

George Carey  
**Know the Truth - a memoir**  
ISBN 0 00 712030 3  
*HarperCollins, London, 2004, £25*

This is the first autobiography by an Archbishop of Canterbury. It takes us from his working class background in Dagenham, his spiritual awareness and development in the evangelical tradition of the Church of England, through his experiences in the RAF in Iraq and on to his career following ordination. From there we see his fairly rapid rise and surprise invitation to and acceptance of the post of Canterbury.

I found the book very readable, written as it is in a very plain and straightforward style. What does emerge is Carey's love of the Gospel and his passion to preach and teach it. Much of the book centres on his travels throughout the Communion which he took very seriously. There is an interesting chapter on sorting out the chaotic financial affairs of the Church of England, and we are given insights into his relationships with fellow bishops, politicians, royalty and other contemporaries, very often in a candid, critical and almost gossipy way. In the book, this man isn't slow in giving his opinions. During his time in office Carey had to face two highly controversial issues - that of the ordination of women to the priesthood, which he was in favour of, believing that opposition was a serious heresy; and the challenge which homosexuality made to the Church - especially where it concerned ordination and same-sex blessings, which the Archbishop believed to be against Biblical teaching and a compromise with prevailing culture. He repeatedly returns to the topic and I was left with a strange feeling that though he mentions people having gone through divorce or having been in an adulterous relationship (and the Gospels do have something to say about both), with these he seems more at ease, less judging, more understanding, than he would be of a long-term loving, faithful and committed homosexual relationship.

*Know the Truth* gives us intimate and interesting insights into the scope of the work of an Archbishop of Canterbury and the importance of this office in the life of Church and State. It is the opinion of George Carey that on his retirement he had left the Church of England in good heart. Yet, many of us could only feel a great deal of sympathy for a successor who very early on faced a great deal of hostility over issues that had long been bubbling away and which inevitably had to surface and be tackled. Carey was a faithful and solid servant of his Lord and a good man; by Divine Providence his mantle fell on another, with different gifts, to lead the Church into a new era.

***Benedict SSF***