

Things fall apart

Rowan Williams's plea to the Anglican communion to hold together appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

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- [Stephen Bates](#)
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Many of us in the United States await Stephen Bates' commentaries on the evolution of the Anglican Communion, because they are indeed insightful and accurate. A cradle Episcopalian now 69 and a retired priest, I have lived through many pioneering moments of the Episcopal Church, and I welcome them as fine tuning takes place at each juncture.

I am one of those who regard radical saints like Akinola, Duncan, Minns and company as possibly suffering from delusional grandiosity and intellectual paralysis. One can understand the normal "preserver" versus "pioneer" dynamic as all human association evolve; the result can be - and has been for the Episcopal Church in the USA - a gradual unfolding nudged by God's Spirit. Radical extremes, however, are unhelpful to this process. Indecisive mentoring, such as Dr. William's faltering attempts, lack wisdom and courage. Not that anyone is insincere; all deeply care - but sometimes too much about power and institutional preservation, instead of the Gospel and the Anglican heritage of faithful, reasonable agreements to differ.

A reconfiguration of the Anglican Communion, however implemented, will affect neither the Gospel nor the Episcopal Church in the United States. The roughly 10% of American Episcopal clergy and laity that strongly disagree with Church trends - to the extent of their possible withdrawals - are a minority. In the past a small percentage of devoted people have sought alternative spiritual homes when the 1928 Prayer Book was retired, when women were ordained, and so on.

Nonetheless, for most Episcopalians living their faith rooted at the local level, national and international brouhahas are of little concern. They already have a significant place at the Table and need not another at Lambeth - a nice tradition, though. Furthermore, the American spirit of Independence will not tolerate the stifling of sound scholarship that might be offensive here and there; whether doctrinal, moral, or in other areas, we agree to differ as citizens - certainly a secular spirit in no contradiction to historic Anglicanism.

Stephen Bates' perceptions are always on target. Hardness of heart and intellectual frigidity prevent some readers from benefiting from his wisdom.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Richard T. Nolan, retired, West Palm Beach