

Professor Biggar defends his book *Colonialism*

From the Revd Professor Nigel Biggar

Sir, — I write to correct four misleading statements made by Dr Susan Durber and the Revd Dr Duncan Dormor ([Letters, 26 April](#)).

First, Dr Durber finds my book *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning* “repugnant”, because I judge the wholesale damnation of the residential-school system in Canada to be unfair, even though “more than 200 bodies of babies and children have been discovered in former school grounds.” But the fact is that, since the alleged discovery of “mass graves” three years ago, not a single set of remains of a murdered child have been identified. I refer her to C. P. Champion and Tom Flanagan, *Grave Error: How the media misled us (and the truth about residential schools)* (2023).

Next, Dr Dormor asserts that claims of a conspiracy to silence me “are significantly overstated”. But the fact is that I documented the concerted campaign to shut down my “Ethics and Empire” project in 2017 on pages 299 and 324-5 of *Colonialism*, and Bloomsbury’s unilateral termination of its contract to publish the book itself in “Anatomy of a Book Cancellation” ([Compact, 2 February 2023](#)).

Third, Dr Dormor attributes to me a “crude utilitarian calculus” of the goods and evils of colonialism. But the facts are that I explicitly rejected such consequentialist reasoning on page 285, and that he chose to be silent on the moral evaluation that I actually made on pages 285-8.

Finally, he describes my book as a “polemic” that falls short of “the rigorous standards expected in academia”. But the fact is that shoddy polemics do not contain 135 pages of substantiating endnotes and a supporting bibliography of more than 30 pages, carry what Sir Trevor Phillips has described as “the intellectual force of a Javelin anti-tank missile”, and command the endorsement of eminent historians such as Vernon Bogdanor, Niall Ferguson, Tirthankar Roy, Jonathan Sumption, and Robert Tombs.

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