

“The Decisions Have Already Been Made!”

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

On Monday, February 21st, I went to Christ Church in downtown Pensacola to hear Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury. I am grateful to Christ Church both for the invitation and for their kind hospitality. I am so grateful to them that I wish my report on Lord Carey could be more positive, but I have to report to you my very great concern. (I had hoped it would be possible for me to share my concern with the Rector of Christ Church, Dr. Levenson, before this broadcast.)

Lord Carey’s address, having to do with “The Religion of the Heart”, was pleasant. It included some humor. And there was polite applause at the end. Unhappily, as far as I was concerned, it managed to avoid every controversial subject facing the Anglican Communion today! And that is all the more remarkable since several of these controversies emerged “on his watch” as Archbishop of Canterbury.

In an excellent article in *The Pensacola News Journal* on the Archbishop’s visit, Kris Thoma says: “Anglicans are struggling to decide such issues as whether to sanction the ordination of gay clergy, give blessings to same-sex unions and allow women priests to become bishops.” She quotes Lord Carey on these issues as saying, “The next two weeks will be critical.” If they are so critical, why did he ignore the issues?

Our response to all this is “***Wake up, people, and smell the coffee! These issues have already been decided!***” And to pretend the issues have not been decided and that there is still time for discussion is – and I am sorry to say this – deceitful. The issues have already been decided.

The strategy all along has been to keep the conservatives – the traditionalists, the evangelicals – discussing. (The trendy word is “dialoging”.) Meanwhile the liberals go on acting unopposed. The liberals act, the conservatives go on discussing and eventually accommodate themselves to what the liberals have done. Back when Lord Carey was Archbishop of Canterbury the conservatives in England were discussing the ordination of women as deacons. But in this country Bishop Paul Moore helped to ordain illegally eleven female deacons, in Philadelphia, I think it was. This was done in violation of the canons of the Church, but nothing was ever done about it! The liberals went on acting, while the conservatives discussed and adapted themselves to what the liberals had done. And now Dr. Gerald Bray reports that in the year 2005 there will be more females than males ordained in the Church of England! Is there any doubt how the vote will go when the question of female bishops in the Church of England arises? Especially since the present Archbishop, Rowan Williams, has already declared himself in favor of female bishops! The issues have already been decided. Women in the clergy – priestesses – that’s already decided.

Gene Robinson – his legal name is Vicki Gene Robinson – was supposedly “consecrated” as Bishop of New Hampshire. We conservatives are supposed to sit back and dialogue – don’t

do anything – while Vicki Gene goes on supposedly “confirming” and “ordaining”. And those being ordained in the Episcopal ministry today are required to sign an oath that they will not oppose the ordination of women! While the conservatives babble on, the liberals take action. And then the conservatives – who have not put up much of a fight anyway – adapt themselves to what has been done. Has that not been the course?

The issues have already been decided. There is no further discussion. The only issue is where we take a stand. Either we take a stand, or we go on drifting with the current.

One more item, that has been scarcely commented on. In her annual address to Parliament, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, asked Parliament for legislation permitting same sex relationships! Now this past week we are informed that the Church of England is making the same provisions for same-sex partners of the clergy as for clergy wives, even though same-sex partners for the clergy are illegal!

And the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, thinks these matters are still under discussion? Does he really not know the issues have been decided? We maintain that the issues have been decided and the only question that remains is where we make our stand? And let me tell you that we at All Saints have made our stand. We stand with the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and the one oblation of Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world. The ‘79 Prayer Book (the “imitation prayer book” I call it) fudges on this crucial issue and opens the for the heresy of transubstantiation. We have taken our stand with Scripture, with the 1928 Prayer Book, the male priesthood and against the ordination of gays. These are not matters of discussion. These points are not negotiable. Our response is this:

“Lead on, O King eternal
The day of march has come;
Henceforth in fields of conquest
Thy tents shall be our home.”

A radio broadcast in Pensacola, Florida, on Station WCOA 1370 AM, on Sunday, March 6th, 2005, at 8:05 a.m., by The Rev. Hugh B. Hall, Jr., Rector of All Saints Church, Pensacola, Florida.