

Strictly Confidential File Memorandum

Date: 4 September, 2000
Subject: Bishop Peter Ball

000932

1. The papers deal mostly with events after Bishop Peter resigned as Bishop of Gloucester and concern his rehabilitation to ministry. The Gloucestershire Police conducted the investigation into the allegations made against Ball. There are no substantial papers on the file about the offence itself¹.
2. This much is however clear: in December 1992, Neil Todd makes allegations of indecent behaviour against Ball and shortly after attempts suicide, twice. As a result, his parents make a statement to the police and Ball is arrested in Gloucester. On 8 March 1993 Bishop Ball is cautioned for one offence of gross indecency, contrary to Section 13 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956. He resigns as Bishop of Gloucester and goes to ground. By September 1993 however he and his brother, Michael, are pressing for him to have permission to minister and seeking to clear his name. In 1994 Bishop Ball reaches an out of court settlement with Todd, and pays him £15,000.
3. There is not enough detail on file to make a realistic judgement based solely on the papers as to whether the bishop committed the offence or not. The balance of probabilities is however that Peter Ball is guilty of the offence for which he received a Caution. At the meeting with Bishop Gordon and Dr Frank Robson on 29 January 1993 he admits lying naked on a bed next to a naked eighteen year old man (?Todd). He accepts the Caution and thereby admits guilt, even though no one else was present when the offence took place, and so there was no independent witness or evidence. He pays damages to his accuser. Seven additional accusations from other men (or on their behalf) are detailed in the file. A private detective (the Rev'd Bryan Tyler), engaged by the Ball brothers, sets out to prove Peter Ball's innocence and to demonstrate that there has been a conspiracy against him. However, he tells Bishop John Yates in February 1993 that he is sure that there is a case to answer². Lord Lloyd of Berwick (Lord Appeal in Ordinary), also someone who initiates contact with Lambeth Palce determined to 'clear the Bishop's name', later advises that an offence did occur.³
4. Much has been written (not least in Chapter 4 of the *Under Authority* Report GS 1217) about the tension between the pastoral and the juridical in the role of a bishop. It is clear from the correspondence that in this matter the Archbishop responded quickly and instinctively to his duty as a pastor. Peter Ball was

¹ Bishop Ronald Gordon's note of a meeting with +PB on 29 January 1993 says "PB would not wish to deny that an incident took place at his home in Gloucester which could be interpreted as gross indecency, namely that he lay naked on a bed alongside a naked eighteen year old man."

² Memo from +JY to ABC 15 February 1993 "He [the Rev'd Brian Tyler, a former CID inspector] made it clear that, although he began with the supposition that Peter had been 'set up' by one or more of the young people involved, and while that might still be an element in the case, he had no doubt that there is a case to answer."

³ Memo from +FS to ABC 21 October 1994 reporting a telephone conversation with Lloyd.

arrested on 14 December 1992 and comes to Lambeth to see the Archbishop the next day. By 17 December, the Archbishop had written to him personally assuring him of prayer and saying he was determined to keep him on the Episcopal bench⁴. The Archbishop writes to the Chief Constable of Gloucester in support of Peter Ball on 5 February 1993. Immediately after his resignation both Peter and his brother go on holiday at the Archbishop's expense, and the first instalment of over £8600 is given to them. The Archbishop visits Peter in his new home in May 1993. As early as mid 1993, the Archbishop is encouraging Peter to hope to be restored to partial ministry. Writing to Michael Ball later he says, about his decision not to list PB on the Lambeth and Bishopthorpe Register, "I did not do so, for in the end I believed him to be basically innocent...."⁵

5. From the file it seems clear that the Archbishop has all along believed Peter's version of the events; certainly he has given him very generous pastoral support in terms of time and money. Even when +PB had admitted guilt (by accepting a Caution) the Archbishop still believed in his innocence and decided not take any action under the disciplinary procedures of the Church. Staff advice that there should be an independent Church enquiry into the case was in the event not followed up.⁶ Subsequent allegations against +PB are not investigated partly because they might bring to light further evidence that would lead to charges.⁷ The Archbishop gave Peter Ball substantial sums of money, and persuaded the Church Commissioners amongst others to contribute. He restored +PB to ministry sooner than might have been expected in comparison to similar cases, and gave him a Provincial Permission to Preach – thereby giving him a far wider authority to minister than most ordinary retired bishops.
6. Both Ball brothers seem to be manipulative, and in retrospect can be seen playing upon the Archbishop's generous nature. The pastoral, supportive tone of his initial involvement means that, when the Archbishop decides that the time has arrived to administer discipline, his action is received with surprise and dismay. His 28 September 1993 letter to Bishop Michael Ball refusing permission for +PB to have a licence is so unexpected by the recipient that it receives a furious response accusing the Church and the Archbishop of failing to support +PB and himself.⁸
7. Again and again we see those in the Church guilty of misconduct revising history to cast themselves in the role of victims. We believe it to be so in this case. The relationship between the two Ball brothers ensures that they feed each other's distorted view of events. As time passes, brief periods of acceptance of responsibility by +PB give way to denial, defiant rage and wild accusations of plots and conspiracies. The psychiatrist who sees Peter Ball (Name Redacted) whom Bishop Richard knows, and for whom he has a high regard) seems to make

⁴ ABC to +PB 17 December 1992 "Peter, I want you to know you are on my heart and constantly in my prayers. You need to know further that the matter does not diminish my admiration for you or my determination to keep you on the episcopal bench.

⁵ ABC to +MB 28 September 1993

⁶ See Andrew Purkis note to Bishop John Yates dated 8 January 1993

⁷ See FR to +JY 29 December 1992

⁸ +MB to ABC 1 October 1993

little or no impression at all against this.⁹ The Ball brothers are encouraged in their denial and revisionist view by the very wide support +PB continues to receive. Indeed, the re-examination of the file has been prompted by letters and telephone calls in support of, and critical of the lack of the Church's concern and pastoral care for, Bishop Peter. Despite the evidence that begins to accrue, large numbers of people refuse to believe that +PB committed any act of gross indecency, or indeed has done anything worthy of resignation or rebuke.

8. Looking at precedent, one might have expected Peter Ball to have been asked to resign and be put on the Lambeth and Bishopthorpe Register under P(i) for a minimum of five years. This would indicate that his offence was of such seriousness that it was thought inappropriate that he should exercise his Orders for the time being. Even after five years, precedents suggest his restoration to ministry might have been more gradual, since there is little or no apparent acceptance of responsibility or recognition of the harm he has done to his victim(s) and the Church more generally. There are only brief glimpses of penitence or remorse and these vanish altogether once the Ball brothers retire and live in the same house.

000934

Richard Llewellyn

Andrew Nunn

⁹. Indeed her only appearance in the correspondence after an initial exchange between her and the ABC (3 February 1994) is in a 12 August 1998 letter when Ball quotes her as saying she tells him he is not a homosexual.