



Following the publication by the Daily Mail of a story entitled "Archbishop Says Sorry For Bombing the Nazis" (Saturday 14 February) the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury has issued the following statement on the "manifestly false" story.

A spokesperson for the Archbishop of Canterbury said: "Any suggestion that the Archbishop was apologising is manifestly false. The Archbishop's comments were a reflection in a solemn ceremony on the tragedy of war. They very carefully avoided apologising, and those present, including the President of Germany, recognised the difference. In his speech the President also recognised the fact that there is no equivalence with Nazi war crimes and that the war started with Nazi aggression. In broadcast interviews immediately following his speech the Archbishop refused to say he was apologising, but repeated that war is always tragedy. He also referred to the terrible losses in Bomber command. Archbishop Welby said it was not a question of blame and spoke of the bombing of Coventry, Liverpool, London and other places."

An extract from the Archbishop's interview with the BBC following the interviews is published below:

5 Live: What must have been a very sad and poignant day.

Justin Welby: It was sad and poignant, and also deeply moving. The speech by the German President brought together all the different victims of the Second World War, and of conflict since, in a very powerful way. So there was a mood of hope as well as sadness.

5 Live: Did you feel, though, that deep wound that perhaps was left there 70 years ago?

JW: Oh, unquestionably. When you hear the stories of survivors and they talk of the suffering of this area, you do feel that sense of wound - not as a sort of equivalent to other wounds but just as yet another wound that is caused by war.

5 Live: What lessons need to be learned, then, from what happened 70 years ago?

JW: I think the key lesson we need to learn is that war is a brutalising process, that reconciliation takes a long time and is fragile, and that remembering well is essential to forgiving completely. And as a Christian we saw in this ceremony together today the way in which faith in Jesus Christ brings people together to forgive as they remember.

5 Live: But of course not just in Dresden. We've been speaking today throughout the program about the current situation in Ukraine and what's happening globally at the moment. Are those lessons being learnt and are they being reflected in what's happening today?

JW: Well I think you're making a very good point there, that reconciliation, getting away from violent conflict, learning to disagree well, is a very fragile process. The great thing about Dresden today is they're not remembering to blame but to remembering to move on and to learn. And I think it's that learning that needs to go on being spread. And there are times when one confronts such evil that it is very difficult to see other ways of facing it.

5 Live: And what position can you have, and can the Church of England have, in doing that, or at least helping that to happen.

JW: Well, the Church of England, through the Anglican Communion, has 80m members in 165 countries, the vast majority in places of poverty, and over half in countries which are in conflict or post-conflict situations. And we are engaged all round the world in working for reconciliation and peacemaking and many Anglicans are suffering and dying in that cause.

5 Live: And do you feel that your message is being listened to? Do you feel as relevant now?

JW: It's being listened to well in some places and not at all in others, and some way between the two in many. Yes, it's not our message, it's not the message of the Anglican Church: it's the good news of peace in Jesus Christ. And that is still relevant and it is still being listened to, and in many parts of the world that is what people turn to in moments of the greatest despair and darkness.

5 Live: And in the sense of Dresden, is one of the ways forward to apologise for what happened? Do you think Britain and America should apologise for what happened in Dresden?

JW: That's a very complicated question, because when you listen to people who were in bomber command and you hear of their suffering; I lived in Coventry and you see the suffering there, in London we know of the Blitz, and in many other cities right across the United Kingdom and round the world, I think it's more complicated than should we apologise. I think there is a deep need for profound sorrow at the events and the causes of such dreadful times as Europe lived through. And there's also reason for hope and encouragement that Europe has become a centre of reconciliation in the world - a great miracle."

[The full text of the Archbishop's speech can be found here.](#)

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