

1993/10

The Archbishop of Canterbury  
Lambeth Palace  
London

001714

15th December '92

Dear Archbishop,

We met recently at the House of Commons at the launch of DPA  
DPA which I co-wrote with Name Redacted

I'm writing because of what I've just heard about my dear friend Peter Ball. He moved to East Sussex in the same month as I, back in 1977, and we became surprisingly close friends. I was not an Anglican and did not share his approach, and it may be because of this that we were able to come so close. Our friendship was underlined when my wife gave birth to identical boy twins in 1984.

Peter was a true 'father in God' to people of every denomination in East Sussex: Baptists, Methodists - even House Church folk - considered him 'their bishop'. Whatever the allegations, whether or not they are true, I have learnt more about holiness and true Christ-likeness from him than from anybody else.

Obviously I do not know the nature of the allegation, but as someone who worked closely with him for 14 years - and knew nearly all the young men who passed through his care - I would be amazed if any indecent act took place.

What I suspect may be the foundation for the allegation is an incident which, until now, I have only mentioned to my wife.

I was 23 when Peter and I first met, and our friendship developed through prayer, conversation and partnership in mission and training young people. Coming from such different backgrounds, we had contrasting ideas about the best format for training young men. But he was the Bishop and so a monastic model was used.

I gave him my full support, and he suggested that we seal our commitment in the work of the gospel in a similar way to St Francis - by stripping of our clothes in his chapel, as a symbol of no going back, and praying together.

We did this, there was no physical contact or sexual 'atmosphere' and - in truth - it was a deeply meaningful spiritual experience which seems to have been part of bonding Peter and myself together in the service of Christ. It was never repeated, and was clearly meant and understood as a 'symbolic' beginning.

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I have no idea whether he ever asked others to pray in a similar manner. None of the young men ever suggested that he had, and I would have thought that at least one of them would have commented to me if he had. But it does seem possible to me that Peter, in his new role in Gloucester, may have asked somebody to make a similar spiritual gesture of commitment - which has been mis-interpreted and has become the foundation of this allegation.

Please forgive me for writing at length, but both Name Redacted and I were devoted to Peter and were deeply enriched by his ministry. I pray that, as you deal with this issue, you will make plain the compassion, justice and unconditional forgiveness of God - and that you will confront the doublestandard which suggests that one 'sin' is worse than another.

Throughout his time in East Sussex, Peter persisted in challenging materialism, ambition, greed and individualism. It would be tragic if his prophetic voice were silenced, because - perhaps - he sinned once in a moment of weakness.

Please stand with him. Please stand with him publicly. And when you visit him at his retreat to pray with him, please assure him of my prayers and support.

With best wishes, deep gratitude for your words at the House of Commons, and my prayers for you at this time.

Yours sincerely,

**Name Redacted**

LAMBETH PALACE

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