored his American counterpart not to proceed with Robinson's consecration. Akinola later recalled: "I told [Griswold], 'For the sake of the rest of the world, you can put it aside.' He said, 'No.' From that moment, I knew the fabric of the Anglican Communion was torn."

As a result of that primatial meeting, a Lambeth Commission was formed to produce a report on how the Anglican Communion could stay together in the midst of the divisions caused by the Episcopal Church's actions. The study was released a year later in October 2004 as the *Windsor Report*. That same month, before the report was released, Akinola announced the formation of a group of North American parishes for Nigerians who could not conscientiously worship

in either the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church of Canada. By April 2005, that convocation was known as CANA.

Akinola at the time regarded CANA primarily as a pastoral measure for Nigerians. "I well remember one woman coming to me during one of my visits [to America] and, with tears, saying she could no longer worship in [the Episcopal Church] and that her whole family no longer had a church home, yet they would prefer to remain faithful Anglicans," he said at the time. The actions of the U.S. church had impressed upon the Nigerian primate an "obligation ... to provide for the proper and continuing pastoral and episcopal oversight for Nigerian churches in North America."

Relatively few concerns were expressed at the time concerning CANA. Some questions were raised as to whether the new convocation went against the *Windsor Report's* admonitions against what progressive Episcopalians call "border crossings," the uninvited interventions by one primate or bishop within another primate or bishop's territory. Additionally, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams stated that he never approved the formation of the convocation. Still, there was no official Episcopal Church reaction against its establishment.

## The Missionary Bishop

Additional controversy proved inevitable, however. Akinola had stated that CANA would have its own episcopate. And in June 2006, Minns was elected by the Episcopal Synod of the Church of Nigeria to serve as missionary bishop of CANA.

Minns, a staunch evangelical, was no stranger to controversy. His call to ordained ministry grew out of his service as an active layperson at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Darien, CT—a flagship parish of the charismatic movement and subject of a book entitled *Miracle in Darien*. Minns received his Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1979. While at the seminary, he met a student from Nigeria who also would prove controversial later in life: Peter Akinola.

In 1991, Minns became rector of Truro

Church in Fairfax, VA, a large parish famed for its charismatic and evangelical bent. Truro had a history of ministry with African Anglicans since the early 1980s. The parish's reputation in Africa grew throughout the 1990s as it sent parishioners on short-term mission projects and initiated long-term financial commitments.

While at Truro, Minns also became active in Episcopal Church politics. By 1997, Truro was sending teams to work for renewal at each General Convention. At Truro's farewell service for Minns in April 2007, the Rev. John Yates, rector of the Falls Church (another large and prestigious northern Virginia parish now part of CANA), noted that Minns' vision always had extended beyond the parish level.

That vision positioned Minns to be a key player in Anglican affairs after Robinson's consecration. Eventually, his assistance to Global South primates at the primates' February 2005 Northern Ireland meeting led then-Presidenting Bishop Griswold to accuse him of undertaking "the devil's" work.

But when Minns was consecrated in August 2006 as missionary bishop of CANA and afterwards began serving CANA congregations in the United States, there was no official Episcopal Church reaction. Public opposition came only five days prior to his May 2007 installation, with Bishop Jefferts Schori's letter. The Rev. Dr. Kendall Harmon, Canon Theologian of the Diocese of South Carolina, commented that Episcopal Church leaders had waited until "the flood ... [had] arrived on their front doorstep" before protesting Minns' ministry.

Akinola seemed, in his comments at the installation, to respond to the requests from Williams and Jefferts Schori not to proceed with the installation. "We are doing this on behalf of the Anglican Communion," the Nigerian primate said. "If the atmosphere is conducive and conditions are right ... Nigeria will not for one second keep on to CANA. That I promise you!"

Nevertheless, Minns, like Robinson, was excluded from the initial round of invitations for the 2008 Lambeth conference. Speculation abounded. Was

Williams trying to neutralize the two most contentious figures in the Anglican Communion? Or was he implying that Minns was as immoral as Robinson—that “border crossings” are as immoral as living in a same-sex relationship outside of marriage? On the other hand Minns was treated the same as AMiA bishops, who also did not receive invitations.

Archbishop Akinola reacted strongly. “The withholding of invitation to a Nigerian bishop ... will be viewed as the withholding of invitation to the entire House of Bishops of the Church of Nigeria,” he warned.

### Escalating Tensions

The tensions have escalated recently because what is at stake is nothing less than the soul of the Anglican Communion. Will the worldwide Christian body accommodate the Episcopal Church’s growing commitment to not only the “full inclusion” of gays and lesbians in all aspects of the Episcopal Church’s life (including ordination and same-sex blessings), but its growing agnosticism concerning core elements of Christian doctrine? Or will the communion make a strong stand for Christian orthodoxy?

Progressives in the Episcopal Church have attempted to spin the situation in several ways. Many discount doctrinal concerns and portray CANA as a power grab. A variation on this theme takes a nearly reverse racist angle: Akinola supposedly has an insatiable quest for power and Minns is his instrument to achieve those ends.

Some progressive commentators have disparaged Akinola and the Nigerian church as primitive, uneducated, or authoritarian. Many have accused the Nigerian Anglicans of an undue obsession with western homosexuality. Akinola’s purported backing of proposed Nigerian criminal laws against homosexual gatherings and public displays of same-sex

affection was taken as proof of bigotry. (A few reports, however, indicated that Church of Nigeria leaders were working to ensure homosexuals’ civil rights, although undoubtedly without approving of same-sex relationships.)

The Church of Nigeria’s willingness to suspend financial ties to the Episcopal Church has been labeled by some progressives as callous neglect of Nigerians who might benefit from Episcopal Church benevolences. “Archbishop Akinola and others in his movement would deny that [AIDS or malaria-stricken African] child food, medicine or a mosquito net if it were provided by a donor with whom they differ over theology,” Diocese of Washington spokesperson Jim Naughton charged in a letter to the *Washington Post*.

Progressives, then, have attempted to deny any legitimacy to CANA or other orthodox Anglican bodies. In CANA’s case, they have argued that parishioners have been misled into believing that CANA is a branch of the Anglican Communion—never mind the fact that CANA describes itself as a missionary arm of the Church of Nigeria, not a new branch of the communion.

Another tactic taken is to present the departure of orthodox parishioners as inconsequential. Bishop Jefferts Schori continually has made this argument with the press. When confronted in Virginia by a priest who asserted that her statements

seemed “condescending” to orthodox parishioners, she seemed surprised that they might feel denigrated.

Jefferts Schori and her colleagues in the Episcopal Church’s House of Bishops remain under the pressure of a September 30 deadline to respond to the concerns expressed by the primates in their February 2007 communiqué. The primates asked the bishops to provide assurances that they would not consent to any more consecrations of openly gay, non-celibate bishops, and that they would stop all same-sex blessings (which currently are permitted as a “local option” provided that they are approved in a parish’s diocese).

Despite the Episcopal Church’s demonstrable hostility toward CANA and the concerns of other members of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Akinola eschewed politics in favor of prayer at the May 5 installation. There, he enjoined his new American flock: “I want to urge you, in the name of God, let us continue to pray for [the Episcopal Church], let us continue to pray for the Anglican Communion.”



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**FULL CIRCLE** There is ample historic irony in a black African consecrating a white Englishman residing in America as a missionary bishop. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)



# The Hope of the Resurrection, or the Need for Gun Control?

by Mark D. Tooley

## Church Responses to the Virginia Tech Massacre

**L**eft-wing religious officials raced to exploit the Virginia Tech murders by resuscitating their advocacy for gun control legislation.

Winning the tackiness contest, National Council of Churches General Secretary Bob Edgar issued a news release within hours of the shootings.

“How many more will have to die before we say enough is enough?” Edgar asked. “How many more senseless deaths will have to be counted before we enact meaningful firearms control in this country? How many more of our pastors, rabbis and imams will have to preside over caskets of innocent victims of gun violence because a nation refused to stop the proliferation of these small weapons of mass destruction?”

Revealingly, Edgar’s quick statement barely mentioned “God,” made no mention of Christ, and quoted no Scripture.

From his perch in Geneva, World Council of Churches General Secretary Samuel Kobia offered prayers for the bereaved before launching into his own political fusillade.

“One of the major obstacles to effective global regulation of small arms and light weapons is the pro-gun position adopted by the U.S. administration during years of international negotiations,” Kobia asserted, seizing the occasion to blame America. “The news from Virginia today is little different than the news from Darfur yesterday and the news from Iraq tomorrow,” he stated. Explaining this posited moral equivalence, the WCC chief noted that all three places have “wanton killings, the indiscriminate use of armed force and the widespread availability of deadly weapons.”

Kobia hoped that the “gun lobby across the USA” will begin to “understand the rising frustration among

concerned citizens and governments around the world.” While admitting there are “other factors,” he still insisted that the “U.S. arms manufacturing and arms sales policies have violent consequences abroad as well as in the U.S.”

“We are all Virginians in our sympathy, but many people around the world are also Virginians in their vulnerability to the misuse of unregulated guns,” Kobia concluded. “The globalized trade in small arms and light weapons must come under firm and appropriate controls.”

United Methodist lobbyist Jim Winkler used the Virginia Tech killings to herald his denomination’s support for a complete ban on handguns. “It must be stated that had this ban been in place,” according to Winkler, “this shooting might have been prevented since one of the guns used by the assailant was a 9 mm handgun. We once again call on the Congress to ban all handguns and assault weapons so that our communities will be safer and so that this endless cycle of violence can be ended.”

Not all religious left officials were so quick to exploit the Virginia Tech horrors. The top officials of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) tactfully refrained from political advocacy. Evangelical left leader Jim Wallis also showed restraint, calling for a time of “prayer and silence.”

ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson actually quoted Scripture in his statement: “We mourn, we pray, and with the Psalmist we plead: ‘Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!’ (Psalm 130:1) As family and friends grieve the deaths and injuries of loved ones, we claim the promise of Christ’s Resurrection.”

How gratifying that a prominent

mainline church official actually responded to the massacre of innocent young people by pointing to the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Why did others of his colleagues not follow his example?

The sin of murder precedes by many millennia the invention of firearms. It is recorded in the earliest chapters of the Bible, with Cain’s killing his brother Abel, and continues until the final chapters of Revelation. Before the advent of guns, fallen humanity killed each other senselessly by the thousands with spears, arrows, hatchets, and axes.

Much of the religious left, with its absolute faith in statist regulation and its denial of human fallenness, is confident that murder can be banished by banning its instruments. But human nature is such that murderers will be the quickest to find the weapons to accomplish their evil purposes.

There are legitimate arguments about whether regulations on the instruments of murder—which are also, frequently, the instruments of legitimate defense—would increase or decrease the murder rate. But it lies beyond the power of the state to change corrupt human hearts. The social mores that prevent murder are only effectively instilled by religion, which the religious left has neglected in favor of a political “salvation.”

*This article originally appeared online at Frontpagemag.com.*



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# Being Salt or Light in Social Witness

by Ralph A. Webb

**A**t the “Mere Anglicanism” conference held in Charleston, SC, on January 25–27, 2007, Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali of Rochester (England) gave the opening and closing lectures. Bishop Nazir-Ali was gracious enough to give me a half-hour of his time for an interview at the end of the conference.

Born in 1949, Bishop Nazir-Ali was ordained to the priesthood in his native Pakistan in 1976. He was the youngest bishop in the Anglican Communion upon his consecration in 1984. He has been bishop of three dioceses: the Diocese of Raiwind (Pakistan); the Diocese of Southwark (England), where he served as assistant bishop; and the Diocese of Rochester. He also served as an assistant to Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and was himself a candidate earlier this decade for Archbishop of Canterbury.

## Salt or Light: Christians and Culture

Dr. Robert Louis Wilken voiced concern in “The Church as Culture,” an article published in *First Things* (April 2004), that Christianity might not be able to last in a country without a base in the culture. Bishop Nazir-Ali disagreed with this statement, feeling that it’s a “contradiction in terms” to believe that Christianity should influence a culture but still be dependent upon it.

This comment led the bishop to expand on his own concerns, expressed in his second Mere Anglicanism lecture, that Christians need to distinguish times when they should be “salt” in a culture as opposed to “light.” Bishop Nazir-Ali said in the lecture that “[p]art of the Christian vocation today is to never be truly comfortable—to be both citizens and exiles.” Using Jesus’ analogy from Matthew 5:13-16, he talked about how Christians are at times called to be “salt” and influence society but at other times to be distinct and be a “light on a hill.” Bishop Nazir-Ali believes that to successfully address postmodernism, it’s getting to the point where Christians in Britain may need to become “light” rather than “salt.” He implicitly invited American Christians to consider this possibility as well.

So what are some modern-day examples of how Christians should be “salt” ... or, conversely, “light”?

## Being “Salt” by Standing for Christian Values

Bishop Nazir-Ali spent a good amount of time in his

second lecture identifying four values that Christians share and that should impact society at large:

- **The Inherent Dignity of Every Human Being**—Even many secularists hold to this principle. Baroness Warnock of England was an agnostic, but she still believed that the dignity of every person is non-negotiable and sprang from a Judeo/Christian worldview.
- **Equality**—All human beings are equal by virtue of being made in God’s image. The New Testament speaks of all barriers to equality being broken down. (See, e.g., Galatians 3:28.)
- **Liberty**—For Christians historically, this value was promoted through the Reformation’s emphasis on everyone having the right to access the Scriptures.
- **Safety from Harm**—Western societies in the past three decades have viewed this value as applying to individuals. The Christian view is more expansive: institutions and even societies themselves are due this protection. Bishop Nazir-Ali argued that any attack on the family unit is tantamount to an attack on society itself.

Bishop Nazir-Ali added in the interview that people should be aware that “the very values by which they live are derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition.” The values, in fact, come from Jesus himself. When the values depart too greatly, Christians must be willing to make a stand for Christian values. “We should always be willing to work with our societies, communities, and the nation, but also willing to make a stand if necessary.”

## Same-Sex Blessings and “Gospel Values”

What about progressive Episcopalians’ argument that so-called “gospel values” should guide a church’s decision on whether to bless relationships between same-sex couples? Progressives typically define “gospel values” as positive qualities such as “fidelity, monogamy, mutual respect and life-long commitment,” as the Rev. Susan Russell told the Anglican Consultative Council. Many progressives believe that if these qualities are in evidence and a relationship is free from exploitation, it should be blessed by the church.

After responding that such values could of course permit all sorts of behaviors (e.g., unmarried couples, consensual incest), Bishop Nazir-Ali stated that marriage between one man and one woman evidences “a proper complementarity” lacking in same-sex relations. A man and a woman complement each other not just through the

Nazir-Ali believes that to address postmodernism successfully, Christians in Britain may need to become “light” rather than “salt.”

ability to procreate, nor only through their different gifts and abilities. Rather, they are able to do things differently as members of different sexes that two people of the same sex can never do.

### Being Salt by Engaging with Islam

In the question-and-answer session following his second Mere Anglicanism lecture, Bishop Nazir-Ali had been asked to talk about how Islamic extremism was fueled by Western materialism and culture. He responded:

Western lifestyle does offend Muslims, but this is not the main cause of Islamic extremism. [Islamic extremism is] deeply rooted in a vision of the world which has to see Islam dominate ... It is also fueled by anti-Jewish and anti-Christian attitudes that have little to do with modern Israel and the contemporary problems in the Middle East ... It also has to do with [a vision in which] Christians and others are subservient to Islamic dominance.

Bishop Nazir-Ali said in the later interview that he agreed with Kenneth Cragg (an Anglican bishop also, and a leading scholar of Islam and the Middle East) that a major “difference between Christianity and Islam [involves their] attitude toward power.” Bishop Nazir-Ali continued, “The cross is the giving up of power for God’s purposes. Islam has thought that the cross is a way of taking up power so that God’s purposes may be fulfilled.... [Muslim extremists have thought that] if Islam is not dominant, its purity is compromised. [This viewpoint] is rooted in a particular interpretation of what the *sharia* [law] requires.”

Stressing the necessity of Christians’ engagement with Islam, Bishop Nazir-Ali suggested a four-point practical strategy:

1. Become aware of issues related to Islam in the world today.
2. Engage in conversations with Islamic scholars—Islamic scholars have a broad influence and many of them are concerned with how Islamic policies affect the common good.
3. Encourage politicians in Muslim

countries to take the fruit of these conversations and use them in policymaking.

4. Educate Western policymakers and urge them to deal with the issues.

### Being Salt by Guarding against the Corruption of Patriotism

In his book *Conviction and Conflict: Islam, Christianity, and World Order*, Bishop Nazir-Ali talks about how patriotism “is greatly to be admired ... [and] makes for the common good.” At the same time, however, he warns that it “can go horribly wrong” if it becomes “turned in on itself, becomes excluding and exclusive, or promotes xenophobia and suspicion of the ‘other’” (p. 37).

Expanding on these thoughts, Bishop Nazir-Ali noted, “No one is exempt from the possibilities of patriotism going wrong. The tension is already there in the New Testament” with apostolic injunctions to both obey the authorities and obey God rather than man. One example of patriotism having been corrupted was National Socialism in Germany. Christians, then, should be aware that a force for great good can become one for great evil—and guard against such an occurrence.

### Being Light

When should Christians move from “salt” to “light”? Bishop Nazir-Ali responded by noting that such a change normally takes place gradually. He also argued that it is prudent to move from “salt” to “light” if you are either compromising your faith or seeking acceptability from the culture.

He added, “There are certain church stances where the salt metaphor works ... but then there comes a time when the salt metaphor doesn’t work because [either the church or the culture is] hostile or indifferent [to the other]—so you have to become more of a light.” He cited Popes Leo and Gregory the Great as examples of Christians who had to move from salt to light.

### The Task for All Christians

All of these points connect with an issue raised by Bishop Nazir-Ali in his first Mere Anglicanism lecture: the necessity of translating the Gospel into cultural contexts

(“enculturation”) while not giving in to the culture (“capitulation”).

Enculturation, according to the bishop, involves how we relate to peoples’ customs and habits. It is not the same as contextualization, which deals with relating to peoples’ political and economic situations. The Gospel always must become intelligible to another culture—that is, understandable in terms of peoples’ customs and habits. This does not mean that the “good news” of the Gospel changes. But how you tell the story differs so as to make it understandable to different cultures.

At the same time, Christians must never capitulate to the culture around them. Here, Bishop Nazir-Ali referred to the thought of Pope John Paul II. In his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, the pope gave two limits to how far enculturation can go:

1. **The Nature of the Gospel Itself—**Christians are not free to compromise the essence of the Gospel.
2. **Fellowship among Christians—**Enculturation should never limit the fellowship among Christians of different places, times, and cultures.

In his second lecture, Bishop Nazir-Ali concluded that the salvation history contained in the Scriptures shows God working among people to prepare them to come to Christ. It is not for Christians to say who will or will not be saved; rather, our job is to bring people to knowledge of God’s purposes. This means that Christians should engage in conversation with people, trusting that Jesus Christ, the Word (Greek *Logos*), is working in them for God’s purposes. That is the task for all Christians, whether they are currently “salt” or “light.” The Holy Spirit is also convincing people of sin and righteousness and judgment. We should trust this work. ☛



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# Methodist Liberal Flagship Sets Course at 100th Anniversary Conference

by Rebekah Sharpe

**T**he Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) celebrated its 100th anniversary with a conference entitled “Voices of Faith 2007: Make Plain the Vision.” At the April 13-15 conference in Arlington, VA, guest lecturers spoke of the Bible as a guide for social justice lobbying and workshops taught participants how to advance MFSA agenda items. The event illustrated the theological and political directions in which the liberal “Social Gospel,” long championed by the MFSA, is now headed.

The conference opened with a worship service and a dramatic presentation on the past 100 years of MFSA history. The preacher for the service was Dr. Brian Blount of Princeton Theological Seminary, and his text was I Corinthians 11:17-34. Blount said that he chose the passage despite his reflection that “some of the reason why I don’t

go to Paul is that some of the time Paul and I just don’t get along.”

## **The Eucharist as Socialist Prototype**

The Princeton professor focused on the apostle’s warning that the Corinthians were “eat[ing] the bread or drink[ing] the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner” because “when the time comes to

eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk.” Transposing this ecclesiastical injunction into a political context, Blount asserted, “Paul might ask the same questions of our [United States] House and Senate.” He warned, “To horde and devour all the resources of our country because we paid for them is to eat to our own destruction.”

Recalling that the Corinthians “didn’t just have the meal of the Eucharist, but they had a kind of meal before: the love feast.” Blount saw in this voluntary religious sharing a prototype of socialism: “Something similar is supposed to be happening in this country.... We must be sharing our resources at a national table of fellowship.” But he decried the current social reality: “not everyone is at the table when the wealthy and the comfortable are already at the table eating everything it has to offer.” Blount expressed concern: “If we could not share the resources in our secular guise, then we partook of communion at our own risk.”

Following Blount’s lecture, one audience member complained: “I did not hear one group of people mentioned.... Do you know who you left out? Is it because

they’re irrelevant or we’re in a church that doesn’t accept LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered] people for ministry?” Blount responded, “I apologize of course for leaving that group out.... You’re right, that is a lack that I would correct if I were to give the lecture again.”

## **Hankering to ‘Send the Rich Away Empty’**

On the morning of April 14, the Rev. Dr. Traci West, Ethics and African-American Studies professor at the United Methodist-affiliated Drew University Theological School, preached a sermon based on the text of the Magnificat (Luke 1:47-55). Mary’s message, Dr. West maintained, “is a message that requires us to realize the inequalities and the injustices among us.... It requires us to look at all the benefits of superiority that we cling to.”

Within the church, West called on United Methodists to “stop this blasphemous worship of heterosexuality, and to require systemic change.” She criticized the church’s ban on ordinations of unrepentant practicing homosexuals, charging that “the primary criteria for our church to confirm that [the call to ordination] is heterosexuality.” She also rejected Judicial Council ruling 1032, which she characterized as allowing a pastor to “decide whether to accept a gay or lesbian person to membership in the church.” In reference to these supposed inequalities, West questioned “the cost of this justice stuff” and what it would require to effect a “kind of radical systemic shift of bringing the powerful down from their thrones, of sending the rich away empty....”

West seemed to tie Jesus’ mother into today’s leftist political and sexual agendas: “I don’t know if you’re really ready for this audacious justice stuff of Mary’s.... We can’t embrace it without first being grounded in the justice of God.... It’s ... social; it’s also very political.... As lesbians, as gay men, as bisexuals, as transgendered, as intersex, and heterosexuals too ... our political identity, our social identity, all of that has to be negotiated as part of what it means to be rejoicing in God our Savior.”

Continuing her rambling remarks, West said, “I don’t know if we can go there. It may not be such a nice place. You may have to break the socialization you were taught.” She attacked various Bush administration policies, such as “the [alleged] enormous cuts in ... child healthcare” and “the racist, sexist policy that we pay billions of dollars for ... the Healthy Marriage Initiative.” The latter initiative, so disdained by the Drew professor, is a program offering

Blount saw a socialist prototype in the voluntary religious sharing of the Corinthian “love feast.”

voluntary training to poorer couples on how to form and sustain lasting marriages in which to rear their children.

"I know this is boring," added West. "You want to talk about Iraq, and you want to talk about the war and how the money is spent ... but we need to talk about the poor who don't even get on our agenda as progressives." She phrased her concern in class warfare terms: "What does it mean for the rich to be sent away empty?"

### Rallying Against the 'Far Right' Christian Teaching on Marriage

Kathryn Johnson, the current MFSA Executive Director, used an introduction to stress the federation's stand against traditional Christian and United Methodist standards of sexual behavior. "We just want to make sure that there is no doubt where MFSA stands," Johnson said. "We are calling for all discriminatory language to be removed from the [United Methodist] *Discipline*.... The discrimination which now riddles our *Discipline* is almost all ... related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons.... That's what we're talking about that needs to be removed!"

Scott Campbell, a Massachusetts pastor and columnist for *The Progressive Christian* magazine, remembered, "In October 2005 the Judicial Council surprised us.... They ruled that a Virginia pastor had the right to bar a gay man from membership in a local church because that man was unrepentant in his homosexuality." Campbell noted that "many did not believe that the Judicial Council would be so instrumental ... in the church's precipitous, slippery slide down the long slope to discrimination." This remark prompted later speakers from the pro-homosexuality Reconciling Ministries (Sue Lowry) and Affirmation (Diane DeLap) to introduce themselves sarcastically as "Sue, an unrepentant lesbian," and "Diane DeLap... an unrepentant transsexual."

California pastor Richard Bentley spoke about the need to elect a progressive Judicial Council at the 2008 Conference. Bentley mentioned current council members who favored ruling 1032, "...Holsinger, Boyet, [and] Daffin....," recalling:

"In 2000 when they were elected we were asleep at the wheel, and Good News and the Confessing Movement went into that 2000 conference convinced that they were going to take over the church." Consequently, he suggested, "It [ruling 1032] was not a surprise; we elected folks from the far right and we got it."

In 2008, Bentley said, "we're going to continue the strategy of working quietly with progressives and moderates to develop a slate of five people so there will not be vote splitting." Evidently, Bentley would regard as "far right" the vast majority of United Methodists who support the church's traditional teaching reserving sexual intimacy for the marriage of man and woman. "Moderates," in his rendering, include those who would join with MFSA in undermining that teaching.



**DISCRIMINATION** MFSA Director Kathryn Johnson described traditional Christian teachings concerning sexual behavior as "discriminatory." (UMNS)

### 'Worrying Less about the Christ of Our Salvation'

Conference participants took advantage of workshop sessions on both Saturday and Sunday. Former MFSA Executive Director George McClain led a workshop entitled "Faith in an Age of Empire." McClain mourned America's wayward path since the perceived glory days of the 1960s, saying, "It's almost like it was going downhill.... In so many ways, we looked at corporate America and the United States' role in the world. In so many ways, it was like a hardening ... one foreign incursion after another.... It was like we were trying to make up for the fact that we lost in Vietnam.... In some ways, these things seem to

be getting worse."

McClain showed clips from the documentary film "Theologians Under Hitler," which he called a "kind of ... dramatic example of the malleability of religion by ... the powers of empire." He spoke of his fellow social activists, stating, "I think one of the ways that we in our lives are vulnerable in the current religious climate is because I/we are not sufficiently prepared to deal with the theological aspects ... the accusations that we are not ... Wesleyan ... Methodist" and that "we are apostate because we don't adhere to one particular kind of Christianity."

Consequently, McClain had participants discuss their personal theological perspectives through one of three presumably distinct interpretations of Christian theology: the penal substitution/atonement model focused on Christ's death as securing redemption from sin, the moral influence model stressing Jesus as an example for Christian living, and the *Christus Victor* model hailing Christ's resurrection victory over sin and death.

One participant suggested that the *Christus Victor* model was flawed: "the *Christus Victor* image can be used, in effect, to support empire." Tending toward the moral influence model, McClain explained that in his own experience, "...one of the things we focused on was worrying less about the Christ of our salvation and more about the things he said and did in the Bible."

Participants exalted the supposedly liberating nature of progressive theology, saying, "We don't know God; we experience God." Another added that "as progressives we are always progressing, never letting it [our theology] get tied down in a simple orthodox answer." Some called for wider-ranging theological sources, saying, "Our theology must be based on more than our own [Christian] scriptures.... We are too parochial, I think." ■



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# United Methodist Seminary Event Ponders “Queering the Church”—and Silencing IRD

by Ray Nothstine

The United Methodist-affiliated Boston University School of Theology hosted and sponsored an April 18-19 conference on “Queering the Church: Changing Ecclesial Structures.” Speakers at the event on the Boston University campus delved into discussions of “hard-core queer theology,” “triadic unions,” “erotic relation with the divine,” and the “queerness of God.”

The term “queer,” often used as an insult against homosexuals, has more recently been taken up by some radical gay and lesbian theorists as a badge of honor flaunting their non-conformity with social and sexual norms. This kind of delight in transgressing traditional boundaries was the prevailing spirit at “Queering the Church.” Speakers almost seemed to compete against one another to see who could utter the most outrageous sentiments furthest from Christian orthodoxy.

The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* lifts up for candidates and ministers “the highest standards of holy living in the world,” including “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness.” The *Discipline* specifies, “The practice of homosexuality is inconsistent with Christian teaching” (§304, 2-3). But

none of the speakers at the Boston University conference espoused or explained that teaching to the pastors, seminary students, theologians, and others in attendance. The only message heard at the United Methodist-related seminary event was a relentless and radical attack on the denomination’s own standards of doctrine and behavior.

There was only one exception to the message of limitless tolerance. Conference organizer Alexander Hivoltze-Jimenez attempted to silence this reporter (and the IRD) with acts of theft, deceit, and attempted bribery.

## Eager to Explore ‘Divine Bodies’

The first speaker at “Queering the Church” was Professor Mark Jordan from the Department of Religion at United Methodist-affiliated Emory University in Atlanta. Jordan, in his lecture on “Theater of Divine Bodies,” deconstructed traditional Christian teachings on sexuality in favor of a radical sexual liberation theology.

Jordan focused much of his talk on the

marginalization and silencing of homosexual persons within the Roman Catholic tradition. He denounced the “exclusion of queer bodies” and the “long history of persecution, and facing condemnation from dominant theologies.” Jordan quoted Catholic dissenter George Hyde, a forerunner of the modern gay church movement, as lamenting, “You have built closets in every room, and in God’s house there are no closets.” Dissenters, he said, had been defined as “an encampment of radical fairies and lesbian witches.”

By contrast, Jordan advocated the “Pope’s need to acknowledge natural law allows same-sex relationships.” He called for Christians to go further in “exploring the present queerness of bodies in church—or the implications of enacted queer ritual.” The Candler professor warned, “When churches fail queer people, they fail the principle of incarnational theology.... It is a refusal to understand what incarnation means.”

But Jordan offered a word of caution for gays and lesbians fighting to be ordained in mainline Protestant denominations. “We’ve had too many martyrs,” he said. “We don’t need more martyrs.” Jordan added, “We’ve played much too nice with the churches.” He advised activists to be in the fight for the right reasons and be careful not to allow the conflicts to damage their spiritual integrity and growth. There is an urgent “need to lift the ban on queer love,” Jordan concluded. “The language of the queer church is a hot breath of desire.”

## Touting ‘Hybrid Spiritualities’

Responding to Jordan was Robert Goss, a former Jesuit priest, the current pastor of North Hollywood Metropolitan Community Church, and the author of *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* and *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*. Goss identified himself as a “queer theologian in a queer church.”

Goss boasted of how his church puts on “gay passion plays with transgender characters, and queer nativity scenes.” He made reference to Jesus being “sexually intimate with his male disciples.” Goss redefined the Christian understanding of God’s grace in transgender language: “Grace works as a divine drag.”

“I do not deny the presence of Jesus in institutional churches,” Goss commented, “but we have to widen the concept of church beyond institutions.” He dismissed the

Speakers almost seemed to compete against one another to see who could utter the most outrageous sentiments furthest from Christian orthodoxy.



United Methodist Church as “a church of empty rhetoric,” because it denies ordination to practicing homosexuals.

Goss proclaimed enthusiastically that “hybrid spiritualities are the emerging spiritualities in our culture.” He noted his own personal mixing of Christianity and Buddhism within his spiritual journey.

Marcella Althaus Reid, a University of Edinburgh professor, focused on the “liberation of ecclesiology from heteroconstraints.” Althaus Reid said, “My reflection is that the church should become a space of dis/grace, in order to allow diversity and creation in its midst.”

### ‘Hot Breath’ in the Air

Retired Episcopal Divinity School professor Carter Heyward began her address by remarking, “Every day our own military and other militaries blow holes in the world.” Here and other places, Heyward insisted we need to recreate our world. She elaborated, “Queer theologians are called to be liberationists first.”

The widely-published professor at the Harvard-affiliated divinity school complained of being silenced by “hetero-patriarchy, which is also capitalist, militaristic, and sexist.” Heyward lamented the “simple disregard of dissident voices, and the silence of martyrs, [upon] which the Bush administration, Patriot Act, and War on Terror is based.”

Heyward found liberation from this oppression in “the hot desire of a queer God who we incarnate and share flesh with.” She exalted “queering theology” as “a witnessing of incarnation, which is the hot breath

of desire on divine skin.”

Kelly Brown Douglas, a professor at Goucher College in Baltimore, gave the final address at the conference. Defining herself as an “Episcopal priest and womanist theologian,” Brown Douglas spoke on “Singing the Blues/Reclaiming the Faith: The Black Church and Sexuality.” The concern expressed in her title was with “how the black church rejected the blues-singing women,” whom it labeled as “hyper-sexualized Jezebels.”

Brown Douglas attacked African-American churches that hold more traditional views on sexuality. “The black church lags behind for gender justice,” she said. The Goucher professor also rhetorically asked, “How is it a church so committed to racial justice is so blatantly hypocritical?”

The crux of Brown Douglas’s argument was her call for “movement beyond the Platonized views of sexuality.” Such views, which she seemed to attribute to Christian orthodoxy in general, espouse an “anti-Christ” dualism of good and evil, soul and body.

According to Brown Douglas, “a Platonized Christian religion reveals the soul and reveals the body as sin.” Sexuality, she said, “is viewed as procreative good or lustfully bad.”

### The Limits of Tolerance

All of these pro-homosexuality arguments could have been expected. What was most unexpected was an incident on the conference’s final day. Having properly registered and paid for the conference, which was advertised as a public event, this

reporter had no reason to expect any difficulty in observing and reporting on it.

Instead, my tape recordings of the event were snatched from my possession. I later discovered that the tapes, including notes and proprietary information not related to the conference in any way, had been erased. This action was taken despite the fact that other conference attendees

were allowed to make recordings.

The conference organizer, Alexander Hivoltze-Jimenez, claimed that there were “no recordings allowed, and this was made known on the website.” When I confronted him about the lack of any such anti-taping stricture on the website, he then alleged that I had not registered for the conference. This assertion, too, was false—as Hivoltze-Jimenez had to admit that he had my registration check and intended to cash it.

At the end of the conference I tried to discuss the theft of my property with a Boston University Police officer. Hivoltze-Jimenez then threatened to have me expelled from the premises, although he subsequently backed down and called for dialogue between us.

The conference organizer then offered me a bribe in the amount of \$100 to turn over the written notes still in my possession. When I asked why he was so eager to suppress my coverage of the event, he charged that my and IRD’s reporting was “biased.” Yet Hivoltze-Jimenez could not cite any specific examples of inaccuracies, and he could not fault me for any lack of decorum at the conference. I had been peaceful and respectful at all times, and had even politely applauded speakers after their addresses.

### A Prayer for Light

While at first I was upset concerning the thefts and threats, my thoughts turned to forgiveness, my own sins, and grief for those in darkness. The center of the unity and triumph of the Church is the light of Christ. In the words of Isaiah:

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. ☩*

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**Ray Nothstine** is a recent graduate of Asbury Seminary and a former IRD intern.



**RECREATING THE WORLD** Carter Heyward insisted that the world needed to be “recreated” to free it from a “hetero-patriarchy” which was sexist, militaristic, and capitalist. (Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS)

# Presbyterian Action Delivers Balance to Middle East Debate

by James D. Berkley

**T**here are times when our denominations betray us and the IRD needs to offer the church what its leaders have failed to provide. Such was the case this spring in respect to fairness and truth about the Middle East, forcing IRD's Presbyterian Action committee to step in to rectify the situation.

In 2006, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly "recommend[ed] that each church and presbytery seriously consider celebrating one Week of Prayer and Witness with Christians in the Middle East during the season between Easter and Pentecost 2007." The intention sounded good, especially after two years of heated contention over Israel divestment. This 2006 General Assembly wanted to bend over backwards to be fair and evenhanded, following the disaster of partisan contentiousness experienced when the 2004 General Assembly ordered a divestment process targeted solely on Israel.

**The Israel/Palestine Mission Network apparently does not share the General Assembly's earnest desire for evenhandedness.**

In a healthy denomination, a week of observance would certainly be a good thing. Clearly the Middle East needs our prayers for its peace and freedom, and people everywhere need a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. However, in the Presbyterian Church,

few things are that simple. One-sided political agendas lurk behind good ideas and often sully the results.

Presbyterian Action has often criticized those one-sided agendas, and we were part of the coalition that encouraged the 2006 General Assembly commissioners to reverse the unwise divestment decision of 2004. Now we have concerns about signs that General Assembly staff members have not yet accepted the mandate for political balance. The official resources for the Middle East Week of Witness, for instance, evidence the same kind of bias that General Assembly sought to halt.

So Presbyterian Action decided to move beyond criticism to produce a positive alternative for congregations that wanted to observe the Week of Witness, an alternative not compromised by questionable theological or political slants. These worship materials and an annotated bibliography remain available on the IRD web site ([www.ird-renew.org/presbyterian/mideast](http://www.ird-renew.org/presbyterian/mideast)) for churches to utilize in place of the official resources, even after Pentecost.

We borrowed from the denominational resources where they seemed appropriate and valuable, but where necessary, we changed or inserted material to bring theological soundness and political balance. Readers who compare the official resources with the Presbyterian Action version will see, we hope, a small-scale model of constructive Christian engagement in potentially divisive political issues.

## Slanted Resources

So how did this Witness Week observance and the official resources come about? Although the overture emerged from the Presbytery of Western New York, the idea originated among leaders of the denominationally sponsored Israel/Palestine Mission Network (I/PMN). These advocates found themselves looking for a legislative vehicle to advance their political slant.

The I/PMN leadership settled on writing an innocuous-appearing overture to focus attention on the Middle East. An I/PMN activist in New Jersey has claimed that she was "in the group that realized this idea, although credit must go to Kathy Matsushita for coming up with the idea to begin with." Matsushita, who co-chairs I/PMN, lives in Illinois. Another I/PMN member ushered the overture through the Presbytery of Western New York.

It was no coincidence that the overture rationale tasked the I/PMN with producing the materials for the week of emphasis, in conjunction with denominational staff. That was a clever move. The members of the network thus created a nifty way to get the General Assembly to promote their "education" efforts.

The problem is that the Israel/Palestine Mission Network apparently does not share the General Assembly's earnest desire for evenhandedness. The I/PMN leadership is composed entirely of activists focused on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. They are ardent supporters of the Palestinian nationalist cause and roundly antagonistic toward Israel. Balance and an open forum are not even allowed in this ad hoc group.

The group, given official status by the General Assembly and operating with General Assembly Council staff and financial support, hews to a partisan political viewpoint that paints Israel as the evil oppressor and Palestinians as the innocent victims. It is out of this kind of one-sided ideology that the divestment movement arose,

with all its problems. And it is exactly this kind of factional side-taking that General Assembly voted to end in 2006.

However, it is not surprising that the bibliography, worship materials, and lesson plans the I/PMN produced reveal the network's heavily pro-Palestinian slant. The I/PMN could have conscientiously provided materials that reflected the General Assembly's call for fair-mindedness, but instead the I/PMN recommended materials long on Palestinian political propaganda and short on impartiality. Quite simply, for the most part, the I/PMN has delivered to us its biases.

Arguably the worst example of this bias is the recommended use of the video "Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land" for youth groups. The video begins with dramatically prejudicial opening lines that evoke sympathy for Palestinian refugees fleeing after Israeli military victories. But the lines fail to mention that those wars were triggered by Arab attempts to destroy nascent Israel.

From the beginning, this video is propaganda. It seems highly irresponsible for the I/PMN to commend such demagoguery for use with impressionable adolescents, whom the church ought to nurture rather than exploit.

The I/PMN members may certainly express political preferences, but not in materials for the entire denomination. Presbyterian commentator Will Spotts brings up a far greater problem, however: "the consistent effort they have undertaken to *obscure* the facts." Presbyterians will often disagree, but they should be able to expect openness, magnanimity, breadth of spirit, and fairness from their leadership. Such has not always been the case in respect to Israel and the Middle East.

It is disturbing to have a single faction corner the market on leadership and then flood the market with its opinions, while withholding acknowledgment of other

viewpoints and cutting off opportunity for fellow Presbyterians even to consider a broader perspective. Yet this is what has happened with respect to information about the Middle East, due to intransigence by those charged with being fair.

### Supplemental Resources

Presbyterian Action's resources reflect a desire to emphasize the Middle East, but not in the unacceptable manner set up by the I/PMN. Presbyterian Action took pains not to be a radically pro-Israel faction to



**BALANCING ACT** Too often, our churches take sides in complex debates, putting their own ideological perspective ahead of the truth—and as a result, making peace all the more difficult to achieve. (David Silverman/Getty Images)

counter the denomination's radically pro-Palestinian activists. We consider it as inappropriate to be totally pro-Israel as it would be to be entirely pro-Palestinian. Balance is what the church needs, not equivalent imbalance!

Since worship is first about God and our response to God, the Presbyterian Action-suggested worship resources focus on God's sovereignty and our hope that derives from God being God. This contrasts with the I/PMN worship resources that seem to imply that solving the complex problems of the Middle East is up to us and our striving, that the causes of strife are all socio-political, and that our government bears particular guilt in the matter that needs to be confessed.

In a similar manner, Presbyterian Action's bibliographic resources employ some of what the I/PMN suggested but provide both more simplicity and greater

balance. The resources offer information and a perspective valuable for Presbyterians seeking to better understand a complex situation that defies easy stereotypes.

### Spiritual Resources

In the final analysis, however, the tragic impasse in the Middle East is simply another manifestation of the fall of humankind. We humans evidence total depravity. We are sinful beings, and our sin carries with it deadly and disturbing consequences. As long as persons and nations and whole cultures rebel against God and God's gracious provision for our brokenness, there will be such tragedies. As long as self-interest, unforgiveness, hate, retribution, and tyranny motivate individuals and nations, death and destruction will continue. The Middle East remains a hotbed of seemingly intractable conflict, but it is only one such arena in which the sinfulness of humankind wreaks bitter results.

That is why as good as it is for us to seek understanding and wisdom, as

necessary as it is to broker compromise and rapprochement, as noble as it is to stand beside those who suffer, these marvelous human solutions will ultimately be shown to be inadequate by themselves. What is needed is God's miraculous *shalom*, the full and robust peace that passes all understanding, the peace only God can bring.

And so we do our best. We think our hardest. We exercise conscience and will. But, even better than that, we pray. We ask God to usher in peace, and we ask God to make us instruments of that peace. 📖



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