

I was born in 1943 and how the world has changed since then, scientifically, medically, socially, educationally and psychologically. Back then the word “gay” meant happy, fun, and the Flat Earth Society was still in existence.

I am a cradle Anglican and my great grandfather was a spiritual advisor to Queen Victoria. Even in those days of strict moral code her questions to him were profound and probing. She valued his answers to questions of life after death, what it would look like and in what form we would meet our loved ones. She wanted to know how religion fitted into her own experience of life.

Now new scientific discoveries, social challenges, changes in moral code and new psychological insights have challenged some of our traditional views. Because these views have become largely irrelevant to the world in which we now live we see people angry and unhappy with the status quo and searching for approaches that will be more equitable, give more people a voice and nurture the soul.

The traditional approaches of many churches to these concerns have been found to be inadequate and attendance has steadily declined.

Now we seem to be left with a polarized situation between conservative and liberal; those who take the Bible literally and those who interpret it as the best way the writers knew at the time to express what they experienced in their relationship with God.

We are now being asked to look at our challenges, not in a dualistic, black and white way but to find new ways of being in the world that transcend either/or to include both/and. The ways to do this can only be perceived with the love and the benefit of all as our guide. No exclusion or inequality of colour, race, creed or sex.

My brother was a gay composer who died of AIDS in 1992. Having been a chorister at St Paul’s Cathedral in London in the 1950’s he knew all the psalms by heart and treasured the language of the BCP and King James Bible. He could not, however reconcile the interpretation that the church gave to the words he loved and the narrow interpretation that was prevalent at the time. Homosexuality was an offence and illegal until 1969.

We are constantly evolving and changing which is surely God’s plan for us. The old order breaks down in order for new life to emerge. Change is uncomfortable but if we are to grow as a church and a society we have to find new ways of living in the world. Ways that are less hierarchical, patriarchal and more inclusive, compassionate and loving.

Our faith is founded on love. The discussion and changes to Canon 21 are long overdue. What are we waiting for?

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Oliver