

Fear: The History of a Political Idea: Looser federation unlikely solution

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Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has warned in a television interview that the worldwide Anglican Communion may “rupture” over the issue of homosexuality.

Anglicans have been riven with division since the 2003 election of V. Gene Robinson, who lives openly in a same-sex relationship, as a bishop in the Episcopal Church, and the introduction by a diocese in Canada of a rite for blessing same-sex unions. Many Anglican churches, particularly in Africa, condemned Robinson’s election and several have cut ties with the U.S. church.

Interviewed by veteran broadcaster David Frost for the BBC in Sudan, where he was visiting aid projects, Williams was asked if he could imagine the Anglican Communion becoming a looser federation to accommodate Anglican churches with widely differing stances on homosexuality.

“If there is a rupture, it’s going to be a more visible rupture; it is not going to settle down quietly to being a federation,” said Williams, the leader of the more than 70-million-strong Anglican grouping. “My anxiety about it is that if the communion is broken, we may be left with even less than a federation.”

In 2004 the Windsor Report, produced by an Anglican commission set up after Robinson’s election, requested that the American church adopt a moratorium on having as a candidate for bishop anyone in a same-sex union until a consensus has emerged in the communion. It also urged the U.S. and Canadian churches to apologize to other believers within the Anglican Communion whom they had offended by their actions.

Still, among five initial nominees to become the new bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of California are a lesbian and a gay man. Reportedly Bonnie Perry of Chicago and Robert Taylor of Seattle are in same-sex relationships.

The diocese will vote on the candidates in May, with the bishop-elect requiring ratification at the Episcopal Church's general convention in Columbus, Ohio, the following month. The Episcopal convention is also scheduled to elect a successor to Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold. Three of the nominees are reported to have voted in favor of Robinson's consecration as a bishop.

Meanwhile, in an opinion article in the *Washington Post*, the Episcopal bishop of Washington, D.C., John Bryson Chane, struck out at Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria for supporting a Nigerian law criminalizing homosexuality. Akinola, wrote Chane, "is perhaps the most powerful member of a global alliance of conservative bishops and theologians, generously supported by foundations and individual donors in the United States, who seek to dominate the Anglican Communion and expel those who oppose them, particularly the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada."

While many countries have laws dealing with marriage and sexual behavior, the Nigerian law crossed the line because it prohibits any public or private activity "in any way related to homosexuality," Chane said. He added that "the archbishop's support for this law violates numerous Anglican Communion documents that call for a 'listening process' involving gay Christians and their leaders." -*Ecumenical News International*