



THE ARCHBISHOP  
OF YORK

*The Archbishop spoke this evening (17 March) at the emergency 'No more Nukes' rally called by CND. His speech follows in full...*

Plutarch famously said that “when Alexander the Great saw the breadth of his domain, he wept for there were no more worlds to conquer.”

That is, I suppose, one way of securing peace. You conquer everything.

Human history is, after all, the story of empires and war and with it the ever more sophisticated ways of killing each other that we concoct.

But there is another strand in human history, with a bigger vision and a greater hope. It declares that peace is something more than the absence of conflict. It doesn't begin with the conquest of others, but with the conquest of the human heart, putting the needs of others first. For the best way of avoiding war and making peace is collaborative enterprise. Then human communities are so invested in each other, and in each other's well-being, that war becomes unthinkable. And swords are turned into ploughshares.

This vision crops up all over the place. Paradoxically, it is what has tied the United Kingdom together for hundreds of years. It hasn't always worked. But it is still a vision worth pursuing. And whatever your view on Brexit, it is simply a matter of fact that out of the horrors of the Second World War the Council of Europe was formed not to create a common currency, but a common destiny; not simply a free trade zone, but peace.

The root of this vision, that we belong to each other and must find global solutions with each other, lies in the Jewish/Christian revelation of God who has created us one humanity to inhabit one world and whose purposes are those of peace.

The nuclear non-proliferation treaty of 1968, of which we are a signatory, is another example. Its aims to reduce and then eliminate nuclear weapons, has formed the backdrop for all UK defence policy by all governments ever since. Of course, many of us have rightly called for more; but there has been some progress and some reduction in arms.

But yesterday's announcement changed this. We are now going to increase our warheads by 40%. That is, we are going to spend more money on more bombs.

This is inexplicable, illogical, immoral, legally unjustifiable and flies in the face of several uncomfortable facts. First, our legal obligations. Second, the success of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in changing the narrative across most nations in the world. Thirdly, the more pressing and immediate needs in our own country as we emerge from the horrors and sorrows of Covid. And, fourthly, the fact that the best way of building security and stability in the world is to invest in international aid, not weapons of mass deception.

The shortest verse in the Bible also speaks of tears. Not tears of regret that there are no more countries to conquer, but the tears of Jesus as he wept at the grave of his good friend Lazarus. I am honoured to speak at this meeting this evening. I carry with me the prayers and best wishes of

many other Christian leaders in our nation. With Christ we weep at the grave of our nation’s ambition to offer a principled and progressive way forward for the security of our nation and of the world. This defence strategy is indefensible.

However, I do believe in resurrection.

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