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Chapter 14

Biggar vs Little Britain

Richard Drayton

In his essay 'The Historiographical Operation', Michel de Certeau alerts us to seek out what he calls the significant deviation in history – 'deviation' to be understood, I think, in the mathematical sense – those slightly off-centre events or personalities which allow us to illuminate the normal distribution of cultural or social phenomena.¹ If we pursue what the Italian microhistorian Carlo Ginzburg called 'clues', and which his compatriot Edoardo Grendi called the 'exceptional typical', we may better understand larger social structures.²

Nigel Biggar was born in March 1955 in Castle Douglas in the west fringe of the Scottish borders, almost as close to Belfast, as the crow flies, as to Glasgow and Edinburgh. He was the youngest son of Francis Raymond Biggar (born 1913), who worked for the family firm Thomas Biggar and Sons, farmers, millers and dealers in grain and manure, founded by his great-great-grandfather in 1842.³ It is not my aim to compare Nigel Biggar to Mennochio, the mad miller of Montereale, whose exceptionally typical mental world Carlo Ginzburg famously explored in *The Cheese and the Worms*. Biggar is rather an index point which, while eccentric, lies much closer to the mean in the standard distribution of ideology of his age than Mennochio. But as with the Italian miller, a journey into the mind-world of Biggar can help us to understand larger, and less articulate and visible cultural currents in late twentieth and twenty-first century Britain. It may provide insight into how some of the embers of empire continue to burn, and even to kindle obscure new flames.

If the Brexit moment is in many ways characterized by a kind of 'return of the repressed', as the psychoanalysts would put it, Nigel Biggar's strange career as a public intellectual is emblematic of it. He is unique in the striking portfolio of political positions for which he has proposed ethical arguments: against Irish republicanism and in defence of Northern Irish Unionism;⁴ against Scottish independence and in defence of Scottish Unionism;⁵ in support of 'just war' (within which he includes the Afghanistan, Iraq and Libyan Wars, while he excludes the Easter Rebellion of

1916 and military republicanism in Ireland, and implicitly the Afghan and Iraqi resistance fighters);⁶ for the moral purpose of the First World War;⁷ for intervention in Syria as Britain's 'moral duty';⁸ for the arbitrary killing of Bin Laden;⁹ for hereditary monarchy;¹⁰ in defence of an unelected House of Lords;¹¹ against the disestablishment of the Anglican Church,¹² chiding the editors of *Charlie Hebdo* for their abuse of free speech while urging that of course they should not have been killed for it,¹³ for Cecil Rhodes's statue to remain on Oriel's façade but against a statue to Mary Seacole at St Thomas's hospital;¹⁴ against the European Court of Justice's extension of the right to benefits of EU migrant workers;¹⁵ against the removal of Trident from Scotland;¹⁶ in defence of the killing of wounded combatants on the battlefield as an ethical option (since the Afghan rebels have no modern medical care), but against euthanasia within the West, because here we have the means to cure and relieve pain;¹⁷ in support of an ethical case for torture, or as he prefers to call it 'aggressive interrogation', in which he includes sleep deprivation, hooding, stress posture, deprivation of food and water, even waterboarding;¹⁸ against giving transgender people civic status,¹⁹ and for an ethically-justified imperialism. Biggar in March 2019 asserted, 'I voted Remain, just, but dislike most of the company I'm in'.²⁰ 'Remain' has strangely, however, not been among causes he has championed, indeed in 2017 he denounced the 'imperial ambitions' of the European Union, and in January 2019 lent his name in a letter which described Britain's relationship to Europe as 'political servitude' and argued that British universities would benefit from a 'No Deal'.²¹ While perhaps alone in taking a public stand on this system of positions as a whole, it is clear that Biggar is fully representative of a powerful current within British public opinion, and has quite self-consciously sought to quicken this solidarity.

Biggar has sought out the sympathy of a mob of rightwards opinion, and not just in the content of his views, where he clearly reaches from his pulpit towards the pews. Biggar has cultivated an interesting querulous tone in his press and Twitter personae, like a kind of middlebrow Katie Hopkins, he presents himself, and is being marketed by others, as one of a majority whose rightwards views have been drowned out by a noisy bullying liberal but illiberal minority, a majority which at last will speak.²²

In an article published in *The Conservative* of April 2017 under the title 'Outing yourself as a rightist isn't easy', he declared:

The zealous certainty of a minority can tie the tongues of an uncertain majority. But when someone dares to stand up and out, others begin to find their voices, reassured that what they think can be said in public without risking social death.²³

This, I would suggest, is part of the music of the Brexit moment, a passive aggressive lament of a denigrated traditionalism, a denigrated Conservatism, a

British patriotism, perhaps even a denigrated ‘whiteness’, which will now take back control. His strange career deserves our attention not just for what it represents now, or where it comes from, but where perhaps, with or without his control, it will go. For some of the ugly possible outcomes, one needs only look at how he, wittingly or unwittingly, directed the swarm of wasps of right-wing Twitter trolls and *Daily Mail* columnists to attack the Cambridge lecturer Priyamvada Gopal.²⁴ The Biggar phenomenon is a sign of the times to which we should pay attention.

Biggar took Dr Johnson’s high road to England early as a teenager to Monkton Combe, a minor public school near Bath, a very muscular Christian Victorian foundation. Sir Richard Dearlove, best known as Tony Blair’s head of MI6 during the production of the ‘dodgy dossier’, is another Old Monktonian. Since 2014 the school now has a ‘Biggar Society’ which meets once a term for a dinner and a lecture on theology.²⁵ He went up to Worcester College, Oxford, where he graduated in 1976 with a degree in modern history. He appears to have been pulled towards the Calvinist current in late-twentieth-century Anglican evangelical theology associated with J. I. Packer.²⁶ Packer went to teach at Regent College in Vancouver in 1979, and Biggar followed him, taking an MA in theology in 1981, going on to Chicago where he received his PhD in 1986. Biggar returned to Oxford and was fixed up with a post at the evangelical bastion Latimer House, which Packer had helped found during the 1960s.²⁷ There he made his first sign of his future direction in a coded attack on Archbishop Runcie and his liberal wing of Church in a pamphlet called *Theological Politics* (1988). This was a broadside against Archbishop Runcie’s *Faith in the City*, the famous 1985 Anglican Church report which blamed a material and spiritual crisis in the inner cities on Thatcherite policy, which Biggar found to be weak in its theology.²⁸ Two years, later, to be fair, Biggar did offer a partial critique of Thatcherism, writing ‘it is mistaken to suppose that the systematic contraction of state support will stimulate a recovery of relevant kinds of personal responsibility’, essentially proposing the complementary argument to ‘Render unto Caesar . . .’, which was that welfare provision should be the complement to an aggressive attempt by the Church to challenge a moral crisis.²⁹ A somewhat meteoric career unfolded. While only ordained as Deacon in 1990 and priest in 1991, he ascended to the rather snug billet of Chaplain of Oriel College, Oxford. In 1993 he published his most substantial scholarly work, a 190-page study of Karl Barth’s ethics.³⁰ On this slender barque, he sailed to a chair at Leeds in 1999. In 2004 he moved to Trinity College, Dublin, to the Chair of Theology and Ethics, returning to Oxford to the Regius Chair of Moral and Pastoral Theology in 2007, the directorship in 2008 of the McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics and Public Life, and the office of Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

A big fish in the Anglican pond, he would however probably have remained obscure to a wider public had he not made three key interventions on the

question of empire: first, in the 'Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford' controversy from late 2015; second, in the late 2016 controversy over Bruce Gilley's notorious 'The case for colonialism' essay in *Third World Quarterly*; and, since late 2017, with his 'Ethics and Empire' project at his Macdonald Centre for Ethics at Oxford.³¹ If one uses Lexis-Nexis to audit the presence of Nigel Biggar in the British press up to December 2018, some 262 of the 318 occurrences of his name in the press throughout his lifetime appeared after January 2015, with 186 after December 2017 alone.³² The views of the poor bullied Regius Professor of Theology have become a touchstone for right-wing political commentary. 'Climate of fear at Oxford warns colonialism scholar Nigel Biggar', read a typical hysterical *Times* headline of 3 February 2018. Put to one side the extraordinary apotheosis of a commentator on a subject into a scholar of it, and sample the mood of paranoia and its uses. The strangeness in the career of Biggar does not lie in his views, but in the way in which he has used them in a deliberate way to seek out a public notoriety, and how in turn he has been picked up, packaged and retailed by figures like Rod Liddle, and the columnists of the *Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*, the self-constructed lonely prophet calling from the wilderness of Christ Church High Table, with only the comment pages of *The Times* in which to share his views, turned into a commodity in high circulation.

Having now identified the Biggar nebula in the night sky, let us now explore the mysteries of this 'exceptionally typical' ideological constellation.

Biggar describes his growing up in the sixties and rejecting the change he saw around him: 'my Inner Edwardian refused to vacate my soul, . . . I found the cultural changes swirling around me painful and unsettling . . . But observing that the tide was against me, I went into inner exile'.³³ In his own narrative, he returned from that desert to prophesy, with the critical moment of his 'coming out' being his 2013 book *In Defence of War*, which ends with his rousing ethical case for the Iraq War.

But Unionism was much earlier the cause of this lowland Scot. His first public political interventions on non-theological questions were a sequence of letters to *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* in the 1990s on the Irish question.³⁴ In 2002, he was happy to retail the paranoia of the Ulster unionists, offering the allegation that even after the Good Friday Agreement 'the evidence is that IRA continues to hunt for weapons in the global market'.³⁵ In his abundant public commentary on matters Irish, there is no editorial or letter to the press in which Biggar makes any disapproving comment about British army or Unionist paramilitary violence. When the question of Scottish independence became live, Biggar emerged as a vigorous Unionist campaigner. While other No campaigners urged mainly economic arguments, he sought to muster ethical ones, even going so far as to call Scottish independence 'a false god'.³⁶ In February 2018, as *The Times* announced in an article entitled 'Brainy Brits come out for Brexit',

Biggar joined 40 'leading intellectuals' in *These Islands*, a think tank committed to providing the ideology for a twenty-first-century Unionism.³⁷

Biggar's Unionism is not a collateral ideological commitment. Central to all Biggar's thought, indeed his theology and ethics is the idea that kinship and the forms of solidarity found among those most closely related to, and living in proximity to you, are the central ground of ethical life, and indeed of encounter with the divine. What Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between God and man, an idea enlarged by Karl Barth, Biggar's most important theological influence, as the inability of the created to know the Creator except through the creation, constitutes the ground on which for Biggar loyalty to tribe, nation, empire become ethical desiderata.³⁸ In a highbrow version of Ayn Rand's 'To say "I love you" one must first know how to say the "I"', Biggar believes morality must begin in a love which is grounded in one's kin, one's kind, one's immediate community. In 1993, he wrote:

Note that it is our neighbour whom we are to love – the one nearby. That is to say, we are to love in the only way that creatures genuinely can: by caring for those who are given to cross our finite path. Being creatures, and not gods, we cannot love everyone; but we can love our neighbours . . . we may not avert our eyes from the battered body on the side of the road that we rush down in pursuit of . . . some Grand Humanitarian Cause. The charity of creatures really does begin at home, or somewhere close by, even if it eventually expands beyond its domestic matrix.³⁹

His argument in 2016 for Britain leaving the European Union appeals to identical grounds: 'We are finite, not infinite; creatures, not gods . . . we should feel special affection for, loyalty toward, and gratitude to those communities, customs, and institutions that have benefitted us by inducting us into human goods . . . we owe [the nation state] our gratitude and loyalty.'⁴⁰

Biggar's view on the British Empire, first offered in the last chapter of his short 2014 book *Between Kin and Cosmopolis*, derives from this idea that 'gratitude and loyalty' are owed to an imagined community of the Union's dead. The problem that empire 'comprises the imposition of rule by one people upon another' can be solved if 'the imposition of imperial rule can have the salutary effect of imposing a unifying, pacific, and law-abiding order on peoples otherwise inclined to war among themselves' (p. 91). Biggar does not seem to find it necessary to ask Tacitus's question of who gets to decide what is peace and order, and what is desolation and tyranny, for he knows that his kin's way is best. He is untroubled by the risk that a love of kin can become a kind of idolatry, particularly when supporting fantasies of violence and domination, even, or perhaps in particular, when those are adorned with an ethical surplice.

The collective identity and ‘order’ constituted by kinship licenses an ethical imperial violence. Biggar thus urged to an American readership a relaxed attitude to an empire dominating others by force:

The problem arises, however, when [one assumes] that anything in the world that involves hierarchy or coercion – that is, one person dominating another – is necessarily an instance of ‘domination’ as stipulated and therefore immoral . . . Surely we *want* the police to *dominate* the mafia, don’t we? And we *want* those fighting in a just cause to *dominate* those fighting in an unjust one?⁴¹

This culminates in an argument for how ‘callousness’ can even become a ‘Christian virtue’: we begin with kin, and those truths we know intimately on our own terms, and sometimes honouring them may require erecting a barrier of fibrous insensitivity to the ideas, the feelings, even the right to life of others who are non-kin. The waging of war, with all its collateral damage, becomes a moral obligation: Britain, if it is true to the God which it knows from within, must take up the world’s fight, ‘By all means let’s have post-imperial modesty but let’s refuse post-imperial sulking . . . We continue to have significant power, hard and soft, and we have a moral obligation to use that power to best effect.’⁴²

We might note the affinity between this post-Calvinist constitution of kinship as the ground of imperial ethics and callousness, and the thought of another lowland Scot, born just 50 miles away in Ecclefechan, 150 years before Biggar. One hears an echo of Thomas Carlyle, who in his infamous *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* (1853) argued the British should care for those close to them before cosmopolitan ‘philanthropy’ towards offshore suffering, who preferred a society organized by ancient hierarchies, loyalties and kinship, while celebrating the Empire’s heroes.⁴³ Biggar’s pro-empire, indeed pro-empire violence apologetics, and his closely linked ‘just war’ arguments and justifications for torture, are certainly in continuity with how Carlyle, Kingsley, Dickens and Froude found fine words to defend the brutal repression of the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865 when British troops killed 439 people, flogged hundreds with cat-o-nine tails made up mostly of brass piano wire, killed pregnant women, even smashed babies’ heads.⁴⁴

As with Carlyle and Froude, there is an efficient logical circle which connects Biggar’s taking of kinship as moral community to his justification of contemporary violence, to his pursuit of an edifying moral spectacle in the history of the British Empire. ‘We’ have the right to kill and rule others without their consent now, and even where we judge it necessary to torture, and we had it then. A certain anxiety about history arises from this glance backwards and forwards to different generations of killers and torturers with whom one identifies. It seems to be coped with either by averting the gaze from episodes of the inhumanity of one’s imagined kin, or by applying positive stories to bandage over events which might

provoke shame. This Whiggish insistence on the Empire's past as underpinning a national mission to be revived and extended, today Afghanistan tomorrow Syria, explains why almost every Oxford historian has run as quickly and far as he or she can from Biggar's 'Ethics and Empire' project.⁴⁵

There are larger reasons than a Whiggish attitude for grave concern about Biggar's use of history. As one revelatory example, I recommend his essay 'Less Hegel, More History! Christian Ethics and Political Realities', in which he urges his theological colleagues to think less from theory and instead to turn to history (in particular war and high-political decision-making):

Suppose, then, that one evening our ethicist lays down his copy of Augustine or Vitoria and takes up Barrie Pitt's history of the battle of El Alamein, when the British Commonwealth scored its first major victory on land over the Germans in the Second World War . . . History, then, teaches that a kind of certain professional callousness is a condition of military success.⁴⁶

It is quite extraordinary: from a story told about Montgomery by a single historian, Biggar feels able to deduce a truth which can somehow affect ethical thinking in some enduring portable way.

Sir Christopher Clark once made the devastating quip that the problem with Max Hastings is he thinks anyone who writes about the past is a historian. Biggar takes this one step worse, it seems anyone who reads about the past, even in a single secondary source, can speak with the authority of the historian. His method consists of cherry-picking what he takes to be facts from books which reflect back to him the kin-ego in an attractive form, and keeping a scrupulous distance from anything which might contradict his intuitions. He doesn't seem inclined to read widely enough to get anything quite right. His website proposes as its first example of the positive ethical role of the British Empire how Britain 'suppressed the Atlantic and African slave-trades after 1833.'⁴⁷ The problem is not just the schoolboy error, which has been up on the website for over a year, of confusing the date of the Emancipation Act (1833) for that of the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1807, enforced south of the Equator only after 1850); more worrying is its ignorance of Britain's role long after 1834 as the key financier of, and trader with, the cotton and sugar plantations of the United States, Brazil and Cuba, where slavery persisted into the 1860s and 1880s.⁴⁸ In his apology for Cecil Rhodes, he takes a single account of Rhodes having Zulu friends as a child, and his will's intention that the Rhodes Scholarships be open to all South African races (by which the old rogue of course meant only Afrikaners as well as the English, not Khoisan, Xhosa, Zulu, Malays, Indians or Chinese), as evidence of Rhodes not being a racist.⁴⁹ In support of his take on the Irish War of Independence, he appeals repeatedly to Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and*

Community in Cork, 1916–1923 (1998), without noting the accusations of academic fraud raised by its critics, nor any alternative histories of that crisis.⁵⁰ It is enough that one view friendly to his political instincts has been published.

My own personal dealings with Biggar have been limited to the famous ‘Must Rhodes Fall?’ debate in the Oxford Union, in which his team was defeated. The event was clearly troubling enough for him to provoke him to write at length about it in his apologia about ‘coming out as a rightist’:

[In] the opening sally of one of my opponents, Richard Drayton . . . [he] argued that, if he were to presume to offer his opinions on the theology of the eucharist, he, as an historian of Africa, wouldn’t deserve to be taken seriously. Therefore, nor should mine on Rhodes, I being a mere theologian. Had there been time to respond, I’d have said that, had an Africanist shared his views on the eucharist, I’d have treated them on their merits, and that it was disappointing that he wouldn’t extend the same justice to me.⁵¹

This is interesting on many levels. He has forgotten not just that my comment on this theme is not at the debut but actually 24 minutes and 50 seconds in, but that I said nothing about ‘opinions’ but was pointing out the ‘appalling oversimplifications and errors’ of history he had just made.⁵² I can’t help feeling, too, that his decision not to present me to that particular constituency of readers as Rhodes Professor of Imperial History but as ‘an historian of Africa’ had its own slippery rhetorical purpose. But most striking was the concluding suggestion that history was about ‘views’ and that his idea of the past, on whatever shallow basis it rested, should be taken seriously. Sadly, while the Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of all believers may be a fine basis for spiritual life, neither in climate science nor in history does it provide a sound basis for thinking, nor standing in scholarly debate. The pride and dignity of history as a discipline is that it yields robust and measured knowledge of the past by the weighing of evidence and interpretations based on deep immersion in contemporary sources and traditions of scholarship. The price of admission to the history game is higher than simply having strong views about the past. Perhaps Biggar’s lawyerly arguing of provocative views, with friendly ‘facts’ hastily mustered and hostile ones ignored or quarantined, is respectable in the world of Christian ethics? But there too, it seems, there are some who are troubled by oversimplifications and omissions in his theology.⁵³

Neither Biggar nor his growing public seem to see, or at least to be troubled by, the lack of rigour and shallow learning which underpins his attempt to tell moralizing stories about the nation. This is because the actual truth of what happened in the past is probably secondary in importance to him and his audience. What matters is kinship, and what threads of possible truth might be harvested, by whatever means, and twined into a twenty-first-century rehearsal

of that imagined identity. He is not 'post-truth', but pre-truth: knowing who you are, who are your kin, what their past and their projects are, precedes and organizes a moral and cognitive order. It is, in practice, a profoundly situationist ethics, in which the predicament of birth becomes the ground on which the world is commanded. It is an ethics and intellectual practice that begins and ends in narcissism, even an idolatry of the self. If there is a kind of urgency, even stridency, to Biggar's voice, that clearly has its basis in a sense of threat to that cherished idol of the self as it is experienced in history and memory. 'When an Anglo-Saxon puts together Japan, the Second World War and a locomotive, he arrives at one thing only: the Burma Railway', Biggar writes on a visit to Japan in 2016 when, ironically, he chided his hosts for their national lack of shame and repentance for their imperial crimes.⁵⁴ Perhaps, at least if that self-defined 'Anglo-Saxon' brings on holiday with him the childhood trauma of seeing whites reduced to slaves and coolies in *Bridge Over the River Kwai*.

The kin idol's face became painfully visible in Biggar's response to the Royal Historical Society's October 2018 report *Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History*. Declaring his scepticism about what he called the RHS's 'campaign to promote "Black History"', he declared that history teaching should instead prioritize how 'we British have come to be as we are'.⁵⁵ Quite apart from suggesting he hadn't actually read the report before shooting from the hip, he seems to think that 'we British' have a history to which 'Black History' is peripheral. Now, to be clear, Biggar is not a racist. As Chaplain of Oriel in 1995, after reading Colin Powell's autobiography, he urged the British Army ensure its officers were not promoted on the basis of 'the colour of their skin, their private incomes, or their public-school manners'.⁵⁶ People of colour are clearly welcome to the commons of the kin, although perhaps only as supplements, as they agree to fit into the old order. It is not clear, though, judging from his response to the report, if Biggar has quite wrestled with the price of this idea of history, as explained in a jesting response to his letter in 1995: 'Mr Biggar could in turn cheer me up by telling me why he thinks so few people of General Colin Powell's background have achieved the distinction of, say, a bishopric, headship of an Oxbridge college or even the dizzy heights of a college chaplaincy?'⁵⁷ He has not understood, not least in the question of Rhodes statue in Oxford, how a backward-looking idea of dead kin distorts one's capacity to make kinship with the living in the present.

For Biggar and his secular congregation his practical theology of war and history fills a space of post-colonial loss. It compensates for a sense of personal diminishment premised on an earlier narcissistic identification with Britain's power, with an imagined past and future of a Greater Britain. That he and they generally favour Brexit is not coincidental. 'Take back control' was the theme of the politics of Brexit, given a libidinal twist, for example in Daniel Hannan's suggestion 'Let's dump the E.U. and rekindle our love affair with India'.⁵⁸

Melancholy is combined with the pleasurable fiction of a repressed self claiming expression, with fantasies of agency, power, and virtue.⁵⁹ Were this just a solitary vice, we might allow its sharers their private pleasures, but it is linked with real-world violent projects which can never be satisfied, an imagined past that never can be restored, and a kinship, so passionately desired, which will only be whole in mourning. This is the pathos of the Brexit camp. In a decade or two, this whole mind-world will be gone, as foreign and strange to Britain as medieval crusaders. We may hope these embers of empire do not spark new destructive flames before, at last, they die.

Notes

- 1 Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley, (New York: Columbia University Press), 77–78.
- 2 Carlo Ginzburg and Anna Davin, 'Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method'. *History Workshop*, no. 9 (1980): 5–36; Edoardo Grendi, 'Micronalisi e Storia Sociale, SOCIALE.' *Quaderni Storici* 12, no. 35 (2) (1977): 506–20; Matti Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research'. *History and Theory* 40, no. 3 (2001): 347–59.
- 3 'Biggar, Rev. Canon Prof. Nigel John', *Who's Who*, <http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/10.1093/ww/9780199540884.001.0001/ww-9780199540884-e-245063> accessed 1 August 2018. Biggar's family history may be pursued through <https://www.genealogy.com/ftm/b/i/g/Kenneth-H-Biggar/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0295.html> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 4 'How to define a united Ireland', *The Times*, 31 December 1993 and 'Overcoming "obstacles" to Anglo-Irish negotiations', *The Independent*, 18 July 1994.
- 5 'Independence will do nothing for Scots', *Standpoint Magazine*, May 2014, <http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/features-may-14-independence-nothing-for-scots-nigel-biggar-referendumpage=0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C4> accessed 1 August 2018; 'Scottish independence seems like a false God', <https://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/news/scottish-independence-seems-false-god>
- 6 Nigel Biggar, *In Defence of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); 'Don't be so sure that invading Iraq was immoral', *Financial Times* (10 February 2010); 'Saddam's evil regime had to go', *The Times* (27 August 2015). For his comment on the Easter Rebellion and the Anglo-Irish civil war of 1919–21 see his *Between Kin and Cosmopolis: An Ethic of the Nation* (London: James Clarke, 2014): 93–4.
- 7 'Was Britain Right to Go to War in 1914?', *Standpoint Magazine*, <http://standpointmag.co.uk/features-september-13-was-britain-right-to-go-to-war-in-1914-nigel-biggar-first-world-war?page=0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C4> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 8 'Intervention in Syria is Britain's moral duty', *The Times* (10 October 2015).
- 9 *The Times* (10 May 2011).
- 10 *The Times* (19 November 1999).
- 11 *The Times* (26 August 2011).

- 12** Nigel Biggar, 'What is the good of Establishment?', *Standpoint Magazine* (April 2011), <http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/features-april-11-what-is-the-good-of-establishment-nigel-biggar-church-of-england-humanist-liberalism> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 13** *The Times* (9 January 2016).
- 14** Nigel Biggar, Opening speech in Oxford Union debate of 19 January 2016, which may be seen on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPsQF91bZFA> accessed 1 August 2018; on Seacole, *The Times* (20 June 2016).
- 15** 'Europe's imperial ambitions led to Brexit', *The Times* (4 September 2017). For Biggar's pro-Brexit views his Twitter stream of retweets provides abundant further evidence.
- 16** 'Agenda: Why we should learn to live with Trident', *The Herald* (18 July 2016), <https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/14624940.agenda-why-we-should-learn-to-live-with-trident/> accessed 9 April 2019.
- 17** Nigel Biggar, 'In defence of killing the innocent, deliberately but not intentionally', *Public Discourse* (28 April 2014), <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/04/13050/> accessed 9 April 2019; Nigel Biggar, *Aiming to Kill: The Ethics of Suicide and Euthanasia* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004).
- 18** Nigel Biggar, 'Individual Rights versus Common Security? Christian Moral Reasoning about Torture', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 27, no. 1 (2014): 13–14.
- 19** 'The Obsession with gender identity has gone too far', *The Times* (2 August 2018).
- 20** <https://twitter.com/NigelBiggar/status/1110252451070918657> accessed 26 March 2019.
- 21** 'Europe's imperial ambitions lead to Brexit', *The Times*, 4 September 2017, accessed 1 September 2018 and 'Universities needn't fear a No-Deal Brexit', *Guardian*, 8 January 2019, accessed 25 March 2019.
- 22** E.g. the equation of Biggar with the victims of Stalinism in *The Times* (8 October 2018).
- 23** Nigel Biggar, 'Outing yourself as a rightist isn't easy', *The Conservative Online*, http://theconservative.online/article/outing_yourself_as_a_rightist_isnt_easy accessed 1 August 2018.
- 24** For his attempt to urge the University of Cambridge and/or Churchill College, Cambridge to discipline Gopal, and the use of Twitter to stoke the fire, see Nigel Biggar, 'Vile abuse is now tolerated in our universities', *The Times* (10 April 2018), and the retweet, <https://twitter.com/nigelbiggar/status/984346457686839296> accessed 9 April 2019. As an example of what followed see Guy Adams, 'How can Cambridge allow this Don to spit out her hate-filled bile', *Daily Mail*, <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/daily-mail/20180412/281861529084026> accessed 1 December 2018, or read the thread on tweets such as <https://twitter.com/alexvtunzelmann/status/984366969762795520> accessed 9 April 2019. For a discussion of the episode see <https://thetab.com/uk/cambridge/2018/04/12/cambridge-academic-faces-racist-daily-mail-smear-campaign-110185> accessed 1 December 2018.
- 25** 'Societies @ Monkton', <https://www.monktoncombeschool.com/assets/files/seniorschooldocs/SocietiesIndex2014-2015.pdf> accessed 9 April 2019.
- 26** On Packer's influential career see Timothy F. George (ed.), *J. I. Packer and the Evangelical Future: The Impact of His Life and Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009) and Leland Ryken, *J. I. Packer: An Evangelical Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

- 27** It seems, however, that tensions had opened up between Packer and Biggar by the late 1980s; see his review of J. I. Packer et al., *Here we Stand: Justification by Faith Today* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986) in *The Churchman*, vol. 100(4), 365–67, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/churchman/100-04_346.pdf accessed 1 August 2018.
- 28** *Theological Politics: A Critique of 'Faith in the City'*. Latimer Studies 29/30 (Oxford: Latimer House, 1988).
- 29** 'Mrs. Thatcher's Moral Reformation', *Latimer Comment* 30 (Spring 1990). I am grateful to the Librarian of Latimer House for providing me with a copy.
- 30** Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening that Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).
- 31** The introductory page of the 'Ethics and Empire' website helpfully collects, and provides digital links to, all of these interventions: <https://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/ethics-and-empire> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 32** <https://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal/api/version1/sr?sr-igel+Biggar&csi=139185&oc=00240&shr=t&scl=t&hac=f&hct=f&nonLatin1Chars=true&elb=t&apiFlaps=All+Result%3BNews%3B&crth=off&secondRedirectIndicator=true#0|1|BOOLEAN|||>.
- 33** Biggar, 'Outing yourself as a Rightist isn't easy'.
- 34** *The Times* (31 December 1993); *The Independent* (18 July 1994); *The Guardian* (3 September 1994).
- 35** *The Guardian* (27 September 2002).
- 36** Biggar, 'Scottish Independence Seems like a False God', *Church Times* (8 September 2014), <http://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/news/scottish-independence-seems-false-god> accessed 9 April 2019; Nigel Biggar, 'Unionists Don't Despair, Scotland is not Lost – Yet', *Standpoint* (September 2015), <http://standpointmag.co.uk/features-september-2015-nigel-biggars-scotland-is-not-lost-snp> accessed 9 April 2019.
- 37** *The Times* (18 February 2018).
- 38** Nigel Biggar, *Between Kin and Cosmopolis* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).
- 39** 'Faith and Reason: The lightness of a half real liberty', *The Independent* (17 April 1993).
- 40** Nigel Biggar, 'The nation state and the case for remaining in the EU', <http://www.reimaginingeurope.co.uk/nation-state-case-remaining-eu/> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 41** Nigel Biggar, 'Less Hegel, More History! Christian Ethics and Political Realities', *Providence Magazine* (March 2016), <https://providencemag.com/2016/05/less-hegel-history-christian-ethics-political-realities/> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 42** Nigel Biggar, 'What the United Kingdom is Good For', *These Islands* (24 October 2017), http://www.these-islands.co.uk/publications/i260/what_the_united_kingdom_is_good_for.aspx accessed 8 January 2018; and see *The Times* (1 February 2017).
- 43** Thomas Carlyle, *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* (London, 1853).
- 44** *Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission* (London, 1866), especially 77, 334; Bernard Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1962).
- 45** Of the army of Oxford historians, the only loyal participant is Alexander Morrison of New College.

- 46** Biggar, 'Less Hegel, More History! Christian Ethics and Political Realities'.
- 47** See <https://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/ethics-and-empire> accessed 30 December 2018.
- 48** See Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).
- 49** E.g. Nigel Biggar, 'Rhodes, Race and the Abuse of History', *Standpoint Magazine* (March 2016), <http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/6388/full> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 50** Biggar, *In Defence of War*, 46 n.141 and *Between Kin and Cosmopolis*, 94–95. On the controversy see Ian McBride, 'The Peter Hart Affair in Perspective: History, Ideology and the Irish Revolution' *The Historical Journal* 61, no. 1 (2018): 249–71.
- 51** Biggar, 'Outing yourself as a Rightist isn't easy'.
- 52** See 'Must Rhodes Fall? | Full Debate | Oxford Union', *YouTube* (21 January 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3aBDBdDIgU> accessed 1 August 2018.
- 53** Richard B. Hays's complains about Biggar brushing aside and ignoring counter-examples, and offering large claims on flimsy evidence in 'Narrate and Embody: A response to Nigel Biggar's "Specify and Distinguish"', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 2 (2009): 185–19, especially 187, 191 and 192; Andrew Torrance charges that 'Biggar's presentation of Barth is superficial', in 'Karl Barth on the Irresistible Nature of Grace', *Journal of Reformed Theology* 10, no. 2 (2016): 19; and Alistair McIntosh describes the 'straw man feel' of *In Defence of War* in his review in *Third Way* 36, no. 10 (2013): 40, <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2013-ThirdWay-Defence-War-Biggar.pdf> accessed 1 December 2018.
- 54** *The Times* (16 February 2016).
- 55** *The Times* (19 October 2018).
- 56** *The Times* (7 October 1995).
- 57** Harry Holt, Letter, *The Times* (17 October 1995).
- 58** *The Telegraph* (9 November 2015).
- 59** See Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbias University Press, 2005) and Fintan O'Toole, *Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain* (London: Apollo Library, 2018).

