



INSIGHTS

A CHURCH AT RISK: THE EPISCOPAL “RENEWAL MOVEMENT”

BY LEWIS C. DALY

The Episcopal Church's magnificent National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., became the spiritual focal point for a nation in mourning on September 14. There, under its vaulted ceilings, President Bush made his first major speech following the attack on the World Trade Center. The congregation of former presidents, congressional and military leaders, and spiritual dignitaries was a reminder not only of the Cathedral's political stature in Washington but of the

historic importance of the Episcopal Church, and indeed mainline Christianity as a whole, in our nation's public life.

The presence of Washington, D.C., Bishop *pro tempore* Jane Dixon, who welcomed the assembled leadership of the nation, is further testament to the Episcopal Church's public importance, particularly the importance of its commitment to women's equality. Few who witnessed the mournful

grandeur of that scene could have guessed, however, that the Episcopal Church, and Jane Dixon herself, are under attack. Nor would they suspect that beneath the surface of mainstream stability afforded by the religious surroundings of that day, a conservative movement is seeking to uproot the Episcopal Church from its historic role in American public life.

The Mainstream Under Siege

A 2.6 million-member Protestant denomination, the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) is the official American province of the 70-million member worldwide Anglican Communion, based in Great Britain and led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The national and global importance of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The decades-long conservative attack on the Episcopal Church recently escalated with the formation of the schismatic Anglican Mission in America (AMiA). In this photo, taken June 2001 in a Denver church, Mission leaders consecrated four American priests as “bishops” of the AMiA. Rwandan bishops Emmanuel Kolini (front left) and John Rucyahana (top center) are spearheading international support for this historic political effort to undermine mainline Protestantism's most progressive denomination. Also participating in the ceremony were Charles Murphy (top, second from left) and John Rodgers (top right), American Episcopal priests who were themselves consecrated by Kolini and other overseas leaders as the first AMiA bishops in January 2000.



The right wing and their allies in Washington have taken the art of political exploitation to new heights in their bid to translate the September 11 attacks into domestic policy gains.

Tax cuts for the wealthy have been repackaged as wartime “economic stimulus.” Civil liberties, especially for immigrants and political groups, are under assault. The oil companies’ designs on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are being pressed as a blueprint for energy independence from the Muslim world. A public relations campaign designed to paint opposition to Bush’s judicial nominations as a hindrance to the prosecution of terrorism has been opportunistically pushed by right-wing members of the Judiciary Committee such as Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ).

These items are part of a longstanding and comprehensive agenda of ultraconservative forces to transform key elements of our mainstream consensus. To accomplish these goals they have made a concerted effort to neutralize, gain influence in, or simply take over key centrist institutions of our society such as the Republican Party and the American Bar Association.

The mainline denominations are another prime target, representing billions of dollars in assets as well as formidable communications capacities that exert enormous moral influence in defining “Judeo-Christian values” for policymakers and voters. Under particularly aggressive attack are the Presbyterian, United Methodist, and Episcopal churches—with their combined membership of 14 million. The Right has already succeeded in taking over the largest Protestant denomination in the nation, the Southern Baptist Convention, and is using it effectively to advance its agenda. While IDS is a secular institution, we know that if the Right captures these churches, it will dramatically augment its influence in many areas.

IDS’s Religion and Democracy Program has been painstakingly documenting the efforts of the far right to transform the religious landscape of our nation. We have done so in our groundbreaking volume, *A Moment to Decide: The Crisis of Mainstream Presbyterianism*; in the pages of this publication, including an in-depth article on the efforts of the National Right to Life Committee to build anti-choice lobbying cells in the various denominations (to view, go to www.idsonline.org); and through last Spring’s lecture series at Union Theological Seminary in New York, entitled “Religious Fault Lines in American Democracy.”

Recently retired from his prominent post as the bishop of the Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., the Right Reverend Ronald Haines has taken the important step of standing up to the most recent effort of the Right in the mainline arena, targeting the 70 million-member worldwide Anglican Communion and its official American province, the 2.6 million member Episcopal Church, USA. Haines is one of a number of national church leaders who understands that the deterioration of the mainline churches’ public commitments is part of a wider political struggle in our nation’s history, one that requires new levels of knowledge and institutional response. “Aided by IDS’s unique capacity and social commitment,” he says, “the church can assess the ground it has already lost to the radical right as well as the ominous political landscape that lies ahead. I can think of no other aid in our struggle as important as this.”

This issue of *IDS Insights* is dedicated to providing an overview of the internal and external forces driving the growing conflict within the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church. The outcome of engagements such as this—between extremism and moderation—will go a long way toward defining what kind of nation we are to become.

Finally, a word about our new format. Beginning with this issue, each *IDS Insights* will be dedicated to a single topic—examined at length and in depth. The advantages of such an approach are many, but the one perhaps of most interest to you, the reader, is that in future you will be receiving copies of *Insights* more often and on a more regular basis. We think this is a big step forward in getting our story to the American public, and we welcome your input and participation in this important process.

—Alfred F. Ross

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ECUSA situation is reflected in the many recent headlines it has garnered in the conservative and mainstream press, as well as in the growing involvement of right-wing institutions outside the church that have long desired to rid the public square of mainline religious authority, funding, and influence.¹ Among the most important of these is the Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), whose president, Diane Knippers, is also a key leader of the Episcopal right wing.

Enhanced by a growing international dimension, the conservative bid for power within the Anglican Communion has taken the ultimate step of promoting schism within ECUSA. The seriousness of this development is not lost on prominent mainstream sectors of the church. In fact, one of ECUSA's most illustrious historic parishes, Trinity Wall Street in New York City, has taken a firm stand against the schismatics, one that signals an important new stage in the church's response to the Right.

Faced with a traditionally liberal ECUSA, right-wing forces have focused on developing bases in Africa and other regions from which to stage inroads back into the United States. In a notice posted on its website, Trinity accused three Rwandan bishops of "actively working to promote schism within the Episcopal Church in the United States."² At issue was the June 2001 consecration in Denver of four Anglican priests as bishops in the newly formed Anglican Mission in America (AMiA), first established at St. Andrews Cathedral in Singapore in January 2000. In response, Trinity rejected a \$146,000 grant request from the Province of Rwanda, one of the AMiA's two sponsoring jurisdictions (for more on the AMiA, see *An International Strategy*, below). Trinity spokesperson Judith M. Gillespie noted that, while Trinity did not believe its partners had to agree with it theologically, "Trinity Church cannot provide support to a church that undertakes such divisive activity within our own church."³ Trinity and many other ECUSA parishes provide significant support for Anglican churches and initiatives overseas.

Among the conservative leaders who have attacked the Trinity Wall Street decision is Stephen Noll, former dean of the Pennsylvania-based Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry and one time priest of Truro Episcopal Church (Virginia)—both important institutional strongholds of the Episcopal right wing. Noll has asserted that the grant rejection is "the first of its kind in that [Trinity Wall Street was] so explicit about why they were doing it."⁴ Noll's concern is understandable, as he was recently appointed vice-chancellor of Uganda Christian University, which depends heavily on money from Great Britain and the United States. Notably, Ugandan bishops make up the largest contingent in the ECUSA right wing's growing international network, and Noll's new post is clearly an important link in this strategic process. His intervention in this high-level church controversy is characteristic of his work across denominational lines as well. In the fall of 1999 he was the star witness in an important ecclesiastical trial in the Presbyterian Church, where he testified against same-sex unions.⁵

A Broad-Based Attack

Understanding what is happening in ECUSA requires a new interdisciplinary focus cutting across law, religion, and politics. Many bedrock institutions of the American mainstream have become increasingly vulnerable to the strategy of the Right, as has been seen in the Christian Coalition's targeting of the Republican Party and the Federalist Society's targeting of the American Bar Association. This is certainly true of the mainline churches, notably the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church, but also increasingly the Episcopal Church, arguably the most progressive of the major mainline denominations.⁶

Opposition to the mainline churches has deep roots that extend back to the early part of the 20th century, with the fundamentalist/modernist controversies that began in the seminaries. This opposition evolved in different ways after World War II—on a nondenominational or "parachurch" basis—in order to challenge the churches' growing commitment to labor

rights, civil rights, and international social justice.⁷ As the churches grew in their institutional commitments to these issues and others in the 1950s and '60s, "fundamentalism" was increasingly bankrolled by right-wing laypeople and became intertwined with the rise of the New Right in national politics, led by the Heritage Foundation. A key bridge figure between the business world, the broader conservative movement, and denominational life was the oil magnate J. Howard Pew, who founded the Presbyterian Lay Committee in 1965. This marked the arrival of a distinctive right-wing "renewal" effort *within* individual denominations, led by the Presbyterian Lay Committee and the Good News movement (Methodist). The last 15 years have seen a similar phenomenon develop in the Episcopal Church USA.

There is a lot at stake in the direction of American religion in the coming years. Following the historic right-wing takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the 1980s, the mainline churches stand as a primary battlefield in the expanding landscape of anti-democratic politics in the United States. Notably, one of the main thrusts of the SBC takeover was the church's adoption of an official doctrine of women's submission to male authority. Women's ordination is a major target of components of the Episcopal right wing as well. Likewise, the women's divisions of the Presbyterian and United Methodist churches have been ruthlessly attacked since the early 1990s.

Conflicts over women's leadership, homosexuality, the status of the Bible, interfaith relations, and theological diversity severely destabilized all the mainline churches in the 1990s. But these are in fact merely "wedge" issues within a broader institutional process that is unfolding throughout the mainline arena. Driving this process, these denominational "renewal movements" (the misnomer by which they are popularly known) are seeking to capture the churches—their heritage, their authority, and their assets—for social and political conservatism. Measuring and countering this effort is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

one of the most important challenges the churches now face.

Renegade Authoritarianism

A major denominational flashpoint has been ECUSA's Washington, D.C., diocese, where an ultraconservative priest, Samuel Edwards, was elected rector of Christ Church, Accokeek, Maryland, in December 2000. Washington's Bishop Dixon challenged Edwards' appointment when concerned members of Christ Church directed her attention to his neo-traditionalist and schis-



Samuel Edwards, controversial rector of Christ Church in Accokeek, Maryland

matic views of the church as well as his opposition to women's ordination, which was established in the church in the late 1970s. Edwards has characterized ECUSA as a mutinous, "hell-bound machinery" that must be "gummed up" by "souls and bodies" before it self-destructs.⁸

Prior to his arrival in Maryland, Edwards asserted in an interview with Bishop Dixon that he could not accept her authority as a bishop because she is a woman.⁹ A group of Edwards' supporters brought ecclesiastical charges against Dixon after she took action to assume control of Christ Church. These charges were rejected by a nine-member review committee appointed by ECUSA's General Convention. In late June 2001 the diocese brought a suit in U.S. District Court against Christ Church to force Edwards' removal, which was upheld in an October ruling.¹⁰ This litigation and subsequent appeals could cost the Washington diocese upward of \$1 million. One of ECUSA's most visible conservative organizations, the American Anglican Council, has created a crisis fund in support of Edwards.

Edwards did not come out of nowhere. In fact, he has made a career in ecclesiastical politics out of rejecting any authority in the church that he regards as "revisionist," ordained women's leadership foremost among them. Edwards was formerly executive director of Forward in Faith North America (FiF/NA), the successor organization to the Episcopal Synod of America (ESA), which he helped to found in 1989 to challenge women's ordination in ECUSA.¹¹ Two FiF/NA parishes, St. James the Less in East Falls and St. John's in Huntington Valley, Pennsylvania, have precipitated related conflicts in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, where Bishop Charles Bennisson has been refused his rights of visitation "because he has taught and acted contrary to Scripture and the common faith of the Anglican Communion."¹² St. James the Less actually seceded from ECUSA in April 1999 but remains in possession of its diocesan property. Members of St. John's voted to sever ties with ECUSA and form a separate congregation in May 2001.

In both Washington and Pennsylvania the dissenting churches have sought ecclesial oversight from conservative bishops outside their dioceses. When highly politicized as in the Accokeek case, the effect of these "flying bishops"—a strategy originally established in 1993 after the Church of England voted to ordain women—is to destabilize ecclesial structures by forcing diocesan and national leadership to expend valuable resources, energy, and political capital to defend not only the principles under attack, but the integrity of the church's governance and public authority as a whole.

Battleground of Canon Law

The Edwards case is clearly one important wedge in a growing strategic design that has accelerated dramatically within ECUSA in recent years. The ultraconservative thrust of this strategy is well represented by its recently formed legal arm, the Canon Law Institute, led by Charles Nalls. Headlined by its representation of Samuel Edwards in the Accokeek case, the Canon Law Institute, with its team of twelve pro bono lawyers and volunteer staff of thirty-five, has emerged as a pivotal legal resource for conservative

churches in conflict with their denominations, mainly in the Episcopal Church.¹³ Underlying the theological questions of apostasy and schism that frame many of these conflicts, the control of property is the real issue. It is no coincidence that the Canon Law Institute has emerged at a time when many conservative leaders are promoting schism and hundreds of millions of dollars in assets are at stake.

Notably, the Canon Law Institute, incorporated in 1998, was founded by the late Kenneth E. North. North was an unheralded but important figure at the center of Pat Robertson's religious right empire. At his death he was the director of international operations at Robertson's Regent University and a member of its law faculty. Prior to this he served as director of Regent's Center for Leadership Studies, a remarkable program designed to equip conservative Christians with strategic institution-building skills grounded in the most advanced forms of leadership theory and systems analysis.

With the Christian Coalition in decline, Regent has become a major focal point of Robertson's political agenda, and North was the chief architect of its international expansion efforts before his untimely death.¹⁴ His commitment to advancing Robertson's agenda did not divert him from the right-wing cause in ECUSA, however. Upon founding the Canon Law Institute, he issued a series of legal papers aimed at the church. These include a lengthy review of recent church property disputes in the civil courts as well as a two-part analysis of Anglican canon law as it relates to "flying bishops" within ECUSA.¹⁵

Charles Nalls, North's successor as director of the Canon Law Institute, is Of Counsel at the firm of deKieffer & Horgan in Washington, where he specializes in intellectual property and trade litigation. Both he and firm partner Donald deKieffer, a Republican Party leader, are members of Anglo-Catholic splinter churches in the Washington area. Part of a "continuing church" tradition that rejects ECUSA as apostate, many of these splinter churches consolidated institutionally in the late 1970s, when ECUSA voted to begin ordaining women. deKieffer is the secretary of the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen,

the central “continuing church” leadership network.

The Canon Law Institute’s involvement in the Accokeek case, among others, shows that these are not isolated conflicts but part of a broader pattern of destabilization that is emerging within the church, with significant ecclesial as well as political implications. Anti-hierarchical in appearance, these parish rebellions are in fact attacks on the democratic commitments of the church. As in the other mainline churches, where the right is even further advanced, ECUSA faces a serious anti-democratic challenge from a minority faction with significant resources, political vision, and ideological commitment at its disposal.

The Renewal Movement

Despite a decade of institutional growth on the part of its right wing, ECUSA has shown a striking resilience at its recent General Conventions. These triennial legislative assemblies, the most recent of which was in the summer of 2000, have soundly rejected conservative efforts to challenge the ordination of women and stanch the growing acceptance of gay/lesbian leadership and marriage. This says little, however, about the intent, scope, and strategy of the church’s right wing.

The political climate of the church, and the impact of its right wing, cannot be measured simply in terms of General Convention votes. This is nowhere more true than in ECUSA, where significant diocesan-level and international factors play a critical role in shaping the direction of the church. It should not be assumed, moreover, that the American Anglican Council and its affiliates will not become increasingly influential at the General Convention. In 2000 the AAC mounted an impressive strategic effort, equal in scale to right-wing efforts in the Presbyterian and United Methodist churches, which became effective only after years of practice and experience on the part of the evangelical leadership. On that occasion the AAC had a network of 150 people, ranging from legislative committee advisors to full intercessory prayer teams. Diane Knippers led the AAC’s legislative strategy task force

and claims that 17 of its 29 resolutions were adopted. While none of these were major victories, the church’s adoption of conservative resolutions on “religious persecution,” “post-abortion ministries,” and sexual abstinence is not insignificant. These wedge issues will continue to be pressed in an effort to fundamentally reshape the positions of the church.¹⁶

Furthermore, in gauging the renewal movement’s significance, it is important to understand that mainline liberalism, whatever its relative strength within the churches, has significantly deteriorated in the wider public landscape of American religion, which has shifted dramatically to the right in recent decades. Attacks launched against the Episcopal House of Bishops’ critical statement on the U.S. response to the World Trade Center attack, published in *U.S. News & World Report* and other venues, are illustrative of this trend. Mainline religious authority, once a critical buffer against the right’s



IRD president Diane Knippers has spearheaded important interdenominational networking among mainline conservatives as well as a growing alliance between mainline renewal movements and the broader social agenda of the religious right.

manipulation of wartime conditions for domestic gain, has had diminishing impact in this arena—indeed, in virtually every policy arena—since the late-1980s.¹⁷ This, coupled with steep membership declines, has placed the mainline churches in an extremely vulnerable position in terms of their social and theological commitments, one that the right is able to intensify and exploit in an attempt to strengthen its position and influence.

These developments have the vast political interests of the American religious right on their side as well. Already there are signs that the religious right is seeking to leverage the efforts of the Episcopal renewal movement

as a countervailing claimant to the Anglican heritage. James Dobson, Robert George, Richard John Neuhaus, and other leaders of the religious right would like nothing more than to be able to rely on Episcopalianism as a bulwark for their cultural warfare.¹⁸

Early Manifestations

The Episcopal renewal movement was relatively slow to gain influence in the landscape of anti-mainline politics. Its history is complicated by the presence of three unique currents—Anglo-Catholic, evangelical, and charismatic—each with its own theological and historical pedigree. Samuel Edwards, for instance, is part of an Anglo-Catholic tradition represented by Forward in Faith. The main institutional and networking components of the Episcopal right, however, have come out of predominantly evangelical and charismatic circles, with roots in the Fellowship of Witness, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry (TESM), and Charles Fulton’s Episcopal Renewal Ministries. The evangelical influence is dominant among the politically focused renewal organizations of more recent vintage as well, including Episcopalians United, formed in 1987, and the American Anglican Council, formed in 1996.

Today’s Episcopal renewal movement has important roots in John Stott’s U.K.-based Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC), an American branch of which was established in 1961. Stott is Anglicanism’s most influential evangelical leader of the last century. Through his vast writings and ministry efforts he has long been a key bridge figure between evangelical parachurch movements and mainline evangelicals, not unlike Bill Bright and Billy Graham but with a far more respectable academic and ecclesiastical imprimatur. General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion until 1981, Stott’s most important effort was the development of a scholarship program that brought ministry leaders from Anglican provinces in the developing world to England for 2-3 years of theological training. Evangelical revival movements sprang up in Africa and Asia as a result of this leadership strategy, the fruits of which were strongly evident at the 1998

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Lambeth Conference, the decennial meeting of Anglican bishops from around the world. In 1998, Lambeth was dominated by a well-organized bloc of conservative evangelical bishops from developing nations, working closely with a small faction of conservative American bishops.¹⁹

Unlike its Presbyterian and Methodist counterparts, the EFAC (US) did not immediately have a powerful impact on the U.S. church. However, it created significant “parachurch” space for evangelicals within the U.S. church to build pastoral networks and a theological identity aligned with other evangelical efforts throughout the Anglican Communion. This gained momentum in 1968 when John Stott made his first appearance at an EFAC (US) meeting. The Leesburg, Virginia, meeting was the group’s first national conference, and Stott became a regular advisor thereafter.²⁰

Another important Church of England evangelical transplant, John Guest, took up the EFAC banner from his important post at St. Stephens Church in Sewickley, Pennsylvania. Led by Guest and his assistant John Howe, the EFAC (US) was renamed the Fellowship of Witness and lodged with a small staff at St. Stephens beginning in 1974. With this came an increasing focus on spreading evangelical renewal within the Episcopal Church USA. Guest and Howe began publishing a periodical called *Christian Foundations* to communicate their message within ECUSA.²¹

Important contemporary leaders of the Episcopal right who were nurtured in EFAC/FOW include bishops John Howe, C. Fitzsimons Allison (ret.), and Alden Hathaway (ret.)—all signatories to the watershed Dallas Statement of 1997 (see below); the Rev. John Rodgers, a longtime trustee of what was until recently the largest renewal organization in the church, Episcopalians United; and Peter Moore, the current president of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, a founding member of its board of trustees, and a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary. Fuller is the most important nondenominational training center for conservative evangelicals in the mainline churches.

Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry

Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry (TESM), which became a central hub for evangelical and charismatic activity in the late 1970s, emerged out of the Fellowship of Witness, led by John Guest.²² The first significant institutional base for the Episcopal right, TESM was founded in 1975 specifically as an evangelical training and mission center within ECUSA. This institutional commitment is bearing fruit today in the form of well-educated leadership for the renewal movement and its supporting parishes.

Notably, TESM has also been a center for charismatic activity. In 1987, for example, 2,200 Episcopalians attended the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization in the New Orleans Superdome. The report of then-TESM dean and president John Rodgers on this event was published in TESM’s newsletter, *Seed & Harvest*, in September 1987. Rodgers himself led a workshop on “Risking Obedience to the Holy Spirit,” and other TESM officials/affiliates gave presentations, including



John Guest leads the convocation opening Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry’s first school year in 1976. With Trinity as a launching pad, Guest and his colleagues John Rodgers (left) and Peter Moore (right) have helped to build conservative institutions and networks that have attacked the Episcopal Church with increasing success since the early 1990s.

Alden Hathaway and John Guest. Guest would continue on this charismatic parachurch path as a speaker at Promise Keepers’ events in the 1990s. Among the national speakers who addressed the Episcopal contingent at the New Orleans meeting were George Gallup, the conservative religious pollster, and Bob Slosser, then president of Pat Robertson’s CBN University.

The Congress was organized by the North American Renewal Service Committee, the central strategic networking organization of the charismatic renewal movement, with strong Catholic influence as well as a significant far-right “spiritual warfare” current. Episcopal participation in the Congress was organized by Charles Fulton’s Episcopal Renewal Ministries (ERM), ECUSA’s historic charismatic network.²³ Notably, Bob Slosser was a member of the board of ERM during this peak period in charismatic growth within and outside the mainline churches. In 1986, ERM moved to Truro Episcopal Church in Fairfax, Virginia—among the most important historic parishes of the renewal movement. By 1989, ERM had a staff of 22 and claimed that at least 400 ECUSA parishes were heavily involved in charismatic renewal.²⁴

Among ERM’s many effective initiatives, the most notable is perhaps Project Blessing, which sponsored evangelical leaders from the developing world for short-term ministry in U.S. parishes. Exposure to international voices has played an important role in challenging the colonial mentality of Christian mission work, of course. But in the

hands of groups like ERM, the fundamentalist aspects of overseas Christianity, nurtured at the expense of social issues, were forged into a witness against theological diversity and social tolerance in the U.S. church. Since the late 1990s, this “missionary blowback” has evolved in highly politicized ways and is now a central ingredient in the strategy of the Right.

Political Growth

Ambridge, Pennsylvania, the home of TESM, was also the birthplace of Episcopalians United for Revelation, Renewal, and Reformation (EURRR; EU hereafter). EU was incorporated in 1987 by TESM treasurer George S. Oliver, and it was run for many years out of offices in Solon, Ohio—home of its executive director, Todd Wetzel. Wetzel got his start in the charismatic wing of the church as editor of ERM's magazine, *Acts 29*. In 1997 he moved EU's offices to the home diocese of the American Anglican Council and its founding chairman, Bishop James M. Stanton.

In a movement that had been dominated by pastoral networking and education, EU brought a new national focus on accomplishing "constructive change in the structure and ministry of the Church," including a more organized presence at the church's triennial General Conventions. According to tax records, Episcopalians United took in nearly \$7.4 million in contributions from 1990 to 1999, although this income has been declining steadily since the mid-1990s, when the American Anglican Council was formed. In 1999, EU's income was \$440,793.²⁵ Among EU's important leaders are former trustee John Rodgers, who was also a founding board member of the American Anglican Council. More recently, Rodgers co-founded the Anglican Mission in America to escalate a schismatic/parallel jurisdiction strategy against ECUSA (see below). Another important EU leader who has branched out recently is trustee William Bugg of St. Jude's Church in Smyrna, Georgia. Bugg is now chairman of the U.S. Anglican Congress, which is sponsoring a major gathering of the full spectrum of "orthodox" Anglican currents in the United States in the spring of 2002.

American Anglican Council & the IRD

Building on the political focus of Episcopalians United, a high-profile national platform called the American Anglican Council was established by key leaders in 1996. Originally housed in Texas, the AAC was actually incorporated by a trio of Washington insiders, including two former

Reagan Justice Department officials and the president of the most important Washington think tank targeting the social justice commitments of the mainline churches.

AAC incorporator Richard Campanelli is currently a shareholder in the law firm of Gammon & Grange in McLean, Virginia, specializing in not-for-profit tax law. According to a biography posted on the website of George Mason University, where he is on the faculty, Campanelli has "advised and represented numerous religious institutions on constitutional, regulatory compliance and public policy issues, and was recently named chairman of the firm's nonprofit practice group." Formerly he served in the Reagan Justice Department as Senior Special Assistant to the Attorney General.

James Wootton, another of the AAC's incorporators and also a founding board member, was Deputy Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the Reagan Justice Department and later became president of the Safe Streets Alliance in Washington. Among other things, the Safe Streets Alliance drafted right-wing anti-crime legislation promoting the use of a profiling system called the Serious Habitual Offender Comprehension Action Program.²⁶ The Safe Streets Alliance received \$250,000 from the Sara Scaife Foundation between 1995 and 1997 as well as significant funding from other right-wing foundations.²⁷

Wootton and Campanelli were joined as incorporators of the AAC by Diane Knippers, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), who also joined the AAC's founding board of directors as treasurer.²⁸ AAC founding chairman James Stanton, in turn, joined the board of IRD in 1997. John Rodgers was an IRD board member as early as 1992, when he served as secretary.

A product of the Reagan revolution, since the early 1980s IRD has been the most important Washington think tank targeting the social commitments of the mainline churches, with substantial backing from right-wing foundations, including Sara Scaife and Bradley, as well as Howard Ahmanson's Fieldstead & Company (see below). IRD has played a significant strate-

gic role in the broader conservative movement by attacking and weakening the mainline churches' public authority on foreign policy, economics, and cultural politics. The religious perspective on these issues in Washington is now largely dictated by institutions of the religious right such as the Family Research Council and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. This is especially noticeable in conservative State Department and national security circles, where IRD leads a growing effort to promote evangelical foreign policy agendas in Muslim countries (notably Sudan), China, and elsewhere.²⁹

IRD has recently launched an unprecedented four-year project called "Reforming America's Churches." With a proposed budget of \$3.6 million, the project is targeting the general conventions of the major mainline churches on multiple legislative fronts in the social policy arena, working through the IRD's denominational committees. In addition to being president of IRD, Knippers serves as director of IRD's denominational committee in ECUSA, Episcopal Action. Her activity in ECUSA has increased significantly since her involvement in the AAC's historic effort at Lambeth 1998.³⁰

A Washington Axis

Knippers is a member of Truro Episcopal Church in Fairfax, Virginia. Truro is an historically evangelical parish that grew to 3,000 members, with a strongly revivalistic emphasis, under the leadership of then rector John Howe (1976-89), formerly John Guest's assistant at St. Stephens in Sewickley and a pioneering leader of the Episcopal renewal movement.

In the 1980s, Truro and its charismatic sister church, The Church of the Apostles, became an important religious hub for the political right wing in Washington, including Oliver North and Clarence Thomas. Howe supported Pat Robertson when he ran for president in 1988 and, more recently, he participated in a charismatic "re-ordination" service for Robertson held at Regent University.³¹ He was formerly president and chairman of the board of the National Organization of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Episcopalians for Life, part of a network of mainline anti-abortion movements now being organized by the National Right to Life Committee.³² In 1990 Howe became the third bishop of the Diocese of Central Florida, and joined the board of the American Anglican Council in 1998. In 2000 he gave the keynote address at Y2K4JC, a youth revival event held in Boulder, Colorado, during ECUSA's 2000 General Convention in Denver. Headlined by Colin Powell, the event was co-sponsored by the American Anglican Council and the Diocese of Colorado.³³

Despite John Howe's departure in 1989, Truro has remained an important parish for the Episcopal renewal movement. Its current rector, Martyn Minns, serves on the board of the American Anglican Council. This strong Washington axis centered on Truro and IRD sets the AAC apart from previous renewal efforts, along with the heavy involvement of bishops. Pittsburgh bishop Robert Duncan is currently the AAC's vice president and chair of its bishops network. Six conservative bishops led by Stanton were on the founding board of the AAC, including Duncan's predecessor in Pittsburgh, the ubiquitous Alden Hathaway, and the Anglo-Catholic Keith Ackerman, Bishop of Quincy (IL) and member of the Council of Forward in Faith/North America. The presence of these bishops has undoubtedly contributed to the AAC's relative financial success—more than \$1.5 million in contributions and program revenue from 1996 to 1999.

A Calvinist Thrust?

In addition to the important national connections that marked its founding in 1996, other important national connections have bolstered the AAC in its development. Among these, the support of far-right California banking heir Howard F. Ahmanson, Jr., stands out. The AAC has reportedly received a significant matching grant pledge from Ahmanson.³⁴ While he apparently has had little to do with ECUSA until recently, Ahmanson is a household name among students of the far right, in particular the extreme right wing of American Protestantism known as Christian Reconstructionism. This movement, based primarily in Presbyterian splinter churches

and derived from Calvinist political theology, believes in the necessity of establishing a theocratic dominion on earth, ruled by Christians and organized according biblical law. For many years Ahmanson bankrolled and was a trustee of the Chalcedon Foundation, the intellectual center of Reconstructionism led by the late Rousas John Rushdoony, a right-wing extremist with roots in the John Birch Society. In 1996 it was reported that Ahmanson attends St. James Episcopal Church in Newport Beach, California, whose rector, David Anderson, is the current president of the AAC.³⁵

Ahmanson is also a major funder of Republican political campaigns and right-wing referenda movements. In 1998, for example, he contributed \$350,000 in support of Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action in California state institutions and contracting.³⁶ He has also been an important backer of Marvin Olasky, the architect of President Bush's faith-based initiative.³⁷ In a more recent development, Ahmanson's wife, Roberta Green Ahmanson, has joined the board of IRD—a strong sign of the Ahmansons' growing commitment to the religious right's assault on mainline denominations.

Another of the AAC's important national connections is Bruce Chapman, formerly the chairman of the AAC and currently its vice president. A significant political pedigree lies behind Chapman's work for Episcopal renewal. Chapman worked in the first Reagan administration as Deputy Assistant to the President and as Director of the White House Office of Planning and Evaluation, and later was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Organizations in Vienna. In 1990 he founded, and is currently president of, the Seattle-based Discovery Institute. Among the many things that this important conservative think tank promotes is a new creationist movement called "intelligent design," through its Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture. Howard Ahmanson has pledged \$2.8 million through 2003 to support the Center, according to the Baptist Press.³⁸ This may explain Chapman's involvement in soliciting Ahmanson's financial support for the AAC.³⁹

An International Strategy

"The election [to bishop] of John Rodgers and Chuck Murphy signals a major shift in power within the Anglican Communion."

—Peter Moore, Dean and President
Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry

In 1998 the ECUSA renewal movement was significantly reformulated by a strong evangelical showing at the Anglican Communion's Lambeth Conference.⁴⁰ In the wake of Lambeth (July 1998), ECUSA saw the emergence of two entities designed to capitalize on the growing influence of conservative evangelical leaders from the developing world: the Association of Anglican Congregations on Mission (AACOM), which was incorporated in December 1998 and founded by John Rodgers; and First Promise, launched in 1997 by Charles Murphy, rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pawley's Island, South Carolina, and incorporated as a non-profit foundation in the fall of 1998.

The First Promise Foundation corporate mission statement defined a major strategic turn in the Episcopal renewal movement, claiming that it would take "immediate and prudent steps to prepare and make available the necessary structures for an orthodox Anglican Province in the United States by either the reformation of the Episcopal Church or by the emergence of an alternative."⁴¹ This strategy was literally ordained for the future when Murphy and Rogers were consecrated as the first bishops of the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA) at St. Andrews Cathedral in Singapore in January 2000. The consecrators were Emmanuel Kolini, Archbishop of Rwanda, and Moses Tay, now retired Archbishop of Southeast Asia. Murphy and Rogers now operate under their jurisdiction as missionary bishops in the United States, with the affiliate congregations of AACOM and First Promise serving as their primary ecclesial base. More than thirty churches and 64 clergy have joined the AMiA during its initial organizing phase.

Kolini and Tay are part of a growing network of evangelical primates (heads of provinces

in the Anglican Communion) and bishops from the developing world (mainly Africa and Asia), as well as Australia and New Zealand, that has begun to work closely with ECUSA conservatives. If Lambeth 1998 was the political breakthrough for this alliance, the AMiA is its instrument and institutionalization. On June 24, 2001, four more priests were consecrated as AMiA bishops in Denver's Colorado Community Church with nearly 1,000 participants.

One important figure in this strategic turn is the Rev. Canon Bill Atwood, who founded the Ekklesia Society in 1996 to foster international alliances and was also a founding board member of the American Anglican Council. Atwood has traveled the world, humanitarian aid in hand, to broker and help define the evangelical bishops' impact on the Anglican Communion. The Ekklesia Society, for example, convened the Anglican Witness and Life Conference in Dallas in September 1997, in preparation for Lambeth the following summer. This produced a seminal statement of global orthodox concern signed by 46 bishops and 4 archbishops, including ten diocesan leaders from ECUSA. Notably, Howard Ahmanson helped to bankroll this strategic event with a grant passed through the American Anglican Council.⁴²

The Ekklesia Society currently has more than 90 member primates and bishops, including a bloc of 21 from Uganda. In 2001 it published a remarkable treatise called *To Mend the Net*, written by Ekklesia member bishops with the assistance of Bill Atwood and Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry president Peter Moore, among others. As the Rev. Jan Nunley of the Episcopal News Service has pointed out, *To Mend the Net* calls for "a drastically increased role for the primates in regulating the doctrinal affairs of member churches of the Anglican Communion, including the potential of suspension of communion against provinces or dioceses."⁴³ Another commentator suggests that the ultimate objective of this internationally leveraged domestic strategy is to get the See of Canterbury to recognize the Anglican Mission in America (or a related orthodox structure) as, effectively, the sole legitimate Anglican province in America, supplanting ECUSA.⁴⁴

This strategy has political implications that go well beyond the church, and it is important to understand how Anglican evangelical networks overlap with political and social policy objectives in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. To cite just one notable alliance, AMiA leaders Emmanuel Kolini and John Rucyahana recently helped to form the Rwandan affiliate of Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship International, and Rucyahana serves on the board of Prison Fellowship International.⁴⁵ Watergate felon Charles Colson is one of the most important leaders of the American religious right and a chief architect of its attack on social and political barriers to global evangelization. Many will remember Rucyahana's public call at Lambeth 1998 for the expulsion of 70 American bishops from the Anglican Communion for their views on homosexuality.⁴⁶

A Continuing Threat

A church that has seen its General Convention resist the Right more thoroughly than any other denomination has also seen the Right undertake a remarkable change in course in response to this very resilience. The international mechanisms of the Anglican Communion—its annual Primates' Meeting, the decennial Lambeth Conference of Bishops, and the See of Canterbury itself—have been injected into an historically local and national battle against mainline leadership and social tradition, creating a new terrain of conflict, mobilization, and leverage for the religious right.

The American Anglican right is essentially perverting the church's global communion in order to reformulate the ecclesial status of ECUSA and thereby inflict serious damage on the social progress that was its public legacy in the last century. Among mainline churches, this is a unique story in its international dynamics, a story that is fraught with significant political implications in an age of heightened geopolitical conflict fueled by resurgent fundamentalist belief systems. But it is also a very familiar story in its calculated, sometimes vengeful opposition to the social and intellectual freedoms that have found an indispensable voice in the witness of the mainline churches, the Episcopal Church first among them.

The evangelical drift of the Anglican Communion, and its deployment against ECUSA, is a remarkable recent development within the broader history of anti-mainline politics. Samuel Edwards' views of the American church are gaining ground among leadership sectors within the Anglican Communion that are already being organized to fundamentally alter the Communion's relationship to ECUSA. That much is clear. The question now is how far this strategy will take the Right. The rules have changed significantly with the rise of distinctive international and primatial strategies. These developments in particular must be carefully monitored and firmly challenged.

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Endnotes

¹ See Edward E. Plowman, "Anglican Civil War," *World*, June 16, 2001, pp. 66-67; Andrew Ferguson, "Intolerant Episcopalians," *Weekly Standard*, July 16, 2001, pp. 27-29; Stacy Mattingly, "Episcopal Church Faces the Sexuality Divide," *Crisis*, September 2000, pp. 17-22.

² See www.trinitywallstreet.org/u/d/News/alert_44.html (as of November 1, 2001).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Julia Duin, "Of Funds and Fundamentals," *Washington Times*, August 22, 2001.

⁵ On Noll's activities in the Presbyterian Church, see Lewis C. Daly, "Spiritual Warfare in the Presbyterian Church," *IDS Insights*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 8-9.

⁶ In 1999, IDS launched its Denominational Studies Project to document right-wing developments in the mainline churches. The first study in this series, *A Moment to Decide: the Crisis in Mainstream Presbyterianism*, focuses on the Presbyterian Church (USA). To order a copy, see pages 10-11 of this publication.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 1.

⁸ For Edwards' remarks, see fifamerica.fithweb.com/Reading/Foundations/Found09-2000/riverside.htm. (as of October 12, 2001).

⁹ Andrew Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁰ The Diocese of Washington, D.C., website has an archive of materials and information related to the Edwards case: www.us.net/edow/news/accokeek.htm.

¹¹ ESA assumed the Forward in Faith name in 1999. The Forward in Faith movement was founded in England in 1992 after the Church of England's General Synod voted to proceed with women's ordination. There is a Forward in Faith branch in Australia as well. Edwards himself incorporated the ESA fundraising arm, the ESA Missionary Society, in 1990.

¹² See "A Declaration from the Council of FIF North America," March 10, 2001, www.forwardinfaith.com/news/breaking/2001/03/10*kanuga/1.htm.

¹³ Julia Duin, "Lawyers Help Parishes Secede from Episcopal Denomination," *Washington Times*, November 8, 2000.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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¹⁴ "Regent Appoints Director of International Operations," www.regent.edu/news/kennorth.html (as of October 11, 2001).

¹⁵ These are now posted on the web site of the Canon Law Institute (www.canonlaw.org).

¹⁶ See Knippers' report in the AAC's magazine, *Encompass*, Fall 2000.

¹⁷ See John Leo's bitter attack, "Turning a Blind Eye to Evil," *U.S. News & World Report*, October 12, 2001, p. 55.

¹⁸ See Focus on the Family's 1998 *Citizen* cover story "Pulling the Mainline Back in Line," www.family.org/cforum/citizenmag/coverstory/a0002925.html. To cite just one example where mainline conservatives are already working closely with the religious right, the conservative Alliance for Marriage, which has developed a constitutional amendment to limit marriage to heterosexual couples, is networking through an advisory board that contains leaders from the three most important mainline renewal movements: Parker Williamson and J. William Giles (PCUSA); James Heidinger (UMC); Stephen Jecko, Peter Beckwith, and David Anderson (ECUSA). The chief intellectual architect of the marriage amendment is Princeton professor Robert George, arguably the most important legal theorist of the religious right and, in particular, the antiabortion movement. Cf. www.allianceformarriage.org.

¹⁹ See the EFAC history at www.episcopal.org/efac/articles/efachst.html.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² John Guest announced the establishment of the seminary the year before, at the FOW-led National Episcopal Conference on Renewal. Recommended by John Stott, Rt. Rev. Alfred Stanway, then retired from his post as Australian missionary bishop of Central Tanganyika, became TESM's first president.

²³ "From the Dean," *Seed & Harvest*, Vol. VII, No. 7, September 1987.

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²⁵ Episcopalians United for Revelation, Renewal, and Reformation, IRS Form 990, 1994-99.

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²⁸ Created in 1981, IRD gained national attention when the television show "60 Minutes" highlighted its attack on the World and National Council of Churches. It was also known for its strong support for U.S. policy in Central America. See Leon Howell, "Funding the War of Ideas: A Report to the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries" (1995), p. 33.

²⁹ Faith J. H. McDonnell, "Mobilizing the Churches in Sudan," www.ird-enev.org/Liberty/Liberty.cfm?ID=105&c=18 (as of October 19, 2001); Diane L. Knippers, "China: Responding to Religious Repression Half a World Away," *Religion & Democracy* (May 1991).

³⁰ "The AAC Team: We Came, We Saw, We Served," *Encompass*, August 1998, p. 5.

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³⁴ Jack Taylor, "AAC Launches Fund Appeal with \$200K Matching Funds from Anti-Gay Zealot," www.newark.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/joy122.html (as of October 10, 2001). AAC officials acknowledged the pledge but refused to discuss the amount (in conversation with author,

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³⁶ See California Secretary of State campaign finance record at www.ss.ca.gov/prd/bmc96/prop209.htm (as of October 4, 2001).

³⁷ See Lewis C. Daly, "Charitable Choice: The Architecture of a Social Policy Revolution," *IDS Insights*, September 2001.

³⁸ Karen L. Willoughby, "Discovery Institute Emerging as Force in Creation, Public Policy," Baptist Press, www.baptist2baptist.net/BPArticles/Discovery/discovery.html (as of October 10, 2001).

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⁴⁰ The AAC was heavily involved in orchestrating the conservative strategy at Lambeth, under the leadership of Vinay Samuel, director of the evangelical Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. See the AAC report in its newsletter, *Encompass*, Vol. 2, No. 2, August 1998, p. 5 and *passim*.

⁴¹ The First Promise Foundation, Inc., Articles of Incorporation, Secretary of State, South Carolina (filed November 18, 1998).

⁴² Rev. Canon Bill Atwood, "The Anglican Witness and Life Conference," www.ekk.org/alwconf.htm (as of August 27, 2001).

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⁴⁶ "Anglican Bishop Calls for Expulsion of Pro-Gay Bishops," www.mjconline.com/news/98/news2572.htm (as of October 18, 2001).

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