

The Education of Nations... in Securing Peace and Avoiding War

January 2020 onwards

Peter M. Southwood (Dr)
Law Officer for Public Benefit in England and Wales
(*de jure* by the Court of history since 24 February 2022)
www.directionofconflict.org

Open Letter

The Archbishop of Canterbury
Lambeth Palace
London SE1 7JU

22 February 2023.

Dear Archbishop,

**Re: ‘...the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news’
or
resign**

Our beloved Church of England has sunk to a new low: at the instigation of the House of Bishops the General Synod has this month, while affirming the doctrine derived from Holy Scripture that marriage is between one man and one woman for life, also allowed a service for God’s blessing on a same-sex couple following their civil marriage or partnership. While claiming that this latter service and/or prayers are consistent with the former, it is unlikely to be regarded as such either by the same-sex couples themselves or even the minister presiding who will see it as God’s blessing on their sexual union – which is not so – and a stepping stone to the eventual change of Church doctrine on marriage by political action.

The rebel Bishop of Oxford, who has been open in his support for allowing homosexual couples to be married in church, has led the way and, in keeping with other priests of like mind, has thereby challenged God’s laws and sovereignty.

Despite your own public disavowal of any intention to bless same-sex unions, your book [The Power of Reconciliation](#) (Bloomsbury, 2022) reveals a similar subordination of theology to politics. It is the purpose of this letter to challenge this unbiblical outlook and call for an end to the long line of Archbishops of Canterbury since the 1970s, with one possible exception, who have presided over a long decline of identity in England with the Church of Christ.

cont’d/...

My Purpose:

To forewarn the public one more time that the world is heading for another Great Power war.

As in 1920, the reason is the failure of political institutions to apply ‘an irenic perspective’ even-handedly. Post-Cold War, the term was first defined in English charity law on 9 October 1998, drawing on a United States case of 1917, and affirmed by the Court of Appeal on 28 June 2000.

110 Purves Road, London NW10 5TB, England.
Mobile no: 07821 390492 (voicemail) Email: consultant@directionofconflict.org

In the beginning...

Just before the announcement of your appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, when you were Bishop of Durham, my open letter to the then (Lord) Chief Justice of England and Wales dated 29 September 2012 was copied, inter alia, to you. (It is also on my website.) Your PA acknowledged receipt and assured me she would show it to you, which I am sure she did. Moreover, the terms of her communication suggested she understood its significance. That letter highlighted the need for repentance by judges (and by all), with respect to the annual Judges Service in Westminster Abbey, specifically due to their subordinating truth to political expediency thereby subverting education in the differing means of securing peace and avoiding war to political ends, '...making peace impossible and war inevitable.'

Take a different example from your predecessor's term of office. Early on he appointed a priest called 'John' as bishop who, although openly homosexual, was not in any relationship. This announcement was greeted with protests, especially by evangelicals, so your predecessor backed down and John's appointment did not proceed. Such expediency helped create problems that you yourself have had to address; it made no more sense to refuse to appoint John as bishop than to refuse a heterosexual priest on the grounds that one day he might commit fornication or adultery. (Expediency has its place on policy but not on principle – the right of men and women called by Christ, whatever their sexual orientation, to be appointed priest or bishops based on their faithfulness to Him and suitability as pastors.)

Your entire tenure as Archbishop of Canterbury was to show how you, too, have been swept along, at the national and international levels, by the tides of political opinion and shifting sands of public sentiment, i.e. usually reacting; yet, as you know, Jesus as the True Vine said '...apart from me you can do nothing.' Thus, near the end of your tenure in office, you have become involved in just that legal chicanery, over God's supposed blessing of same-sex couples, which I warned against at the very beginning of your archiepiscopate. *Your book bears this out on the central mission of the Church on peace and reconciliation in Christ.*

Between the times...

My Church Times article of 3 June 2011, on applying a truly biblical theology to global conflicts, which rightly foresaw the direction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict towards periodic war (taken from a Briefing published in January 2006), may be contrasted with the lack of foresight shown by your predecessor over the consequences of South Sudan's independence in 2011. While your book refers to the ensuing civil war in that country it does not address the reasons for the Church of England's prophetic failure. Nor did it result in any attempt by you (or anyone else, as far as I am aware) to try to understand why my method of analysis worked.

To address this gap, let us examine seven differences between your method and mine:

1. *My starting point* is the Kingdom of God taken straight from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Your starting point is The Power of Reconciliation (cf. 'The Power of Positive Thinking'*).

2. *In my case*, this means God's control of His world and the destinies of nations.

In yours, it means the need to rely on human efforts, albeit inspired by the example of Christ. It is impossible Almighty God could be dependent on us in this Way. While you present a vision of what God is bringing about you add 'God does not give us the option of leaving it all to God in a quietist or fatalistic way....' (pp. 182-83). Yet your summary of the *Difference Course* on reconciliation shows no evidence of how God works in history.

3. *In my case*, this complete dependence on Him is revealed by recent history you ignore.

In yours, reconciliation again and again depends on the powerful to relinquish power. (e.g. pp. 39 (second bullet point), page 43 (third paragraph), and p. 48 (third paragraph).)

Example: Take events in the first century from the earthly ministry of Jesus leading to His passion, death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit but, in AD70, to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. In Holy Scripture, as you know, it is attested that Jesus rejected the way of political and military rebellion and prophesied the terrible consequences for His beloved people of rejection of His Way of peace. In our own time, a great peacemaker arose who brought the Cold War to a mostly peaceful end but from which, as I foresaw in four published 'Briefings' (1993-95), terrible consequences would arise due to the West's political exploitation and taking advantage of Russia in the 1990s. Yet your book does not even mention Mikhail Gorbachev and his 'peace offensive'. No 'sacrifice for sin' to be sure, but did not our Lord say of a Roman centurion that He had not seen such faith 'no, not in Israel'? Is not the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 – the year of publication of your book – the fruit of rebellion against God's laws you did not see coming?

4. *In my case*, repentance in the West is urgently needed, not just in the East, because we created the conditions for war in the 1990s as surely as Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

In yours, condemnation of Russia at the outset of her invasion of Ukraine on 24 February (and again on a televised visit later that year) in exactly the manner generally counselled against in your book (p. 146, second paragraph and pp. 235-36, last and first paragraphs). It is true that you allow circumstances where '...even armed resistance, is the only possible response to forces so evil that no negotiation is possible' but also bear in mind that 'the early steps towards conflict begin with demonizing the opponent.' Is that not exactly what you were doing just like politicians the world over are apt to do? [Cf. my four out of six Project on Demilitarisation Briefings (Prodem, 1993-95) against 'Western triumphalism']

5. *In my case*, belief in the good news of 'an irenic perspective' affirmed on 28 June 2000. (An anniversary of great historical significance, as you know). What is this term but the outward and secular expression of the inward and spiritual grace of God's Kingdom? It is not a political policy but a means of interpreting conflicts at every level, even the global.

In yours, there are the six 'Rs' of peacebuilding (Coventry model) – researching, relating, relieving, risking, reconciling and resourcing – but the first 'R' is omitted: repentance.

6. *In my case*, we are called to repent, at the national and international levels, of the subordination of God's Kingdom to politics; vainly imagining that the interests of the State can supersede the sovereignty and laws of God by mobilising public opinion. Both the Prodem court case [1998 and 2000] and the Court of history demonstrated that is futile.

In yours, by involvement in politics without regard to where the proper influence of the Church should be: not principally on a policy (though advancing its benefits may be allowed); rather in evaluation of conflicts where peacemakers are not just mediators or facilitators but the authoritative interpreters of events and their likely future direction. (This is secular, not biblical, prophecy but one that has the power to engage the public.)

7. *In my case*, to illustrate that God works through weakness by a willingness to confront the powerful in liberal democracies, as elsewhere, when they challenge the supremacy of His laws, expressed in the Golden Rule, through idolatrous worship of political power.

In yours, to making political calculations you are neither authorised nor competent to make that invariably end up subordinating the Way of Christ to expediency (as Jesus clearly did not do, even when He seemed 'powerless' before His judges).

End-times...

Like your predecessors (bar one), you have shown over the last decade as Archbishop of Canterbury that you don't accept the authority of Mark 1: 15, where peace and reconciliation in Christ at the national and international levels are concerned.

This has grave consequences for human survival: for you acknowledge in your book the threat of annihilation from nuclear weapons (especially at p. 267, second paragraph) yet, when your book was published, you publicly threw out after 24 February 2022 almost all you had argued for. On what basis of theology can it be claimed that your method of analysis is more reliable than mine when the Court of history, governed by God, has vindicated His laws in the conflict between the West and Russia over the last thirty years since the ending of the Cold War?

To whom then can the Church of England turn? Nothing in this letter is meant to deny your personal commitment to Christ, as priest and pastor, nor your physical and moral courage before and during your archiepiscopate, which is evident in your book. This is not personal.

During the sermon you gave at the funeral for our late Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II, you spoke against leaders who outstay their tenure in a just and courageous way. *As a brother in Christ, I must now ask you the question you put to others: have you outstayed your mandate?*

Yours in Christ,

Peter M. Southwood

cc The Archbishop of York
The Bishop of London
The Bishop of Oxford

The author is fully and solely responsible for this letter and the contents of his website.

Distribution & Privacy Notice

This letter can be copied to those who are or may be interested provided it is done in full, without amendment or financial charge. The letter may also be quoted with due acknowledgement. It is distributed to named individuals because I have a legitimate interest in the matters raised therein.

Note to letter (page 1)

* The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale, an American minister, was published in the early 1950s and criticised by certain scholars and theologians. However, it was, and remains, popular with the public. Personally, I read it at school, and found it helpful even if, doctrinally, it is flawed. On the other hand, Justin Welby's The Power of Reconciliation (Bloomsbury, 2022) was criticised in Anglican Mainstream but otherwise favourably reviewed in the Church Times and Christianity. Being Archbishop generally provides some protection from adverse comment, at least in Church circles, but neither his work nor mine has yet resonated with the general public.

Acknowledgements

Quotations from the Holy Bible are:

Mark 1: 15 (New Revised Standard Version) – title of this letter on page 1.

John 15: 5.(NRSV) – on page 2, paragraph 3.

Matthew 8: 10 (Authorised or King James Version) – on page 3, paragraph 5: Example.