

The Very Revd

Alan Webster KCVO DD

Tel. **DPA**

000272

**DPA**

**DPA**

16 March 1993

RECEIVED 19 MAR 1993

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Archbishop George,

I write with real sorrow to sympathise with you and also with Peter Ball on the series of events which have led to his resignation as Bishop of Gloucester. I feel particularly that great pressure has been put on you as Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint him to Gloucester and that it was very unfair, both on him and on you personally. As you will know, the Crown Appointments Commission of which I was a member for ten years, were pressed, especially by the Prime Minister's Patronage Secretary, to appoint him as a Diocesan Bishop. In the case of Norwich there was a hint that he would be especially welcome at Sandringham. We were pressed that because Maurice Wood had been rather evangelical, we ought to appoint a celibate Anglo Catholic monk. You will be interested to know that the Norwich representatives who included an Anglo Catholic opposed his appointment, partly on the ground that we needed someone married and that Norwich really could not take a group of young men living with the Bishop in the Bishop's House - nor was this pastorally wise for the Bishop. In response to a question from the Archbishop himself, a Norwich general practitioner of great wisdom and religious conviction, simply said, 'Your Grace, for Norwich, must be married'. We did not agree with this as a generalisation, but it was treated very seriously and as you know Peter Mott was appointed to Norwich.

Part of the evidence which was discussed was Peter Ball's succumbing, as Bishop of Lewes, to the attentions of a confidence trickster. This was the case when he appeared in court, having signed a letter appealing for money to buy a valuable chalice which was to be melted down by the confidence trickster and be used as a form of prayer to aid people who were sick. A number of devout Anglicans in the City had suffered through this collection of many thousands of pounds, and resented the kindness of Peter Ball which had led him to sign the confidence trickster's letter without having the time or the probing determination which is required in dealing with these unpleasant people, especially in the South East, who plague religious figures.

LAKEDITH PALACE

ACE000545

000273

I had tried, before I left the Commission, to persuade the Patronage Secretary, Robin Catford, but I felt that he was being overborne by Mrs Thatcher who had formed a particular admiration for Peter Ball at the time of the funeral of Ian Gow. I feel extremely sorry that political pressure continued to insist that the Church should give Peter Ball a task without the support of a wife or of the tradition which could shield him from the confidence tricksters who had already succeeded in damaging him and his work. I fear, however, that the former Prime Minister would make up her mind about clergymen and insist on their appointment (as she did over the present disastrous Dean of Lincoln, who is doing such damage by speaking against his own Bishop) and I so much hope that the new regime will be much more careful in trying to thrust candidates upon the Church about whom it really has not the full information which is needed. Mrs Thatcher had great enthusiasm for her own understanding of the Gospel, but she could be extremely unwise and of course was no longer there to take the consequences of unfortunate appointments.

I want you to know how many of us sympathise with you over this most difficult case, which I fear will continue to make headlines in the evil parts of the Press. Your own prayerful and kind statement was just what is needed. I so much hope that this kind of political pressure on the Crown Appointments Commission will not continue. You will know of Michael Ramsay's opinion about the unfortunate prominence given to the number 10 Patronage Secretary in recent years. Of course there can often be nice men who say their prayers, but pressure from them on behalf of ministers and even MPs is unfortunate.

Of course this letter requires no reply from you. Perhaps you may like to know that Margaret and I have been invited to do various Holy Week things in Boston and New York, including a lecture on Julian of Norwich and her way of prayer.

*With all good wishes*

*Yours very sincerely*

**DPA**