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Interviewer: So, first of all, can you tell me a bit about your background, your childhood and where you grew up?

Respondent: I came into the world six weeks early at 2-and-a-half pounds, premature birth, and my father was given the option of do you want your wife or your child, and he said, "My child... my wife, rather," yes, of course that's a bit of an omen for the relationship that failed later on, but I was brought on six weeks early by an adventurous pioneering GP, and so was a precious, fragile thing, which I think was very important. It was my formation because my mother was very overprotective for probably most of my life, and she died just a few weeks before 90. Parents were little family grocers, grandparents the same, so it was very much a provincial town upbringing. I guess the family script I was soon to understand was work hard, other people come first, the customer's always right, and a life of service to others is what I would probably have put on my parents' gravestones if I'd had my way. As I reflected, my mother was very protective of me, understandably from this fragile beginning long before the days of incubators and so on, and father, whose own father had died when my father was six years old, probably hadn't much experience of fathering, so he seemed to be a distant father, although in latter years I realised that he loved me and was battling for me but probably had a counterbalance to my mother's overprotectiveness, so he would say, "Oh, let him go. Let him experiment".

I suppose all the oughts were there, I must, my duty, what was expected of me were dominant. So, I was a good goody two-shoes, I think. I was quite successful big fish in the little pond of the primary school, put into Cubs at seven and eight and on into the Scouts and Senior Scouts and Rover Scouts, into a church choir from by accident almost because my parents were not people of faith that I knew anything about. I used to drag them there for harvest and Christmas to hear me singing. But those were two of the important influences, I think, on my life externally from the family, the discipline of being in quite a high-powered choir and singing twice every Sunday and three practices in the week and the discipline.

Interviewer: Was this the Anglican church?

Respondent: This was the local Anglican church, yes, very much a middle-of-the-way Anglican church it would be seen then. And I particularly, once I got to secondary age, became a very keen Scout, so all the teachings of loyalty and helping others were being reinforced through that, and of course I was getting them at home where I found my parents were absolutely devoted to the customers who they served. There was no question about wanting profit; the people were there to be looked after. And I managed to get through to a grammar school then. Of course, we were still in the age of the 11 plus, and suddenly began to flounder. I think it was a big fish in a small pond in the primary school and suddenly I was a little fish, petrified of other people, only child. I certainly didn't achieve my potential at school, but reflecting back I can see from those early immediately pre-adolescent and certainly once puberty came, I think the gay sexuality was under the surface all the time and was making a difference, but of course it took me many, many years to begin to understand this, let alone accept it and reflect on it.

My horizons were pretty limited to Devon. I'd hardly been outside the county, I suppose, until I was 16 when I was sent to Finland on a Scout exchange, which opened my horizons a little, but by then my future had been decided. My father wanted me to go into a secure, comfortable job with a pension and had arranged for me to go into Lloyds Bank. So, at the age of 16 I left school with the option of going to the sixth form, but the bank manager thought it would be better if I went in and was formed by them.

Three difficult years, I think because, reflecting back, the sexuality was under the surface all the time, but I didn't have any awareness at all about it. I now know that I had no fantasy that was anything but male. There just was no... I can honestly say I have never fancied any part of a woman at any time all my life, but of course when I had no awareness then, I think it must be difficult for generations to come, and even now for friends in their 40s and 30s and 20s and teens, it's difficult for them to understand how ignorant we were up until the 1960s, I suppose, when it began to seep out both through secular channels and a little bit within the church channels that the word could be mentioned. Of course, the word gay wasn't brought over from the States, I think, until about the 1970s. All I knew was that a couple of teachers at school and a Scoutmaster had all been caught fiddling with the boys and had gone to prison and one had committed suicide. That was the only model that I really had, so I had no way of putting together that the thoughts I was having, an attraction towards people of my own sex, was anything to do with, well, with me or with being gay.

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And some 15 years later when I came out of a divorce and went into probably the most significant bit of therapy I've ever had three months before and three months after we were divorced or separated, I found myself describing this experience, this period of between about 17 and 25, I would have said, as though I was in a funnel, a metal funnel which was greased on the inside and the heterosexual normative world was coming out over the top of the funnel and I was climbing up this funnel where everyone in the community wanted me to go. And I was saying how, in therapy, at about the age of 25, 26, I was reflecting on those early developmental years, particularly the ones in my late teens and early 20s, that it was like being in a greased metal funnel and the conventional way out, the norm, the heterosexual way was to climb up out of the funnel, but I found myself slipping down into the spout at the bottom, which was clearly the gay route that I was destined to take. That was where my natural orientation was, although at that point I'd only just begun to have that awareness. It was a very vivid description of the feelings I had, coming from this conventional little family of trade, meeting, when I was 21 and my future wife was 18, the minister's daughter. And the minister, her father, a congregational minister was someone I'd come to admire a lot and he became a bit of a mentor, and he was one of the people that were quite influential when I look back on it in helping me to understand that I might have a vocation to ordination.

In that situation, as we became friends, the local community, knowing that by then I was a candidate for ordination and the local congregational church members sought a marriage made in heaven, respectable grocer's son about to become a clergyman meets the daughter of a congregational minister, it's all made in heaven and let's clap them all the way. And externally that was all the pressure systemically around me from family, friends, the community, that was the route everyone was taking, wasn't it, in their early 20s then, boy girl meets, gets engaged, gets married. Internally, there was a growing awareness, probably brought on most powerfully for me when I went to theological college, to King's College London, and for the first time came across people who clearly had a gay identity. It wasn't called that then, the word hadn't been invented, but there were people that were shrouded in innuendos and I was titillated by this. And looking back, I not only had my secret internal fantasies that I saw the young boys in the Scouts in short trousers and all these were the things that stimulated me, now it was the conversation that was going on and the camp reactions. It was gradually becoming to stir an awareness. So, I looked around, and here I am now, 22, 21, 22, 23, looked around for any literature I could find that would give me information, and there simply was no literature around. I remember the earliest document I found was a pamphlet produced by the Quaker's towards a creative(?) view of sex, which was the first time anything certainly within the Christian domain came out addressing the subject, which of course was very accepting from their perspective. On the secular side, there was only medical books you could get hold of, which generally took the line of it

being something which was marginal and abnormal, and of course what I was getting through my theological education was a reinforcement of all the things that would have happened through the Sunday School, from the church choir, through scouting, of course this was all wicked and sinful and wasn't to be talked about.

So, internally, there was an extraordinary struggle going on, and within myself there was a splitting going on, there was no doubt about that. Crucial moment happened in my second year at King's, when I was 22, 23, driving back from a boy's club in the East End we used to sponsor, sitting in the back of a Mini car on the Embankment under Cleopatra's Needle, the man next to me, a student in his third year, the president of the faculty of theology, grabbed my hand, and that was such a blissful moment. I didn't know what it was about, but it was what I wanted, and then started a little flirtation and a little affair with this person very secretly, which probably went on for about six, seven weeks before I couldn't hold the dishonesty and the secrecy. And I went to my mentor, who was then the deputy dean of the college, he was my confessor and the person that I would share all my secrets to within a spiritual dimension, and I poured out my heart to him, saying, "I don't know what on earth to do. This has happened and, as you know, I'm engaged to be married," and I was told, "Don't worry, Geoffrey, you'll find this is absolutely normal at this stage of life here with all single-sex company but when you get married these feelings will go away". At a very deep, intuitive level, I knew this was crass advice and within a couple of months I went to the dean of King's, something you would never do as a student unless there was dire trouble, poured my heart out to him and received exactly the same advice. "Never mind, Geoffrey, when you get married it will all go away." So, on I went, back that long vac(?) to Torquay, to my fiancée, her family, went away on holiday with them and still was aware that I had these attractions and there were a couple of students at King's that I knew I was falling in love with, I had that conscious awareness, but always knowing that his was only transitory.

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Interviewer: So, this was part of the splitting going on, was it? You mentioned splitting.

Respondent: Yes. I would not allow... I understand it in Freudian terms, my defences were so strong and it was so frightening to accept this was my reality that I pushed those down into the trapdoor of my conscious awareness, and although they were constantly there, and I think they were never too deeply buried because there was knocking at the trapdoor all the time, I... because it was such a life of a period of history when you showed deference to your elders and within theological setting you obeyed your superiors, I toed the line, but I really did believe it would go away and allowed myself to continue down the path to marriage and was married at the end of my time at King's London. I had a year out preparing to go onto a fourth-year theological college, was married during that year.

Interviewer: How old were you then?

Respondent: And then I was 25, yes, I was 25. And we... I was dreading the first night. Of course, there had been no sexual and within the morays(?) of the church then, of course that was forbidden that you shouldn't have sex before marriage, which I, at some level of awareness, was delighted about, though my wife got rather hot a number of times and I would remind her that we were of course good Christian people and shouldn't be doing anything like this. But I was dreading, I know, that night of the first night of the wedding, but knew that was my duty and so got on with it. And it was probably six months into the marriage when I realised I was still actually quite madly in love with the person who'd... this man at my wedding. He was a first student at King's, a physicist, an atheist physicist, as it happens, and that awareness that I had been given false information by those people I trusted within the church, and it was a clear moment on Good Friday, in fact, in my last year, the fourth year of King's when we were preparing

for the last step of ordination, ordination coming the following June, when during the three-hour service on Good Friday I paid no attention to anything that was being said by the people conducting the service and had my private rage with God that how could he do this to me? Here I was, totally betrayed by him. Her I was trapped in this marriage. We'd been trying for a child and my wife was pregnant and I was about to be ordained in three or four months' time, and all I can say at the end of that honest exchange and outpouring, I did receive an amazing peace internally and I think I probably realised at that moment it wasn't going to change these feelings, but I was going to go forward and resolved to be a loyal husband, a good father and a loyal priest.

So, we went on to a curacy in Chesterfield in Derbyshire for nearly four years, where I managed to remain loyal within my marriage vows but was constantly aware of my inner feelings and discovering that there were other priests in exactly the same situation. It just seemed to be something that was accepted and you just got on with it and made the best of it you could. It was a tough parish and my wife became quite depressed. She had postnatal depression. I found myself being not only a curate with a very heavy workload, pastoral workload, I was the principal parent for my child when my wife had this depression. I found my wife was struggling socially being in a tough working-class parish, and I don't know how I quite got through those four years. Towards the end of that time, I had a mysterious illness which lasted for a month or two. It kept me in bed for a good month with a temperature. Nobody could discover what it is. Various consultants came and saw me and no-one considered it, even thought about it being psychosomatic apart, oddly enough, for my father-in-law who, visiting me, did ask me whether there was anything worrying me and I did say then, with all honesty, that I didn't think there was. But to me clearly now, this was a moment when the volcanic force that was between what I was having to repress and the reality of the life I was having to lead had come to a point where it came out in this mysterious psychosomatic illness which eventually passed. And I suggested that we should possibly go for a stint, or I should go for a stint as an RAF chaplain, which seemed to be an easier life, and of course I wasn't conscious of the fact that it was pretty well an all-male environment, though I'm quite sure that was in my unconscious thinking. My wife thought that would be a good thing and we went off and started that new career.

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I remember my first review at the end of the first year when the station commander told me that I was extremely good with the men and, looking back on it, he was really right. I mean took to it like a duck to water and in my second year, third year of successful career working mainly with young people, apprentices first and then young officers, which was extremely successful pastorally, I was posted to an unaccompanied tour, where the family couldn't come, to an island in the Middle East, 1200 men all together without families. And although I knew this was going to be tough on my family, I also knew that this was going to be manna from heaven really and I went off and did that, keeping in touch then only by sending letters to my eldest child. My second child was born just before I went and of course was too young to know me. During then, I had a very clear understanding, I think, that my sexual orientation was gay and yet I still was deeply committed to my family and returned with all intentions of keeping that façade going. While I was away my wife became very depressed. She'd gone back to live with her parents... and of course the balloon went up, she left the house, she wouldn't spend another night there and the next day we drove back to her parents, which started a six-month separation where we tried to confront the issues. I had to share this with the RAF that we were separated and everyone wished us well to come back together again. As far as the world knew it was just we were having a marital dispute.

I wrote to this other chaplain in Germany(?) and told him what had happened, and as a result he telephoned me and simply said, as a priest, "We must never again meet. Your marriage is absolutely sacrosanct," and that was the end of that. A few weeks later I

had a visit from the special investigation branch of the Royal Air Force, who had tapped that telephone call. All calls were tapped out of Germany once a month apparently. They didn't know what on earth was going on with this extraordinary conversation between two chaplains. I was honest with them and said that, yes, we had met. We'd fallen for each other. I had realised it, told my wife and this is what had happened. I was asked a direct question whether there had been any physical involvement, and bearing in mind this was 1971, coming up 1972, I knew that if I had said there had been any physical involvement I would be in civilian clothes within 12 hours and out of the Royal Air Force.

Interviewer: Because gay people were not allowed in the Armed Forces at that time.

Respondent: Immediate discharge. And I was investigated for two or three months and nothing else could be found against me, no other signs of this, and it was decided that I hadn't done anything so I couldn't be discharged, but they thought it would be best, whereas my contract was for six years, that at the five-year point we mutually agreed that I came out because my psychological state had fallen below the acceptable levels. And I went through this bizarre medical at Air Ministry, where I had A1 against all categories with my physical body and my mental health, but on my emotional stability I was marked down so that I came out medicalled out of the Royal Air Force.

Interviewer: And that was because you were gay, you admitted being gay.

Respondent: Because I was gay, but because I was gay and... well, all I'd said is that I was questioning that I might be gay.

Interviewer: I see.

Respondent: And there was no, as far as they were concerned, there was no physical activity at all.

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Interviewer: No, so hence the emotional instability.

Respondent: Absolutely.

Interviewer: But not the mental illness.

Respondent: Absolutely, absolutely.

Interviewer: Because at that time it would have been regarded as a mental illness as well.

Respondent: So, I was able to retain my full rank in retirement if I wanted to, and I got my miserable £2,300 gratuity. And during this period, I was also talking with my wife about the future and I think this was the time when I most understood what the therapeutic world calls self-deception, when I really told myself after she'd asked me the question, I can only go back with you if you're 100% heterosexual, and I had really perjured myself but I really did believe that I must be heterosexual because I was missing my children so much, I was so gutted, and it's very difficult to relay this to anyone else at how deep this was engrained in me, my bond with my children and it was hurting me so much just in those six months to be separated from them and having to visit them, these ridiculous days out on a Saturday. So, we went back together for a trial period, for four or five months and during which time I was offered a job in the Oxford diocese to be rector of four country parishes by a very accepting bishop who knew the whole score, who was supportive to me and supportive to my wife and the children. And he told me, and bear in mind this was in 1974, that I could work in his diocese as a gay priest and I could

work in any of six other diocese in the Church of England, all of which he gave me the names of.

We came back together and there was great rejoicing with parents, of course, our parents, with the children, with my former wife, but it was very clear in those two years that at home there was a volcano under the surface. It was the elephant in the room that wasn't being spoken of, and although neither of us had any other relationships during that time, it was more and more clear to me that this isn't where I should be. And interestingly, my wife did insist during that period that my GP, who was a friend of ours, referred me to a psychiatrist to check that I was really heterosexual. And I saw this psychiatrist in the outpatient department in Warneford Hospital in Oxford, and it just so happened a man called Bancroft who, with his wife who was also a psychiatrist, unknown to me had written a paper which became an important book in the medical world, which was the first time the world of psychiatry was to change the designation of homosexuality being a disorder. And they were, just by luck of the draw, they were on the vanguard of that mercifully totally changed attitude within the medical world. And after a ten-minute, quarter-of-an-hour interview, he said, "Well, all I can say is that if it's possible for you to stay within your marriage, you will have a much easier life in this hostile world outside. But if it isn't, and from what you say I don't think it is, you have my very best wishes". And that was the final, I think, moment when I realised this was the moment of truth and honesty, and in the next six months I made it quite clear that we must separate, and within the two years of being in those parishes, we did.

At first I was going to... before the parish knew we were going to finally separate and divorce, I was going to try and escape because then it was totally unacceptable for a respectable parish priest, certainly in the Cotswolds, to be divorced without anyone knowing apart from us, the inner circle, the other issues around. I was going to go outside of the church. I'd been offered a job directing a national charity, but mercifully by, one might say, the accident but actually the wisdom of my bishop sending me on a very important training course for a month that I realised that I loved the parish, they seemed to love me and I withdrew that acceptance of other post, to the bishop's delight, I must say, and stayed on for six very happy years as a divorced priest. I think during that period, like a little ripple, the knowledge of me really being gay trickled out, certainly amongst... but it was never spoken of amongst the wider congregation at all. During that time and absolutely coterminous with it and immediately after I was divorced, so as I was separating, I met another priest and that probably, I would say, has been the true love of my life. He was married. He described himself as a 100% gay living in a heterosexual marriage. And we had the most wonderful relationship. He came to be the rector of the neighbouring five parishes. We ran the total of nine parishes together. We were the youngest clergy in the deanery. Everyone thought we were the bee's knees, bringing in the new world in ecclesiastical circles in an area which had never heard of liturgical governance and synodical government, the liturgical movement, rather, synodical government, or certainly women's ministry. And we were the vanguard. We were having this affair, there's no other word for it, totally accepted because no-one even though that could be the case. I became very close to his wife. He had three children while he was there and I used to babysit for them. My mother used to babysit for them. And it became the elephant in the room in the internal circle, but I found that the tension of living dishonestly when it was clear that he wasn't going to move out of the situation was too much, and I think by this time, we were now going into 1982, I was ready to be more open about my sexuality. And so I went to the bishop, a new bishop now who didn't... probably knew from all the notes but we'd never discussed the gay issue, he and I, but I said I thought I was ready to return to inner-city work, which I very much felt a calling to, where I wouldn't... where I could go where I wouldn't go if I had my children living at home.

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And within a few months a post came up in the East End of London as director of one of the old university settlements which required a Christian priest to lead it, and I found myself going to start this new life. It is extraordinary because it's only been recently in writing a short memoir of my life that I've been able to look down on those decades of that half a century of adulthood, and from that perspective I could see the links which I would want to describe where the divine finger was involved in some way and I have no doubt that this was one of the important things, was this movement to London. And the place I went to was one that I was shortly to discover had an enormous history of homophobia, where a very important and nationally esteemed warden who'd been there for 30, 40 years, had been tried at the Old Bailey of his activities with young adults and sent to prison. And this was 20 years before and the whole place was shrouded in shame. And I discovered this on the day of my interview when it was really too late to withdraw, and I do remember reflecting to the heavenly realms, "Well, what on earth am I doing here?" and now, reflecting on it all and writing about it, I stayed there for 18 years. I can see how part of my role was to redeem that situation. And I went on to have a new relationship, a partner for six years who lived openly with me. We confronted the whole of the board of trustees about this. I was a member of the deanery chapter, the Anglican deanery chapter. We confronted the whole deanery chapter at a time... without... just by being, just naturally acting as a couple.

Of course, we're going now into the 1980s and the middle of the 1980s, when there was a great ferment in the wider world, certainly in the secular world, but also within the Christian world, and I was becoming involved in what was then the Gay Christian Movement by joining the counselling group, which was then at quite a tangent with the main organisation because we tried to stay outside the politics. And I often used to think I was not doing enough for the gay cause by not being too public about it. Interestingly, when the first national secretary was appointed to the Gay Christian Movement and it was before I... just as I was about to leave my parishes, I had wondered whether I should apply for the job. And by chance I had written to the editor of Gay Times, a man called Richard Creed, who was a solicitor. He'd written a very interesting article about professional people coming out or just getting on with the job, and I wrote and shared my dilemma of whether I should leave the church completely. And his advice was very simple, he said, "Well, I've usually found that professional people are best to say in their profession and just be honest". And I'm sure that was influential on me when I decided to stay within not parochial ministry but non-parochial ministry.

Another wonderful quirk, another divine finger, another bit of synchronicity, however you want to describe it, some ten years later when I was sending out the usual appeal letters that you do for a national charity, we had started the first HIV/AIDS project in East London and I sent to this small charity down in Somerset and found the chairman of this family trust was a man called Richard Creed, and I put a covering little handwritten note saying, "I don't know if you were the Richard Creed that I wrote to some 10, 15 years ago, but if you were, I'd like to thank you for that," and of course it was. I think it proved so right that I just continued the best job I could, large organisation, following 45 or so people, with probably up to 100 volunteers, dealing with thousands of people a year over a great number of sites, and without making any fuss, we came in line with all the national legislation by then, we were an equal opportunity employer, it was an offence even for a member of the board of trustees to discriminate on the gay issue, and I suppose out of that 45 staff we probably had about 10 who were gay, a number of them in partnerships. We just got on with the sort of life which mercifully, by... and we're now talking, aren't we, in 2015, it has been totally accepted outside of the church for the last 10 or 15 years, and I think that we were just doing it. And my reflection of those 18 years, which were blissfully happy times in terms of job fulfilment, a bonus for me was that I could be honest about my sexuality and help others to be the same.

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Not without its tussles during that time because I had a number of tussles with bishops, some three or four of them very accepting and understanding and three or four of them very un-understanding and I had to face the issues with them. I went through a lot of struggle within my own family when in their teens, when one of my daughters particularly, at the influence of her mother who'd become an evangelical Christian by then, was estranged from me for a good 6 or 12 months because she was caught up in a fundamentalist view of the bible. Of course, she's now gone on to be a therapist herself and we are the closest of friends and, well, with both my daughters we've laughed about it all, probably from when they were each 17, and there were three and three-quarter years between them, and by coincidence I was going out to a father-and-daughter dinner each time with them, so coming up to 18, and each time the question came up, we'd talked about it by then many times, but we reviewed the whole business of how life had taken us, what it was like being gay and so on. And each time it just so happened each daughter had said, "Well, really, dad, you shouldn't have got married, should you?" and then there was a grin, and then, "Well, I'm glad you did". And...

Interviewer: Because they wouldn't be here if you hadn't.

Respondent: They wouldn't be here if I hadn't, nor would the three grandchildren they've produced and we wouldn't all be living the same village as we are now, so it is a happily ever after story from that point of view.

Interviewer: Yes. What's your view on the changes that have taken place in the church and society over the last 40 years?

Respondent: I think I'm absolutely delighted and surprised at the way society has moved as quickly as it has in the last 20 years, I would say, so from the beginning of the 1990s, I think, was when the main legislation was coming in and the political scene was changing. And to me it was symbolised really within the Conservative Party when Margaret Thatcher had introduced the 1928 clause and was really quite militantly anti any gay subject being discussed in schools and so on, and then you think that within the space of a couple of decades, decade and a half, David Cameron could come along and be the first person in the Conservative Party really who advocated from the top as Prime Minister that they should follow, and I think that it seemed to fall like a pack of dominos then politically. And at least it was rather like the glass ceiling with the acceptance of women and indeed with ethnic minorities, one has to add the caveat that although on the surface there's no question about equal opportunities for gay people and all the same rights within secular society, there is still... it's still the elephant in the room on the higher promotional lines in most professions. There is no doubt, and it's interesting the person who was the chief executive of BP, wasn't it, who kept up the façade of being heterosexual and has subsequently come out as gay and spoken and written indeed quite clearly about how he could only reach those levels within an international corporation with a façade. So, it's changing all the time and I think when we see and we've already seen ministers of state declaring that they're gay, perhaps when we have a gay prime minister, when we have a member of royalty accept they're gay, these would be the final (overspeaking).

Interviewer: And how about from the church? Are any of the bishops openly gay?

Respondent: Remember... oh my goodness, yes, we remember, don't we, in the 1990s, I think it was, that Peter Tatchell managed to out some 20 or 30 with banners and I knew most of the stories then behind these bishops, and I've known a few myself. I once remember in East London listening to two of our clients, they happened to be people that were living with AIDS in a project, we had some 120 men living with AIDS in a project that we were running there, and I was at the sink innocently doing the washing up when these two



lads, they weren't more than 19, 20, were chatting together. They were both fairly promiscuous in East London, and one of them started describing a bishop he'd had on Wanstead flats and I realised he was talking about my own(?) bishop, which I'd had great suspicions of. He had no idea I was listening. He had no idea really that I was ordained I think even. And many, many gay men, gay priests of my age and generation will tell similar stories, the hypocrisy and the double life. And it saddens me enormously that, as I reflected earlier, my own diocese bishop in 1972 and '73 was able to tell me that there were six bishops who would accept me openly and I could live, and it was important he said that when I finally separated with my wife that, "You can live in your rectory here with anyone that you form a permanent relationship with, and these are the names of the six other diocese bishops you could do the same," and sadly now, in 2015, we couldn't say that. So, it has been retrogressive in the church. We know that's a political theme within the Anglican communion, and also probably more, I think, myself it's identified by the fundamentalism that we see in both ends, extremes of the church, evangelical, charismatic end and also the catholic end, that if you need to adhere for your own personality compulsions, your fears, to something which is so black and white and rigid then it does, whether you're fundamental about the biblical interpretation, literal interpretation of scripture or the literal interpretation adherence to doctrine on the Catholic side, then that's the position you take. And you can go into this position of splitting, where you can hold that external adherence while internally you can know your own or other people's sexual orientation. And it's very, very sad. And I'm not really at all optimistic at the moment, in 2015, unless we take a line of saying that, within the Anglian communion, different provinces, different countries are at stages of development and accept that we live with this dualism.

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Interviewer: Yes, that's almost like a parallel with the dualism you had in your life, the... I noticed that you said many, many times, you talked about all honesty and honesty, honest came up a lot of times in your account, and of course you've written a book called...

Respondent: An Honest Life, Faithful and Gay.

Interviewer: Yes, and that's been very important to you, hasn't it, to be honest?

Respondent: Yes, it has. I was interesting, there was a review done of the book in Quest, which was the Roman Catholic equivalent to the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, and the person who did the review, who I don't know, had unfortunately totally misread something which I said and he had said in the book, and it was a very sore point to me for the very reasons we're illustrating now, that it was a result of being found out by the RAF that I had to come out and accept myself, which was totally wrong. I made it quite clear it was my own personal integrity that caused me to tell my wife and to tell this other priest with whom I was starting a relationship, and that started everything being acknowledged within myself and within my family circles. It was only the coincidence that it was then overhead by tapping of telephones that the RAF got involved.

Interviewer: Yes, and I think it's that struggle with your own integrity that comes out in the book.

Respondent: Yes. I've had mention I think once in a book, an old priest friend many, many years ago, I mean 20 years ago, used to complain that I was always on about the gay issue. And I mean he, interestingly, is a gay man who once made advances at me and is now in his early 60s, decided to get married, but that's all another story and it all fits the pattern, but he had said at that moment of honesty to me that he'd certainly... I'd been talking about my father to him and how when I mentioned the possibility of being ordained to him, he had said, "You're a stupid fool, they're all a lot of bloody hypocrites". Now, he'd been a grocer for 40, 50 years in this small provincial town and he had watched the churchgoers come in and out, ordained and lay, and he saw the lives they had, he saw

the crooked tricks a lot of them did through the local council and he'd seen it all behind his grocery counter, and he just... he was a person of great integrity. I remember as a cocky teenager of about 17 pointing out to him that he was hardly making any money enough to live on and why didn't he sell the business, get rid of the premises and do something else, be far better off, and he just laughed at me, of course. At his funeral when he was 70 and I was ordained, when I was rector of those four parishes, all sorts of people had turned out from behind the woodwork at his funeral, little old ladies, little old lonely men, and I thought, "You didn't have a business; you had a ministry and that you were there, caring for these people". That's what he did day in, day out, boringly, not making money. And yes, I hope that some of his integrity, and he would see through, he had an amazing way of seeing through pretence, particularly amongst the classes, I think, that it was... I imbibed that from him more than anything.

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I mean he of course was still alive when I had to come out to my parents. They were really unable to understand it. They were totally accepting of me but just couldn't understand it then. They had no equipment to understand it. And of course that interface within the church with the outside world, I mean so many now, I'm just astounded by the number of priests and lay people who are gay who've been able to confront the system and expose that honesty and the dualism within the church and still, still the church is unable to accept it. It does, it saddens me. And I've said often that one of my favourite biblical tests recorded as coming from the lips of Jesus is that let the dead bury the dead, and I think that's probably been my increasing thought about the church because I've watched these commissions be formed. I mean the first one was when I was... it would have been in the 1960s and every decade there's been a new commission, a new report, which has usually taken a few years, and more discussion at all sorts of levels. And I look on my own bookshelves at the books I've acquired since the 19... I suppose beginning in the mid 1970s and through the '80s and '90s particularly, I've got some 40 or 50 books written on the subject of faith and sexuality. All the information is out there. It doesn't need any more writing. It needs a bit of reading and I've found in my last ten years I've been living in Wells(?) that I've found my spiritual nurturing coming from the Quaker's, who back in the mid 1950s brought out their book Towards a Quaker View of Sex, and they've seen through it ever since. And they seem to me, as a national body and as local groups, people who put their money and their time, their energy and their pastoral care where their mouth is and then just get on and do it.

Interviewer: Are there any things I should have asked you about but didn't? Or you'd like to say more about anything?

Respondent: I think I would long for... and I'm loathe to say the church because the church is divided into so many sectors, I mean the orthodox, the Romans, the Anglicans, each of them within 500 different splits internally, many of them totally elitist and believing they have the whole truth. Before we move over to other faith traditions, the overwhelming thing that I have found, I cannot... I would call myself a Christian, that I follow the Christian way and I've been called to faith through the Christian church. I will never deny what I felt was a call of God through ordination through the channels of the Church of England. I'm absolutely convinced that that is the reality of my life. But I equally can't deny the presence of the divine in people who follow honestly the true paths within all the other world religions. And the glorious thing is the gospel that boils down to love and truthfulness and integrity and justice is at the source of all those issues. Now, how we can help that get through to today's emerging generations, and it's certainly what I would try to do within my own family and would... I think the book I wrote was largely for my grandchildren and their successors so they have some idea of what went on before, but if only we could get that gospel over. But the channel to do it through the conventional denominations and expressions, with a number of exceptions, but

unfortunately the image which is given to them, and I see my own children in their 40s now with their friends and their generation and emerging ones in my younger grandchildren getting on towards teenage with their contemporaries, the church has nothing to say to them. They see the church for its... they see it as a dishonest place so often and an irrelevant place, and yet within their own explorations, they're desperately searching for the other and another dimension and all higher things. We fail so often. I mean I just hope that because the struggle as a gay person of faith, and particularly when ordained, of course, it's magnified then, the dualism within all... I mean the Roman Catholic church is saying they'll accept homosexual laypeople but of course the clergy can't. I can't even begin down that avenue because it's in such a mess, it's such, in such a mess. I can't blame people from outside, I really can't, from finding it difficult. But how we approach it from... well, I do believe that the spirit is finding ways and does find ways, but I can't... I see now the Church of England probably dominantly as being owned by the middle-class strata, and that's given out in everything that's done and said, with some exceptions. And I... well, let the dead bury the dead and let's get on with it.

Interviewer: Yes, okay. So, on that note, thank you, Geoffrey Hooper.

Respondent: Thank you.

[End of Transcript]