

Simeon and Anna were old. Yet it was they who recognized the Christ. Let's ponder that.

We live in a society that since the 1960s has been fixated with youth. People seriously believe that children are maturing younger. In fact all the sociological evidence tells us the opposite. Where childhood ended around 21 a generation or so ago today it stretches to 25.

One of the problems with that has been the effect that age is seen as a problem. When we add in our concerns about dementia, it's easy to see why age is considered a bad thing. Well I'm here to tell you the opposite. That's the message of Candlemas. It's not over 'til it's over. All will be well, and all manner of things will be well. It will be alright in the end, and if its not alright them its not the end! But to put that another way - when was the last time you changed your mind about anything?

Well here's my list to challenge you....

When I was 19 I was sure I knew that my evangelical faith was the only true version of Christianity.

Then I got to 21, and grew up, and saw that it was the worst sort of Christianity there is and that I needed to change.

By the time I was 25, married with 2 small children, I had changed my mind about any idea that there should be male headship - I was utterly mistaken. My quiet support of the ordination of women probably didn't endear me to all the staff at my theological college.

How have you changed?

When I was 40 I began, slowly and painfully to realise that my homophobia and traditionalist views on human sexuality were not congruent with the gospel. It took a few years but I changed and it was painful. Dealing with transvestites, transsexuals and so on made me change my mind.

How have you changed?

When I was 50, my daughter, at Uni with lots of gay friends, finally confronted me with my homophobia. I realised I'd just been plain wrong.

How have you changed?

Now I'm 60 I am beginning to realise that all that religious stuff is fine, but that the journey goes on. Simeon and Anna are teasing us to keep growing, keep changing. I used to be hostile to Islam. But I've learned, by being confronted with fundamentalism both in Islam and Christianity, that fundamentalism is a common evil. Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha would have sat down round a table and loved each other's company. There are as many violent Christians as there are violent in the IS fold, let's never forget. So I've learned that there's a perennial tradition, and ancient wisdom that erupt in many cultures and religions. I still believe that Christianity brings something unique and irreplaceable to the party, but the other great religions have a real story for us to hear too.

How have you changed?

I believe less and less, more and more. God is love.

I'm learning to be an Anglican. And that might not be the same as everybody in the C of E's institution.