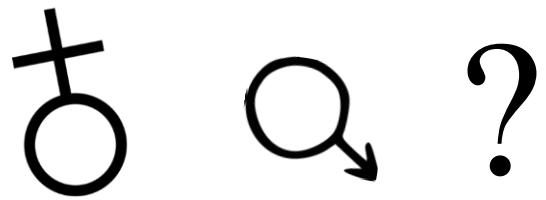


# 'Sex or Death?'



## That was the question!

*This article carries a spiritual health warning: the contents may injure your opinions.*

In my youth (in the 50's) such a headline would never have passed the censorship of my wiser and more righteous elders! Like politics, they were forbidden territory for conversation or light-hearted articles. At best they were in bad taste; at worst a grievous sin. How attitudes have changed.

**The question arose** in conversation with an ordinand in training. She was slightly caught off guard when a tutor asked her, amidst a group of visitors at a Cathedral service, "What's your choice then – Sex or Death?". A snappy answer might have been "Both please, preferably in that order." As always, context is a vital part of understanding! My ordinand friend found it necessary to explain to the startled company that the question related to two module options in the training programme: '**Sexuality and Gender**' and '**Death and Funerals**'.

It is good to know that clergy training is inclusive of uncomfortable and contentious issues: that old attitudes and stereotypes are constantly challenged and measured against different theological perspectives. This is in keeping with Jesus' teaching, who never shied away from controversy, but gently and firmly opened up to his listeners new ways of seeing the world and the people in it, and a fairer 'Way' to live.

Changing attitudes takes time, often generations. Change is inevitable and always introduces new problems. The last century has raised unprecedented demands to accept new understandings of history, of sexuality, gender, even of death and dying. It is not easy to adapt as quickly as some would like, and the Church has a responsibility to discern God's will: mindful that much of the world has yet to embrace the shifting social sands that we see in the west.

**And the question is:** What about MU? Wherever we are on the spectrum of understanding, it helps to remember that ours is not to judge, but to be faithful to our commitment to encourage and support stable marriage and family life in all its forms, lend a kindly hand where needed, and challenge gender injustice.