

ENQUIRE WITHIN

Question: *A few years ago, you were worrying us all with dire predictions of the end of the C of E as we know it due to the financial pull-out from traditionalists who couldn't cope with gender and homosexual equality in the church. Well, it is still here, isn't it? Were you wrong? So what happened?*

Answer: Well, a lot has happened.

Not a lot of it has been positive.

Whilst I admit that my crystal ball predictions have been wrong so far, it may only be a matter of timing. The Church of England and the Anglican Communion is, apparently, slowly dividing into two parts in private and it is only a matter of time before it goes public.

I have to say at this point that I take no pleasure from this and I hope that the division does not take place and that we find a way to live together without separation. It certainly seems to me to be the most Christian option and I hope that we will end up still experiencing a strong form of unity, and continuing to be the Anglican Communion together.

It may be a matter of optimism that the divisions within the Church appear to remain relatively static rather than expanding?

One part is ready to embrace real and practical expressions of equality for women in all levels of Ministry, including that of appointment as a Bishop. This also extends to those of a publicly expressed homosexual orientation, accepting them in its life and Ministry, including appointment as a Bishop.

The other part is resisting this trend and trying to hold a line against accepting women as bishops and against accepting openly homosexual people

in any official positions within the church's ministerial and governmental structures.

The two sides appear to be at arms length and also seemingly willing to wave each other goodbye.

The Archbishop of Nigeria and the Archbishop of Canterbury (pictured in a friendly embrace) seem to symbolise the division.

Peter Akinola and Rowan Williams are men of strong convictions and very articulate advocates for the two points of view.



For Peter, the matter is simple. The Bible condemns homosexual relations and so no one practicing homosexual relations should be allowed a public and official role within the church.

For Rowan, the Bible does not come from the modern world and so does not really understand homosexuality as we understand it today, and so, even if it does condemn same-sex love, (which is debatable) we have to bring our modern insights into what human beings are made of before we condemn and take actions which exclude and condemn.

In addition to this we can see the really good work done by gay priests in the parishes over many years. Their orientation does not appear to prevent their work producing really good fruits. People in the parishes love their gay clergy as much as their straight clergy.

The lines are still drawn, and I guess that the reason for the lack of crumbling of the Church of England lies at the feet of Archbishop Rowan Williams who is beavering away to avoid the disaster scenario and paving the way to a more optimistic way forward. Well done Rowan!

Neil Richardson