

Anglican leaders rebuke archbishop: Rowan Williams challenged on homosexuality stance

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Nearly half of the 38 primates of the worldwide Anglican Communion have rebuked the archbishop of Canterbury for not condemning the liberal attitude toward homosexuality shown by Anglican churches in North America. Of particular concern is the 2003 election and consecration of openly gay Episcopal Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire and the moves in Canada toward providing a form of blessing for same-sex unions.

The 17 primates—including Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria and Archbishop Drexel Gomez of the West Indies—saw the unity of the Anglican Communion challenged by “unrepented sexual immorality.”

In a letter sent November 16 to Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, they said they appreciated his recent acknowledgement that the “overwhelming consensus” of the church is that sex was intended by God for married couples only and that “same-sex sex is unacceptable and cannot be described as ‘holy and blessed.’”

The primates—the bishops of highest ranking in their respective countries—went on to say, however, that they wonder “whether your personal dissent from this consensus prevents you from taking the necessary steps to confront those churches” that endorse homosexuality.

“We urge you to rethink your personal views and embrace the church’s consensus and to act on it, based as it is on the clear witness of scripture,” the letter said.

One of the 17 Anglican archbishops later removed his name from the critique. Clive Handford, the president bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East, said he had not seen the letter before it was sent. “While I saw a first draft of the letter, I was not involved in any subsequent discussion of it,” Handford said in a statement released by the Anglican Communion headquarters.

The *Daily Telegraph* in London reported that another of the 17, Archbishop Gregory Venables of the Church of the Southern Cone of America, said that “a number of us” had been “scandalized” that a private letter should have been made public in the way it was.

The London paper added that “at least two other conservative primates are understood to be furious that the letter was released without their knowledge.” —*Religion News Service*