

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

Reader Mail

SPLITSVILLE -- NOT YET (July 2009)

Re: Mark Tooley's A Tale of Two Churches:

Slow Down! The Episcopal Church has "split"? No, I don't think so; rather another offshoot has been established and not for the first time.

Such breakaway groups have their origins among most, if not all, larger religious bodies globally.

100,000 members in the new, self-declared "Anglican" body? Incorrect, too. Perhaps two-thirds of that number -- which represents a tiny fraction of The Episcopal Church in the United States.

To be sure, many Christian churches, even those that appear monolithic, are engaged in doctrinal/moral self-examination. The Enlightenment and Reformation continue. Virtually every religious body evolves; none is static -- even though many clergy and laypeople would prefer final certainties in all matters.

"Preservers" are in tension with "pioneers" in every generation -- whether among religions or among schools of thought in physics, economics, psychology, etc.

A 72-year-old "cradle Episcopalian," I am personally dissatisfied with a number of significant matters of belief and practice in the contemporary Episcopal Church. However, it is within the life of the Church that effective remedies can emerge -- after much discussion, debate, and discernment. Fewer "schools of thought" and practices then survive. Those that prefer one (their own) notion of the Christian Faith are doomed to frustration or the establishment of their own "orthodox" group (in which dissension will surface in time).

I predict confidently that within a decade, perhaps sooner, the ACNA will be embroiled in much internal turmoil. That is bound to happen and be particularly vicious among the many members who yearn for absolute certainty (rather than informed faith) and for power (rather than the inevitable messiness of shepherding among fellows who think differently). Just watch!

**-- Rev. Canon Richard T. Nolan, Ph.D.
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