

God On Our Side? The Church of England and the Geopolitics of Mourning 9/11

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Political geographers have been surprisingly slow to engage with the importance of religion in contemporary international relations. Informed by theories of critical geopolitics, this paper addresses this failure by considering the Church of England's immediate response to the Al-Qaeda attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001. Focusing on a national service of remembrance held at St. Paul's Cathedral on September 14, it argues that the service was both an expression of grief at a shocking tragedy, and a (geo)political commentary. Occurring at a crucial moment of public debate about how to understand and respond to '9/11', the service scripted a geopolitical text that resonated with voices that were advocating a military response. The article undertakes a discursive reading of the service and its coverage by journalists, and uses interviews with key organisers to analyse its production. It concludes that although the organisers of the service strove to create what they considered to be an apolitical event, the service became part of a process of geopolitical scripting that made the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq more likely, and alternative peaceful responses to the crisis of 9/11 less likely. It calls on the Church of England to reconsider this aspect of its engagement with international affairs, by listening to non-Western Anglican perspectives, and political geographers to interrogate more systematically the intersections of religion and the 'war on terror'.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the geopolitics of the Church of England's¹ immediate response to the Al-Qaeda attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001.² Focusing on the key moment of national mourning, the 'Service of Remembrance with the American Community in the UK', held on September 14 at St Paul's Cathedral, London, it addresses a simple question: in what way was this event (geo)political? It contends that public mourning is ambiguous – expressing genuine grief, whilst also being political. On this basis, this paper argues that, although most of the parties involved in organising the service sincerely believed that they had crafted an apolitical event to enable grieving and provide comfort, the service articulated a geopolitical narrative. Further, it contends that, in a moment of indeterminacy when explanations of the events of 9/11 were contested in society at large, the service resonated with politically conservative voices in the US and UK that immediately called for a military response. In so doing, the Church of England, largely unwittingly, contributed to a process that made the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq more likely, and a peaceful resolution to the crisis of 9/11 less likely.

Responding to 9/11

Immediately following the 9/11 attacks, two ways of explaining the events were advanced, which I will term 'moral-metaphysical' and 'historical-political'. The moral-metaphysical account scripted the events as being beyond the domain of rational politics, the USA being an entirely innocent victim of terrorist evil that was irrational and motivated only by jealousy and hatred of the goodness of democratic America. This became President Bush's explanation, crystallised in his address to a joint session of Congress on 20 September. This speech brought together in a coherent whole the soundbites that had emerged in the first few days following the attacks, as he announced a 'war on terror'.

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber – a democratically elected government... . They hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.³

The second general form of explanation was historical-political, contextualising the attacks in recent US Middle Eastern foreign policy. In an oft-cited account, Johnson traces the relationship of the US to the Bin Laden network, from CIA military support of jihadists in Afghanistan, to Bin Laden's break with the US when it reneged on its apparent commitment to withdraw forces from Saudi Arabia once Iraq had been expelled from

Kuwait.⁴ In the preface to the 2002 edition, reminding readers that in the first edition he had argued that ‘many aspects of what the American government had done abroad virtually invited retaliatory attacks’, Johnson saw in 9/11 the grim realisation of that prediction. He insisted that, ‘The suicidal assassins of September 11, 2001, did not ‘attack America,’ as political leaders and news media in the United States have tried to maintain; they attacked American foreign policy’.⁵

These explanations inevitably suggest different responses. The first logically points towards destruction of the enemy as the only possible course of action. The second suggests that any effective response would have to examine the grievances of the attackers, the responsibility of the US for creating the conditions that allowed the attacks, and consider changes in the formulation and prosecution of US foreign policy.

In his study of US news coverage and comment on 9/11, Kellner argues that the media consistently followed the first explanation, and thus ‘constantly promoted war fever’.⁶ This was performed through the opinions of experts consulted, the texts of on-screen logos, the sacking or silencing of columnists and editors dissenting from or criticising the presidential position, and the voluntary embrace of new government broadcasting ‘guidelines’.

The outcome of this ‘debate’ was clear by the Friday 14 September. Speaking at a service of remembrance at Washington National Cathedral, President Bush repeated his claim that America was an innocent victim attacked by evil, and confirmed his intention to go to war and, ‘rid the world of evil’.⁷ On the same day, Congress voted to set aside \$40 billion for increased military expenditure and grant him a ‘War Powers Resolution Authorization’ reserving the administration the right to go to war against foreign states.

Although the domestic challenges faced by Tony Blair’s government were different, a similar process occurred in Britain. From 11 September itself politicians, religious leaders and journalists incessantly repeated the moral-metaphysical explanation in commenting on the events.⁸ A desire for retaliation was obvious within broad sections of US citizenry,⁹ and many commentators and politicians were calling for Britain to play a role. However, this was far from uncontested. For example, on Thursday 13 September BBC TV screened its flagship current affairs discussion show, *Question Time*, watched by an estimated 5.6 million viewers.¹⁰ Audience participants linked the events of 9/11 to critiques of US foreign policy, reducing former US ambassador, Philip Lader, to tears. The right-wing press in Britain excoriated the BBC for allowing this discussion, for example the *Daily Telegraph* deeming it, ‘Barbarism ... truly disgusting’.¹¹ The BBC swiftly apologised for screening the programme.

It was in this tense context that British churches joined those in the US and elsewhere in holding services of prayer and commemoration on

14 September, in many cases linked to a three-minute silence observed by an estimated 800 million people worldwide.¹² The major one, at St Paul's cathedral, was the focal point of national mourning, on the day of a special parliamentary session in which the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made a hawkish speech preparing Britain for war, insisting on the need for an 'implacable and long fight against terrorism', to save Britain from possible future nuclear strikes.¹³ The *Times* noted that Mr. Blair was 'more aggressive than other European leaders', observing that he left no doubt about Britain's readiness to join the 'war'.¹⁴ Thus, it was already clear before the service began that the British government was positioning itself to join the USA in military retaliation. At that point, for a 50 minute service, the Church of England became the focus of national attention. This paper will explore how, at this crucial moment, the Church of England located itself in relation to the debates over these two explanations of the events of that terrible Tuesday morning.

Geopolitics, Religion, and Public Mourning

Theoretically, this article draws on the reformulation of geopolitics associated with 'critical geopolitics', an exploration of the geopolitical tradition that emerged in the late 1980s by drawing on post-structural international relations theory. It argues that foreign policy is not simply the behaviour of one state towards another dictated by the rational pursuit of readily identifiable economic and political resources. More than this, it is part of an ongoing process of redefining and reconstituting the domestic identity of the state, and is influenced by beliefs about how the world works. Analysis thus focuses upon how discourse operates – how the world is geopolitically imagined across a range of sites such as politicians' speeches, the formal practices of government departments, the output and work of academics, news-media, and popular culture. It unpacks these discourses and practices, seeking to make visible the ideological assumptions behind them.¹⁵ It conceives of geopolitics not as a spatial science that explains how international politics is influenced by geospatial logic, but as language: geopolitics sets up places and regions in an imaginative mental geography, designating them as entities and imbuing them with qualities, providing a discursive framework within which wars can be thought and fought.¹⁶ It is an explicitly political project in that it is concerned with exploring alternatives that challenge geopolitical discourses that portray violence as inevitable.¹⁷

Dalby applies this approach to the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In this uncertain moment, he argues, 'the political ambiguities left a discursive and political space open for political leaders to fill with their specifications of events and appropriate responses to this new geopolitical situation'.¹⁸ The events could have been specified as a crime, necessitating careful international collaborative police and security service investigation,

or the unintended consequence of earlier imperial entanglements. Indeed, whilst different explanations were offered for the events at the time,¹⁹ critical commentators 'were effectively silenced by those calling for bipartisan and unqualified support by US leaders for the "war on terrorism"',²⁰ and a range of alternative options for responding to the events were sidelined and subsequently forgotten.²¹ By designating the US as an innocent victim of unprecedented, unprovoked, motiveless evil, little room was left for a discussion of the reasons that might have caused the violence. This de-legitimation of alternatives mattered profoundly, argues Dalby, because these geopolitical specifications helped determine whether bombs would be dropped, and on whom.²²

Passing references and swipes aside, religion, especially mainstream Christianity in the USA and UK, has been marginal to the analysis of both international relations in general and the 'war on terror' in particular by critical political geographers. This shortcoming is well illustrated by widely cited interventions on the subject by two of the discipline's most prominent scholars, Harvey²³ and Gregory,²⁴ who downplay or ignore religion in their analysis of recent US/UK foreign policy. In contrast, geopolitics' cognate discipline, international relations, has been much more astute at grasping the crucial place of religion in understanding the modern world.²⁵ Thomas recently arguing that 'the global resurgence of religion' has led to a 'transformation of international relations.'²⁶ This article, building on the collection of essays published in the summer 2006 issue of *Geopolitics*, is an attempt to go some way towards correcting that by showing how the study of religion and geopolitics can be drawn together in the context of the 'war on terror'.

The engagement of the Church of England in modern international relations remains a largely unexplored subject.²⁷ In spite of (or perhaps because of) declining membership, it has developed into a vibrant and influential component of civil society²⁸ with well-developed global networks, has at times played crucial roles in abetting government propaganda in conflicts such as the Cold War,²⁹ and in recent years has developed an unprecedented sense of identity as a 'world player' by engaging with issues such as conflict resolution, inter-faith dialogue, and global economic justice.³⁰

In particular, and crucially for this article, the Church of England assumes a role of great importance at moments of national (or, indeed, local) celebration or crisis. At the 14 September service, leading dignitaries of state, politics, and finance gathered in a church to hear what clerics would say to them, in a ceremony that became the key focus of national mourning, and was reported around the world. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. The grand national service of remembrance or celebration is an innovation of the Victorian period, and one whose genesis is intimately connected to imperialist notions of national identity.³¹ The invention of

television and the phenomenon of live broadcasts can only have made such services more important and more influential. Crucially, at these occasions, the church has the ability to contradict or question official interpretations and therefore, as Archbishop Runcie discovered by incurring the then Prime Minister's displeasure for refusing to make the 1982 Falkland Island Service at St Paul's a victory celebration, can generate controversy.³²

Historians of public mourning for wartime deaths have argued that it is highly ambiguous, providing an outlet for grief and a means of coming to terms with tragedies, as well as always being political.³³ It is political in that it demonstrates whose loss a society considers worth marking, offers interpretations and explanations for the deaths of those being mourned, and engenders debate and dispute about how deaths should be commemorated. However, this work is largely confined to studies of material war memorials. The fleeting deathscapes (or joyscapes) of church services have, with minor exceptions,³⁴ been largely overlooked, both by historians and students of the Church of England.³⁵

This lacuna is repeated within the geographical literature. Geographers have insisted that because memorials inscribe space with particular meanings, for example negotiating the divisions of a nation in mourning³⁶ or demonstrating national values in a tangible imprint on the landscape,³⁷ commemoration is inherently geographical as well as political. Geographers have arguably been better than historians at studying intangible and transitory spaces of commemoration,³⁸ but have still overlooked church or other religious services. This article seeks to offer an example of how that might be done.

In a sermon preached at Great Eastern University on 16 September 2001, sociologist Tony Campolo, commenting on the desire for retaliation and the immediate statements of bellicosity by US politicians and media commentators, likened the US that week to a soldier who, having pulled the pin out of a grenade, was looking round wondering where to throw it.³⁹ Having established a theoretical framework, this article will now proceed to explore the 14 September service: what it said to that metaphorical soldier, the British government preparing to support him, and the public at large upon whose consent (or, at least, indifference) the prosecution of the coming wars would depend. It will focus on which of the two explanations, moral-metaphysical or historical-political, the church leaned towards, and the geopolitical imagination that it constructed in relating it.

THE SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Although the congregation assembled to observe the three-minute silence at 11 a.m., the Service of Remembrance with the American Community in the UK began at 12 noon on 14 September. By then, thousands of mourners

had packed the streets from St. Paul's down Ludgate Hill, an unusual occurrence that made a great impression on cathedral staff.⁴⁰ The congregation largely consisted of members of the public who had queued since 5.30 a.m., but also the Queen with Princes Philip and Charles, senior members of the government and opposition, all living past prime ministers, and representatives of London's major financial institutions and firms, including those who had lost staff in the Twin Towers.

The service proper began with the singing of the US National Anthem, and then proceeded through the lighting of a candle, a bidding prayer by the Dean, the Lord's Prayer, intercessory prayers, hymns, anthems, a psalm, and scripture lessons read by the Duke of Edinburgh and the US Ambassador, William Farish. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, gave a six-and-a-half minute address. The service concluded with the singing of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, a final blessing, and one verse of the National Anthem. Proceedings were broadcast live, with running commentary provided by veteran BBC journalist, David Dimbleby.

Grief, Sympathy and Comfort

The service was intended to mourn all who died on 11 September, and, as John Moses, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, put it in his bidding prayer, 'to stand alongside the people of the United States of America in their grief'. Undoubtedly, it achieved that in a way that it would be difficult to imagine any other setting equalling. Words spoken and prayers said gave voice to the grief, shock and anger, yet encouraged mourners to move beyond those emotions, offering comfort, hope, and confidence for the future. Music including Purcell's 'Hear my prayer, Oh Lord, and let my crying come unto thee' and the twenty-third psalm called upon a God who understands human misery, whilst the hymn 'Immortal, Invisible' affirmed hope in a changeless God. Prayers repeated these sentiments, and scripture readings expressed confidence in an immutable God in the face of suffering and upheaval all around.

The service also looked beyond the present experiences of one country to a future free from violence for all. John Moses prayed, 'for all the peoples of this world, for a new vision, a new obedience to God's law of love, a new determination to stand firm in the ways of righteousness, a new hope'. Likewise, in leading intercessory prayers, Canon Philip Butler prayed for 'peoples and nations bleeding still from the unhealed wounds of their history. Deliver them from evil that children everywhere may grow up free from fear and in the ways of peace'. In his sermon, the Archbishop of Canterbury brought together all these themes, speaking of hope overcoming despair, assuring the congregation that 'nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord'. In his final blessing, he exhorted the congregation to 'render to no one evil for evil.'

The Geopolitics of the Service

As this paper has argued, public mourning is ambiguous: as well as addressing the emotions of grief and the searching questions that arise at times of tragedy, it is also political. The following sections will explore the geopolitical imagination enacted in the service.

Agnew has defined a core exercise of geopolitics as ‘geographical framing’, where the world is ‘actively “spatialized,” divided up, labeled, sorted out into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser “importance”’.⁴¹ The very fact of holding the service was an example of such geographical framing. The presence of so esteemed a congregation demonstrated that the events of Tuesday that week were of the utmost importance. It was widely reported that the usually reserved British monarch wept, the *Daily Mail* claiming it was the first time that she had cried in public since the decommissioning of the royal yacht *Britannia*.⁴²

Writing to the *Independent’s* letters column the following day, Natasha Walter admitted, ‘All these tears make me uneasy.’ It is fine to mourn, she continued, ‘But where have been our three-minute silences in recent years for the dead of Rwanda or Srebrenica or Sierra Leone?’⁴³ The point she raised is important. Casualty numbers are a crude way of marking significance, but the number of dead on 9/11 is dwarfed by the millions who were killed in conflict in the preceding years in Central Africa, Ethiopia/Eritrea, and numerous other places. The UN reckoned that 5,000 children were being killed in Iraq *each month* at that time as a result of sanctions enforced largely by the US and UK. But death on this scale is not confined to conflict. In January 2001, 20,000 Gujuratis perished in one of the deadliest earthquakes ever to have struck India,⁴⁴ whilst four months after 9/11, over one thousand Nigerians perished in the appalling Oke-Afa munitions blast and the consequent fateful canal stampede.⁴⁵ Although these Commonwealth states have closer historical-constitutional links with the UK than the USA does, and millions of people with familial connections live in the UK, there were no similar demonstrations of grief.

The attacks of 11 September had a colossal impact on Britain, bringing everyday life to a standstill. Radio 4 comedy programmes were ditched, sporting events cancelled, and top-selling tabloid the *Sun* even suspended its infamous ‘Page 3’ topless young woman slot. It was apparently deemed appropriate to continue laughing and ogling naked women when the other deaths had occurred, but not when people perished in America on 9/11. In holding such a high-profile service for 9/11 and not for these other tragedies, it is difficult to escape the impression that, however unintentionally, the Church of England likewise reinforced the idea that the lives of Americans, and others living in America, matter more than the lives of non-white races in faraway places. I do not believe that anyone in the church hierarchy believes that, but the notion that the suffering of America on 9/11 was

uniquely terrible was important to the US and UK governments' case for military retaliation by invading Afghanistan and, subsequently, Iraq.

Geopolitical Alliances

The service rehearsed a geopolitical vision of the identity of Britain as, alongside the US, a champion of liberty in a dangerous world. It posited a special link between the UK and the US that was emotional yet also political and military. John Moses's opening words were, 'We come together as members of the free world ...'. This beginning of a service of Christian worship with an overt reprisal of a Cold War ideological trope encapsulated the geopolitical subtext of the whole event.

The order of service confirmed this unique relationship. Norman Cooley, an American working for a law firm whose business had an office in the World Trade Center, processed up the nave with a large cross. Lauren Willoughby, an American student lit a candle of remembrance, and prayers were jointly said by Philip Butlin, Canon in Residence, and Mrs. Marcia Molloy, an American lay reader living in London. The service itself was sandwiched between singing of the American and British national anthems – the first time that the former was played at St. Paul's. Thus, through a variety of devices, the service linked Britain and America together in an evocative and affective fashion. As the *Church Times* rather touchingly put it, 'It looked like two families, each with its matriarch and patriarch: the Queen, in black and visibly moved, with the Duke of Edinburgh; and the US Ambassador, William Farish, with his wife Sarah. The patriarchs read the lessons ...'.⁴⁶

Such a connection, embodied in those performing the service as much as in the words sung and spoken, was indeed entirely appropriate for the service, and a moving way to express sympathy. However, in the wider geopolitical context, this linkage was not merely sentimental or emotional, but military and political, and was to play a predictably important role in President Bush's 'war on terror'.

Geopolitical Explanations for 9/11

The only part of the service that was suggestive of an explicit explanation of the Tuesday attacks was the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon. He did not opt for historical-political explanations of what had happened, nor possible alternative narratives, but implicitly aligned himself with the moral-metaphysical explanations that President George Bush and the Prime Minister Tony Blair were using as they prepared their countries for war. For Archbishop Carey, it was apparently explanation enough to assert that the attackers were 'evil' – a word expanded with adjectives such as 'despicable'. Lacking comprehensible goal or grievance, the attackers were apparently

motivated only by evil, perpetrating 'a senseless evil', as he put it. However, the Archbishop did go on to identify a target – liberty. He proclaimed that the American people had suffered an 'assault on their freedom'.

Central to this explanation was a binary geographical imagination of two different realms. On the one hand, was America and 'the free world'. America was portrayed as an innocent victim, 'a noble community of values in which we are proud to share, values like tolerance and compassion, justice and mercy'. The Archbishop stressed that as 'a senseless evil had been perpetrated against America and against the free world', this was an attack upon all who shared American values.

The attackers, on the other hand, inhabited a realm of 'evil' and 'darkness'. At odds with all that the free world valued, they attacked liberty itself, and their actions were 'barbaric'. The labelling of one's opponents as barbarians, reflects a trope historically deployed by Europeans to insist upon their supremacy over non-Europeans,⁴⁷ and has particularly been apparent in European discourse about the Middle East⁴⁸ and other Islamic cultural areas.⁴⁹ The Archbishop of Canterbury was, whether wittingly or unwittingly, signalling an idea which has legitimised Western militarism in the Middle East – and would go on to do so in Bush and Blair's 'war on terror'. This is ironic, as more than any incumbent of the See of Canterbury before him, George Carey had sought to establish links with Muslims in Britain and abroad, and deservedly earned a reputation as a builder of bridges and the promoter of a deeper understanding of Islam.

The sermon did not merely posit a binary geopolitical division of good versus evil: it gestured towards identifying America as a gleaming example of divine virtue on earth. It did this by two moves. First, the Archbishop stated that the values that America embodies are those values, 'at the heart of the Christian faith, and also of other great faiths'. But, uniquely, America is a beacon for other nations to look to, symbolised by America's most famous monument:

as the twin towers of the World Trade Center disappeared amid the smoke and carnage, across a short stretch of water another, older, American icon was not submerged. The September morning sun continued to shine on the Statue of Liberty, a torch raised like a beacon, a beacon of hope, and to millions around the world, a symbol of all that is best about America

That the Statue of Liberty is an emblematic figure of the US is undeniable. However, to conflate it with America as 'a beacon of hope' is an extremely controversial political statement, overlooking the ambiguous nature of the motivations for and impacts of US foreign policy around the world. To acknowledge that is not to claim that the USA is peculiarly evil. However, to describe it in the near-messianic terms that the Archbishop

used is to make an extraordinary political statement – indeed, a statement that reprises the foreign policy discourse of the Bush presidency.⁵⁰ This impression was perhaps further emphasised by the Archbishop's use of biblical prophecy, quoting from Isaiah chapter 61, to illustrate his hope that America might rise up as a stronger nation.

The Coming Judgement

The Archbishop's words served to entrench the idea that America was uniquely good and those who had had attacked it uniquely diabolical. Once a geopolitical imagination is posited in such stark moral terms, and once (at least one of) those realms can be broadly identified as coterminous with a temporal political entity, then only one possibility of action is left open: one must destroy the other. For the Archbishop of Canterbury, this was part of a struggle of light versus darkness: 'as we battle with evil', he said of America's expected response. Having repeated that 'liberty has always been at the heart of the American vision', he went on to state:

that liberty must be defended. It is the awesome responsibility of the leaders of America now to decide how to respond to this evil inflicted upon their people, this assault on their freedom and security. The leaders of America need our prayers. May God give them wisdom to use their great power in such ways that further evil aggression is indeed deterred.

This statement does not specify what kind of response the Archbishop meant. However, with the media full of speculation about which countries America would attack, it would likely lead its hearers to assume a military response. His words would seem to imply that he was cautioning a measured, considered response, but it is certainly not the antimilitarist statement that theologians such as Griffith⁵¹ and Northcott⁵² desire. In that sense, it was again closer to the positions of Bush and Blair that a strong response was needed and justified, but not one in haste or for revenge.

When Archbishop George Carey concluded his sermon, the congregation arose and launched into a stirring rendition of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, which begins:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.
Glory, glory, hallelujah! ...

The theological assertion of this patriotic Civil War hymn is clear from a later verse: 'As he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free /

While 'God is marching on' is a Christological reference, imbuing the militant American nation with a soteriological mission in history. Longley identifies it as, 'plainly a battle hymn for an elect nation, a Chosen People'.⁵³

Responses to the Service

The geopolitical interpretation of the service offered in this paper was precisely how the service was understood in the media. For the *Mirror* it, 'was not just a service of remembrance. It was a celebration of unity, delivering a message of defiance'.⁵⁴ On the morning of the service, the *Sun* announced the three-minute silence on its front cover and urged support under the headline: 'God bless America: 3-minute silence today at 11am'.⁵⁵ An editorial made it clear what it thought the purpose of the silence and commemoration service was: a space to gather our thoughts, focus on the task, and prepare for 'score settling time'.⁵⁶ The *Daily Mail* observed that, 'More than a memorial', it was a statement of alliance between two peoples,⁵⁷ a military alliance that should use all means to 'crush the terror'.⁵⁸ The service and the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury were reported around the world, particularly in the USA.⁵⁹ Reception of the service in the UK and US media illustrates the contention of this paper: that the service enacted an ambiguity of meaning, both as an expression of grief and a search for sense and comfort, but could also be interpreted as a politically partisan geopolitical text explaining why 9/11 occurred and its unique significance, preparing the discursive terrain for war.

The Arrangement and Organisation of the Service

This paper is not remotely suggesting a conspiracy or malignant plan to script a service to aid the US and UK case for war. Both Heffernan⁶⁰ and Morris⁶¹ argue that it is not enough simply to explore the meanings associated with spaces of remembrance, but also to attempt to piece together some of the processes of their construction. Likewise, Crampton and Ó Tuathail insist that research in critical geopolitics that considers discourse alone is too narrow.⁶² In this section, therefore, I will consider *how* the service was arranged.

For this, I interviewed representatives of core bodies involved in organising and participating in the service. These were: the Very Rev. Dr. John Moses, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral (conducted 29 April 2003); Mr. Dan Sreebny, Minister Counselor for Public Affairs at the US Embassy in London (9 July 2003); Mr. Mort Dworken, Minister Counselor for Political Affairs, also at the US Embassy in London (20 August 2004); from Buckingham Palace Sir Malcolm Ross, Controller of the Lord Chamberlain's office, and his colleague Stuart Neville (28 July 2003); and Lord Carey (18 November 2003).⁶³

All interviews were conducted in the offices of the interviewees, with the exception of Lord Carey, who met me at the House of Lords, and Mort Dworken, who spoke to me by telephone from Florida. I asked my interlocutors to recount how the service was arranged, from the decision to hold it down to details such as the selection of hymns and readings. Further questions explored the relationship between the different parties, the substance of discussions and disagreements, and the negotiation of the politics of the service. Some respondents showed me archival records of that week, particularly diaries. As most of these interviews were conducted between one and a half and two years after a sudden and hectic response to a shock event, some details were obviously hazy. This was also the case because few documentary records were produced in the organisation of the service. I gave *aides memoir* to interviewees, such as a copy of the original order of service (kindly supplied by John Moses), and, when interviewing George Carey, the text of his sermon.

From these interviews, I was able to build up a comprehensive picture of how the service was arranged and why it took its eventual form. It would appear that, following an approach by the American Embassy to St. Paul's early on Wednesday morning, and in discussion with Downing Street and other actors, it was quickly agreed that a service of Remembrance should be held at St. Paul's on the Friday, the day that similar events would happen across Europe and in America itself. John Moses told me that, 'It was essentially organised in three hours', by midday Wednesday. This involved an enormous amount of work but, as Sir Malcom Ross put it, 'such was the shockwave of 9/11 that everybody was prepared and willing to drop everything and do what was required'. All the respondents involved with the arrangements spoke of this determination and of the willing co-operation of those involved. A draft of the order of service was shown by St. Paul's to other parties, and comment was invited. To write his sermon, George Carey convened a meeting of his 'inner cabinet' – his chaplain, Jeremy Harris, and his chief of staff, Robert Llewellyn – for a 'brainstorming' session, after which he penned the first draft. He took what he said were the unusual steps of showing it to Sir Robin Janviri, the Queen's senior private official (who did not make any suggestions for alterations), and telephoning the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, to discuss 9/11 and, as he put it, to 'inform and educate my thinking before I gave the sermon'.

Respondents indicated a remarkable degree of unanimity about the purpose and politics of the service. There was a shared understanding of its goal as threefold. First, it was to grieve at a time of shock. As John Moses explained, 'The primary purpose is providing space – architectural and liturgical space – so that people can come and grieve'. Dan Sreebny said that a spontaneous overflow of sympathy was initially expressed by people gathering alongside the embassy and leaving flowers and cards, and thus the need for a service was felt. Second, the aim of the service was to

express solidarity with the USA. As George Carey put it, 'to reassure Americans that we are siding with them', and, 'to express our abhorrence of terrorism'. Stuart Neville emphasised this: 'Because of the relationship that we as a country have with America, I think this was, outside of the US, the key event for the nation, or for the world'. Dan Sreebny explained that the embassy had been overwhelmed with the messages of sympathy and support received from across the country, and saw the service as a way to demonstrate an appreciation of that relationship. Third, it was to offer hope in the midst of despair. Dan Sreebny expressed this in secular terms, 'showing determination, showing a sense of loss but also a sense of going on', whilst George Carey used religious categories to say that the service's goal was, 'to interpret what was going on for the sake of the majority of the population, and an opportunity to express the Christian hope in the face of tragedy', his sermon being 'pitched to interpret this grief and tragedy in the light of faith and hope and love'.

Just as all parties were agreed on the goals of the service, they were equally emphatic that the service was apolitical – at least in terms of taking a position on foreign policy. As Malcom Ross put it simply, 'We don't discuss politics'. Dan Sreebny insisted at the time that there was no sense of, 'doing this in order to position Britain or to position ourselves for future action', and Mort Dworken had been anxious in arranging the service that it would 'reach across the political spectrum', and in particular that Muslim representatives be included. Citing the example of 'Falklands triumphalism', John Moses was fully aware that in such services, 'the temptation is always to collude', and was proud of the Cathedral's success in maintaining, as he saw it, the political independence of the service. When pushed, interviewees accepted that the service was 'political' in the sense of being a public event attended by leading politicians; but they strongly rejected any suggestion that it was political in the sense of backing a certain policy response.

Two examples clearly demonstrate this anxiety to focus upon the three goals identified and steer clear of 'politics'. George Carey, explaining that the sermon, 'was not intended to be political', recounted that his inner cabinet persuaded him to remove some comments from a draft of his sermon about the need for Christianity and Islam to stand together against Islamic fundamentalism, as they considered it, 'too politicised'. Likewise, the US embassy questioned the inclusion of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* in the order of service, as they thought that it was inappropriate for a commemoration service, the lyrics being, 'somewhat aggressive, militaristic' (Dan Sreebny). John Moses, however, explained to me that it was chosen because it was easily identifiable as an American national song, and would be known by people in Britain. Thus there can be no suggestion that anyone hijacked the service for their own ends, or intentionally used it as a vehicle for a partisan politics: on the contrary, all parties strove to ensure that the service would

precisely *not* be interpreted in such a way. However, as I have argued throughout, the service not only could be interpreted as reprising a number of geopolitical tropes that harmonised with the interpretation of George W. Bush, but that this was indeed how it was understood, at least by the popular media.

If this analysis is correct, then we are thus presented with the apparent contradiction of an event that resonated with highly charged political discourses being organised by people striving to craft it as apolitical. It is not that the actors interviewed were ignorant of dissenting voices and alternatives to the 'moral-metaphysical' explanation. Far from it. Parties were generally aware of alternative explanations being offered, but either rejected them or, as John Moses said to me, considered that 'the tragedy was so horrendous' that it would have been inappropriate to discuss such questions at the service. Rather, this contradiction emerges from the ambiguities of a public service of commemoration that addresses grief and loss yet is also political, the working of taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works that critical geopolitics is so adept at uncovering and, vitally, different concepts of the 'political'.

If 'politics' is seen as the formal issuing of explicitly partisan statements advocating certain courses of action, then the service was indeed apolitical. However, this article considers 'politics' more broadly, one aspect of it being discourses that pervade social interaction and have meaning in precise contexts because of their *intertextuality*, or how they are interpreted in relation to other discourses in other contexts. Understood thus, the service did indeed script a (geo)politics of the events. It is impossible to claim that the service had a quantifiable impact on policy or public sentiment. Nevertheless, at a crucial moment, certain aspects of it dovetailed with discourses elsewhere in the public sphere to augment what was emerging in policy circles as a dominant understanding of the events of that terrible Tuesday morning. This geopolitical imagination of an innocent America attacked by depoliticised 'evil' helped make the projection of US and UK violence in Central Asia and the Middle East easier both for governments to legitimise and vindicate, and populations to countenance.⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the St. Paul's Cathedral service of Remembrance on 14 September 2001 was both an expression of grief and a political statement. It was clear by that stage that the UK government was positioning itself to engage with the US in a military response, premised upon the notion that the attacks expressed not political grievance but an irrational hatred of democracy, and could only therefore be countered with violence. However, this interpretation was far from uncontested in Britain, the USA,

and the world, at large. Occurring thus at a crucial moment, the service can be read as containing a geopolitical text that more closely approximated the stark moral-metaphysical interpretations of pro-war voices in politics and media than it did the political-historical interpretations that questioned those interpretations. It did this by employing a number of facets of 'geopolitics' well documented by geographers: ranking places as more or less important, reprising national myths of geopolitical alliance, and gesturing at discourses of civilised versus barbarian. This occurred despite the efforts of the organisers to script what they considered to be an uncontroversial apolitical service, and in spite of the subtleties and ambiguities of meaning that the service generated.

The outcome of the geopolitical designations adopted and the subsequent courses of actions chosen by the US and UK governments included the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as part of a process of remilitarisation long advocated by 'neo-conservative' elements in the Bush administration.⁶⁵ Whether one supports or opposes these developments, their implications have been enormous. Not least amongst them are the deaths of scores of thousands of people, the abuse of Muslims detained by the US and UK authorities, the deterioration of the position of Christian minorities in many Muslim societies, and the alienation and radicalisation of Muslims around the world. It is important to remember that alternative geopolitical ways of framing and responding to 9/11 *did* exist and were voiced at the time, including before 14 September.⁶⁶ However, the geopolitical imagination adopted following 9/11 made adoption of these peaceful alternatives less likely, and UK participation in US-led wars more likely. In re-inscribing, rather than contesting, these discourses the Church of England missed the opportunity to speak 'prophetically', that is to see beyond and challenge common-sense narratives from a faith-informed perspective, when the eyes of the nation were upon it.

The bias in the service towards elite perceptions of the events is hardly surprising, considering with whom St. Paul's and Lambeth Palace took counsel – Buckingham Palace, the Foreign Office, Downing Street, and the American embassy. Whilst this must be the topic of a future article, I also interviewed leaders of Anglican agencies working particularly in Africa and Asia. They expressed the view that the events of 9/11 and the subsequent 'war on terror' had been harmful to indigenous Christians in the Muslim world, and reflected the US and European media's disproportionate concern with suffering in predominantly white countries. They voiced regret that Anglican perspectives and experiences from the Majority World had not been drawn upon as the Church of England reacted to 9/11. I thus conclude by suggesting that it is necessary for the Church to utilise these networks to carefully rethink its relationship to a state that has appeared unusually ready to go to war. That is a process to which political geographers, both inside and outside the church, can surely contribute.

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NOTES

1. It is recognised that 'The Church of England' is far from speaking with a single voice. For example, the response of the Archbishop of Wales, Rowan Williams, who was to become Archbishop of Canterbury, was notably different from that of some other senior clerics. See R. Williams, *Writing in the Dust: Reflections on 11th September and Its Aftermath* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 2001). Furthermore, as Moyser demonstrates (see note 35, below), the Church of England is a complicated set of institutions, interacting with different manifestations of state, public sphere, and civil society at different scales. This paper makes no general claims about 'the Church of England's', but examines one (very public) engagement of the Church with the 11 September attacks.

2. Henceforth '9/11'.

3. G. W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', 20 September 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov>, accessed September 2004.

4. C. Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (London: Time Warner 2002) p. xiv.

5. *Ibid.* p. viii. See also J. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto 2002).

6. D. Kellner, *From 9/11 to Terror: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield 2003) p. 69.

7. 'President's remarks: "We are in the middle hour of our grief"', *New York Times* (15 September 2001) p. A6.

8. Conservative Party leader William Hague described the attacks as a, 'monstrous act of war against the civilised world'. 'London landmarks evacuated, workers sent home, as Blair calls Cabinet crisis meeting,' *Independent* (12 September 2001) p. 7. Tony Blair immediately denounced the attacks as the 'new evil ... barbarism', and promised not to rest until 'this evil is driven from our world' ('We will help hunt down evil culprits, says Blair', *Daily Telegraph* (12 September 2001) p. 2). The next day, phoning George W. Bush for a twenty-minute conversation in which he promised that Britain would stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with the USA, he said 9/11 was an attack 'on the very notion of democracy' ('Blair to demand action against fundamentalists', *The Independent* (13 September 2001) p. 12).

9. Postings to a message board in Texas spotted by the *Independent* were typical: 'Death. Strike quickly and completely. DEATH!'; 'An eye for an eye.'; 'Total annihilation.' "If we knew who did it and they want to put me in a bomber to take care of it, I'd be willing to go": 'Voices of America', *The Independent* (13 September 2001) p. 14.

10. 'BBC says sorry to tearful US envoy', *Daily Telegraph* (15 September 2001) p. 10.

11. 'Barbarism at the BBC', *Daily Telegraph* (15 September 2001) p. 21.

12. 'A silent world, united in grief', *The Independent* (15 September 2001) p. 1.

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

15. For example, G. Ó Tuathail and S. Dalby, 'Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics: Towards a Critical Geopolitics', in G. Ó Tuathail and S. Dalby (eds.), *Rethinking Geopolitics* (London: Routledge 1998) pp. 1–15.
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18. S. Dalby, 'Calling 911: Geopolitics, Security and America's New War', *Geopolitics* 8/3 (2003) pp. 61–86, p. 62.
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20. S. Brunn, '11 September and Its Aftermath: Introduction', *Geopolitics* 8/3 (2003) pp. 1–15, (p. 5).
21. C. Dahlman and S. Brunn, 'Reading Geopolitics beyond the State: Organisational Discourse in Response to 11 September', *Geopolitics* 8/3 (2003) pp. 253–280.
22. S. Dalby, 'Calling 911: Geopolitics, Security and America's New War', *Geopolitics* 8/3 (2003) pp. 61–86.
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32. A. Hastings, *Robert Runcie* (London: Mowbray 1991) pp. 183–186.
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63. Unfortunately, the British government did not respond to my requests for an interview.
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