

## An Inmate Crew,

seven rough characters,  
stood in silhouette by their truck.  
The temp was a hundred and one or worse.  
Noon sun beat on the lake.

They stared into the hazy dazzle of water  
as if to measure its extent,  
how it touched the Arkansas and later  
the Mississippi and went

from there to the Gulf and the sea and a white boat  
and freedom and salt. Whatever they saw,  
resting from work in the blinding heat,  
manacled paw to paw,

they saw like a pride of cats, looking at once  
in the same direction. It wasn't  
exactly longing in their stance.  
More like readiness, the present.

—*Jack Butler*

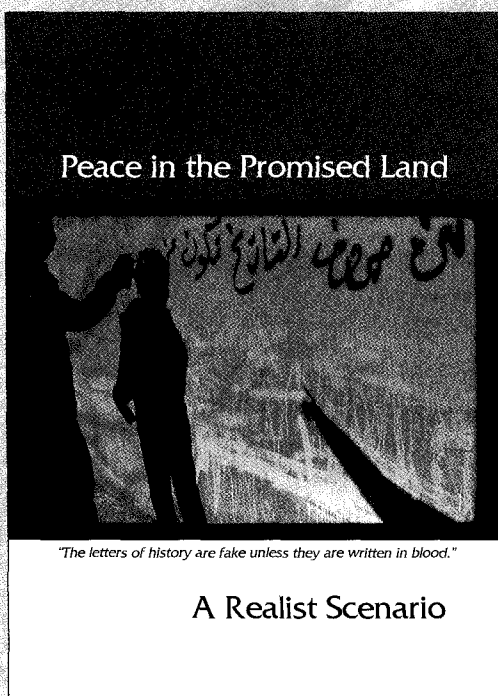


**T**he purpose of this book is to rekindle debate in the United States about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. . . . It is not normal that the discourse on the dispute is far more dynamic, varied, and intelligent in other countries—including Israel—than in America.

—From the Foreword

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# Recovering the Dignity of Truth

## Episcopalians and/or Anglicans

by William Murchison

**W**e Episcopalians—we're just so special, don't you know? We worship in such special ways. Our churches look so special, as do we ourselves—an indication of our social gifts. And when we fight, when we commence to break the church furniture over one another's heads—at such moments we're just, you might say, disgustingly, regurgitatingly special; so special that many of us hope no one is watching. We know better than that, nonetheless. A specially contrived disaster, in particular one with spiritual implications, is for many irresistible. Our ongoing disaster is one of those.

Here, as I write, is a compelling headline from the *New York Times*: "Breakaway Church Gives Up Property." A California parish of the Episcopal Church—in its own mind, a former parish, having disaffiliated from the official church three years earlier—is surrendering title to its 85-year-old church building and, along with that, all claim to endowment monies, prized gifts of silver and silk, all that gave St. Luke's in La Crescenta that certain Anglican cachet. Memories, too, and historical associations: Those go by the boards. It's off to a new place—a rented chapel in a Seventh Day Adventist church in Glendale—and a new start, one untainted by associations with that once very special institution, the Episcopal Church.

Sagas like that of St. Luke's occur with startling regularity now that thousands of the Episcopal Church's proudest, devoutest sons and daughters have decided to chuck it to the Church; to walk as far away from it as possible in order to . . . the right word, I think, is *restore*. "Restoration" catches the spirit of the enterprise. A proud, prized structure is off plumb, with windowpanes broken and ceilings in ruins; in come the plasterers, carpenters, and plumbers to put things right again. That is how it is with the various renovation crews toiling to put right the Anglican franchise in North America.

Both within and without the Episcopal Church, push-back time has come in earnest. Waggled fingers and gentle reproaches no longer suffice. Episcopalians want something done about a wayward establishment—however pleasing its manners and decorative appointments—that has come closely to resemble *The Huffington Post* at prayer, assuming anyone at *The Huffington Post* would dream of

praying.

Last June, in Bedford, Texas, a suburb wedged between Dallas and Fort Worth, an assembly from around the country made up mostly of ex-Episcopalians aggrieved by the Episcopal Church's affection for loose, liberal theology formed a religious association of its own—an Anglican association. (*Anglican*, I should note, is the adjective that applies to all member churches of the worldwide Anglican Communion, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the Church of England at its spiritual center.) The new association to which I refer is called the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA); it is a coalition of varied groups that in recent years have sought to reverse the Episcopal lurch toward a kind of well-mannered secularism. The ACNA has its own constitution, its own governing body, its own back-door entrance to the Anglican Communion through an arrangement called "full communion" with two officially recognized Anglican provinces, Nigeria and Uganda. It proclaims Anglican theology, uses the Book of Common Prayer, and clothes its priests in Anglican vestments.

Wouldn't you say this outfit is Anglican? Most onlookers would. Not so the Episcopal establishment, which drove St. Luke's from its Southern California premises, having bested the parish earlier in a civil lawsuit. If no one particularly loves the modern Episcopal Church, the legal fraternity must. The EC dumps barrels of money on the lawyers it hires to contest the right of any secessionist parish or diocese to keep its property. The Episcopal Church wants that property. To do what with? To keep "Episcopal" as opposed to Anglican worship going there.

Another thing the Episcopal Church and its presiding bishop, Mrs. Katharine Jefferts Schori, like to do is depose departing clergy—in other words, declare them non-clergy, which they clearly aren't, but the establishment must get its kicks somehow. Watching its membership and finances decline as a result of nonevangelism and the embrace of innovations—conspicuously, the gay-rights cause—provides no kicks. Prosecuting, if not persecuting, traditionalists gives Episcopal liberals (an increasingly tautological term) a sense of power and righteousness. (Never mind Saint Paul, whom the choleric liberal Bishop John Spong identifies as a "self-loathing homosexual," concerning the duty of Christians to avoid civil lawsuits. When you want other folks' property, you gotta fight 'em, kick 'em in the teeth, hurt 'em bad!)

*William Murchison is a corresponding editor for Chronicles and the author of Mortal Follies: Episcopalians and the Crisis of Mainline Christianity.*