

“ RENDER UNTO CAESAR ”

TALK GIVEN AT ST JOHN'S, 21ST APRIL 2010

Thank you for inviting me to speak and for coming this evening. My aim is to touch on the changing interactions between the Church and the State over the centuries and to try to shed some light on 21st century Britain. I also want to give you time for discussion. I have no expertise to offer you, only reflections from a deep interest over much of my life in history, in politics and in the nature and workings of the Catholic Church.

The relationship between the Church and the State or the civil authorities has been at times one of deep co-operation, perhaps to the longer term detriment of the Church, at times one of tension, at times one of conflict and at times one of mere mutual co-existence in some key areas. At all times for the Church the fundamental text in Sacred Scripture is, of course, the famous passage of the Tribute Money. This is of such central importance that it is reported in all the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, and Luke 20:19-26. These passages, furthermore, are placed at a crucial point in the Gospel narratives. The tense exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus, one of the most dramatic in the whole of the Bible, comes after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem and just before his Passion.

I'll read you Matthew's account.

The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus into taking an explicit and dangerous stand on whether Jews should or should not pay taxes to the Roman occupying power. If Jesus answered “yes” then he would have been open to the accusation of being against Jewish opposition to the Roman occupation and, therefore, Jesus could have been portrayed as being ultimately against God too, since the Jews believed their land to be specially given to them by God. If Jesus answered “no” then his critics could have reported him to the Roman authorities as someone who was trying to incite a revolt. It is rather as if a prominent Catholic leader in Nazi occupied France (not that there was one) were to be publicly examined by the Gestapo in a way that forced him to come off the fence. In answering his questioners with a counter-question Jesus skilfully invited his listeners to choose allegiances and, fundamentally, he

implies that the claims of God and the claims of Caesar are- or can be - mutually exclusive, although he avoids the trap of saying this categorically. The passage has been taken by some commentators, such as St Justin Martyr, to mean that Christians should pay their taxes, but I am persuaded by those many commentators who interpret the passages as meaning that Christians are obliged to disobey Caesar if and when Caesar's dictates violate God's law. Jesus issues a wide-ranging challenge about how we should govern our lives, how we should inform our consciences, and how we should apply our consciences in the day-to-day negotiations of life. What is due to God could override what is due to Caesar. We could spend all evening teasing out the layers of meaning in the three accounts of this episode.

Since the time of Our Lord himself his followers have had to deal with the fundamental challenge of having to 'render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's'. On the whole, the Church has tried to encourage her members to give to Caesar all that can morally be given. Less often and only very reluctantly has the Church got into conflict with the secular powers that be. On the whole, John Fisher, Thomas More and Oscar Romero and other heroic spirits are rather few. The Church has more often compromised too much with the State. Church members have sometimes fudged and got things wrong, giving to Caesar sometimes at the expense of what should be given to God. It can, of course, be very difficult to get allegiances right in this messy world. Moreover the mindset of Christians is always, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by the society in which they – and we- live.

The general assumptions and culture of the age are very pervasive. It really is difficult to stand back, to be counter-cultural, and to take a different view from that which is marked by the spirit of the age. The most difficult thing of all, of course, is to resist the State to the end, when resistance is demanded by the laws of God. An example of a prevailing assumption was slavery, an integral part of the mercantile economies of Spain, Portugal, Holland and the British Isles from the 16th to the early 19th centuries. Of course, some great Christian prophets spoke out against slavery, from the Jesuit, St Peter Claver, and the Dominican, Bartolomeo de las Casas in the 16th century New World, up to William Wilberforce and his Christian circle in the early 19th century. But, sadly, the Catholic and Anglican pulpits were almost entirely silent on the

subject, a point which Canon Harding makes in his History of the Clifton Diocese.

Even deep-thinking, serious-minded Christians can be blind, immersed in the assumptions of the age or in what they see as other pressing concerns. Or it might be that Jesus's pure demands are too much for most of us, like the rich man in the Gospel who sloped off sadly. In Dostoevsky's "Brothers Karamazov", the Grand Inquisitor argues that Jesus was too radical for ordinary human consumption. As Fr Peter Cornwell puts it, we are constantly trying to catch up with Jesus. Christian history is to an uncomfortable extent the story of the message of Jesus being massaged, spun, watered down, sentimentalised, dodged, even conveniently omitted. What would Jesus say about Trident? How will we be judged for what we have done for earthquake victims in Haiti or homeless in Bath, bearing in mind the words of Jesus about the Day of Judgement and the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25: 31-46.

We in Bath in 2010 are as much breathing in the Spirit of the Age, what Hegel called the "Zeitgeist", as the Crusaders and those who burned heretics in the medieval period. We need to be humble and self-critical before we take the moral high ground in judging people in past periods. I wonder if at some stage in the future, there will be a sea-change in society's general thinking about abortion and the collective penny will finally drop. Since 1967 over 7 million unborn lives have been killed: more than those in the Nazi camps. And yet we are supposed to be a nice, decent, democratic society? How will we be judged? We know from the Gospels quite clearly what is revealed about the importance of children, unborn and born. God will not be mocked. Just as it gradually became unarguable that slaves from Africa were just as human as anyone else, with the same rights, so it must be our prayer that it will gradually become clear to most people that the key argument over the unborn child is not independent viability of life outside the womb at 20 weeks or 24 weeks or some other time, but the child's innate humanity, with consequent rights, from conception, continuing along the great spectrum of life to natural death. The Liberal MP Cyril Smith told me that he vehemently opposed his leader David Steel over abortion. Cyril said that, leaving Christian arguments aside, it was a human rights issue; the unborn should have the same right as the born. When the collective penny does drop then I guess our own age will be judged as

harshly by posterity as we judge with repugnance not only the slave-traders but the many who stood by and said nothing; the merchants, the politicians, the churchmen and the general public of 18th century Bristol and Bath and elsewhere.

One can perhaps apply the same broad arguments to world poverty, famine, the great environmental challenges, and the frightening momentum gathering in favour of euthanasia. The wickedness and madness of nuclear weapons are so obviously totally contrary to Christ's teaching and yet Christian CND has not been supported as strongly within the Church as it might.

Christians can get the allegiance to Caesar or to God strangely out of focus in war-time. In the First World War, for example, the church communities in all the combatant countries could reasonably be accused of putting their nationalism or patriotism before their sense of a universal Church. With warm support from their bishops, Catholic Frenchmen slaughtered Catholic Germans, and Catholic Austrians and Catholic Italians fought one another ferociously. Pope Benedict XV worked tirelessly to appeal to all the combatant nations to lay down their arms and work for a lasting peace. In 1917 he drew up an impressive peace plan. He was ignored at every turn or treated with contempt, for example by the British War Cabinet. Benedict was deeply hurt not even to be invited to the so-called peace conference in Paris in 1919.

Austrian Catholics signed up in their droves to fight alongside Germany in 1939. It took heroism and deep holiness to resist the pressure of the times. Such witness was given by a simple farmer, Franz Jaegerstaetter. He refused to join the army which in his view was pursuing ends totally at odds with the demands of the Gospel. Obedience to God and all the teaching of Jesus had to rule out obedience to a State governed by an evil ideology. Everyone tried to persuade Franz to enlist, including his bishop, his parish priest, his lawyer and his wife. He is a hero of the 20th century, a simple man's Thomas More. Franz was utterly clear and serenely courageous. On 9 August 1943 he accepted execution, even though he knew it would make no earthly difference to the Nazi death machine, but his witness shines for all time.

Of course, Catholics in Britain believed we were fighting a just war in accordance with the principles set down by St Augustine and developed by St

Thomas Aquinas. A good case can be made out for this, but I think the whole question of a just war, including nuclear weapons, needs to be revisited in depth by the Church. It is one of the areas which was largely left undone by the Second Vatican Council. It is also a subject on which we can work closely with other Christians. The US Bishops' Conference did superb work on the just war in regard to the invasion of Iraq and, of course, opposed Bush and the war; much good it did them, but it was a helpful, prophetic voice.

Church history shows extended examples of co-operation between the Church and the secular authorities. For about 1200 years, from Constantine in the 4th century until the Reformation in the 16th, the Church was seen conceptually and in many ways in practice as the one overarching authority. Theorists spoke of a Christian Society, "Societas Christiana", Christendom, within which, in co-operation, there was a spiritual power and a temporal power. The papacy expected all secular authority to be accountable ultimately to religious authority. In practice, of course, the secular powers, usually monarchies, were keen to assert their influence over the church, through the appointment of bishops and the limiting of revenue that went to Rome and such matters. In practice, there was sometimes tension. Indeed, our saint today, St Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, went into exile twice for his defence of the church's rights against William Rufus in the late 11th and early 12th centuries. In terms of jurisdiction, the laity were subject to church courts for certain sins (not always crimes), such as blasphemy, adultery, sacrilege, incest and other matters. The clergy were dealt with, in the first instance at least, by the clerical authorities. A criminous clerk guilty of murder, for example, was first dealt by the church courts and then handed over to the secular courts.

Much of the residue of this deep-seated legacy has come to light in the current clerical sex abuse scandals. The centuries-old culture has been that the clergy deal with their own and, as far as possible, keep the state out of it. The abuses have tended to be seen as sins rather than as crimes as well, and, therefore, repentance has been the order of the day and then a move to a fresh start somewhere else. What we are seeing before our eyes is the dissolution of a medieval, clerical jurisdictional and pastoral culture. The Middle Ages is giving way, under pressure, to contemporary secular legal processes. Mrs Merkel, the German Chancellor, for example, is placing the clerical abuses under State

investigation and the Church in Germany is completely in support of this now. The Vatican has issued guidelines to the universal Church insisting on co-operation with the State at the outset.

In the period from about 1300 until the 1520s two great trends developed in the Latin West. First, national monarchies, notably in England and France, gained greater powers. Secondly, the papacy went through a period of exile, schism (competing popes), weak spiritual vision and scandalous abuses. These and other influences, not least the growing thirst for vernacular Scriptures, led to the so-called Reformation, the great fragmenting of Christendom. State Churches were established in several northern European countries.

Nowhere in the Gospels do I think Jesus meant us to adopt a kind of passive acceptance of anything that the state authorities throw at us. Martin Luther was inclined to lean too much on those passages in St Paul which can be interpreted in this way: 'the powers that be are ordained by God.' The Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia were and are state-churches, as was and is the Church of England, and one of the inbuilt tendencies is for state churches to fall in too readily with what the state authorities decree. Sadly it meant the Evangelical Church in Germany caved in to Hitler, almost entirely, in ways that Dietrich Bonhoeffer could see all too painfully. The Catholic Church in 1930s Germany sadly caved in also, in the main, but for different reasons. The Church in Germany, to some extent, had had the guts knocked out of it by Bismarck and his Anti-Catholic measures, the so-called "Kulturkampf", in the 1870s. Secondly in the 1930s the Vatican saw Nazism as abhorrent but not as evil as Soviet Communism and so a concordat was struck with the Catholic Church, which destroyed the Catholic Centre Party in Germany and had the effect of silencing the Church in the face of the Nazi horrors. Resistance was shown, as usual, by only a few heroic figures such as the Jesuit Blessed Rupert Meyer in Munich.

Perhaps nowhere is a state-church more evident than in our own country. Let us be quite clear. When push comes to shove, the government will not be thwarted in its aims by opposition from the Church whether one is speaking of Thomas Becket in the 12th century, Thomas More, John Fisher, or the other martyrs of the 16th and 17th centuries. The finest minds and souls in the Christian world are mere dust under the chariot wheels of Caesar. As the late

Professor Geoffrey Elton showed, Henry VIII developed the most efficient and powerful machinery of government in Europe, supported in its purposes by all the instruments of a police state. The monasteries and religious orders were a vast institutional, landowning and spiritual network to an extent which we can now scarcely imagine. And yet in 3 to 4 years only they were completely destroyed and eradicated from the soil of England and Wales. This was an act of state power which outranks in its magnitude and thoroughness the impressive nationalization programme of the post-war Attlee government.

As Professor Eamon Duffy has demonstrated beyond argument the Crown and Parliament relentlessly and systematically imposed on the people of this country in the 16th and 17th centuries religious changes which most did not want and which altered for ever the religious practices and religious imaginations of the people. The Catholic minority, leaving aside the executions of the heroic, were hounded, imprisoned, fined almost out of existence at times, and marginalised from national life. Anti-Catholic laws were slightly relaxed in the late 18th century in order to allow the ranks of the British army to be filled by Irishmen. Grudging tolerance was conceded in the 19th century, to be replaced in the 20th century by a measure of respect at best (as seen in the 1944 Education Act) and indifference and contempt at worst. If you think anti-Catholicism has died in this country, the new wife of Peter Phillips, 9th in line to the throne, felt in 2008 that it would be easier all round if she left the Catholic Church and became an Anglican before the wedding, to the dismay of the bishop in her diocese in Canada.

What about now? Gordon Brown professes admiration for Catholic Social and Economic Teaching and action, but the government does not welcome opposition from the Church, as we saw in the legislation on gay adoption and the sweeping aside of protests from bishops and the Catholic Children's Societies. Archbishop Nichols and the Catholic Education Service fought hard and eventually secured some success over the admissions policies of Catholic schools, but the issue will return. And there was the Prime Minister's sullen irritation with our Bishops' pleas that MPs be allowed a free vote on aspects of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill and in response he in effect brought in a whipping of his party.

The British government, for all kinds of reasons, will not brook opposition from the Church. I don't only include the Catholic Church here. The great Bishop George Bell of Chichester, the 50th anniversary of whose death we celebrated in 2008, opposed the saturation bombings of Germany in the last stage of the war, for which he was almost certainly punished by not being given Canterbury. Archbishop Robert Runcie was snubbed and derided for his sermon in St Paul's during the Falklands Victory celebrations, when prayers were offered also for the Argentinian dead, and the highly complex and important lecture to senior lawyers given by the present archbishop of Canterbury was greeted with vulgar scorn in the popular press and silence by the political establishment. Christ never promised his followers an easy time.

Time does not permit us to look at State persecution of the Church under Communism, or in Japan until the 19th century, or in parts of Africa, or in current Sudan, Pakistan, Palestine, Iraq, North Africa, Cuba and elsewhere. "Aid to the Church in Need" does a great service in keeping us aware of persecution, but sadly it receives insufficient support.

Persecutions of the Church and the perceived threats posed to the Church by several contemporary movements have very much shaped the approach of the papacy for over 200 years. The Papacy has seen socialism in its extreme and distorted forms become fascism in Italy and atheistic communism in Russia, China and elsewhere. It has seen liberalism and the primacy of individual choice, good in so many ways, lead, however, to abortion and much else. It has seen materialism, good in many ways in seeing progress of many out of poverty, lead to consumerism and the undermining of family values and so on. Pope Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors in 1864 is often seen as an exaggerated, over-statement of negative fears, a battening down the hatches in fortress church. One can see much of that, but at the same time the 19th century was often turbulent for the Church; two popes, for example, had been driven into exile. I was in Rome after Easter and still I cannot look at the President's palace on the quirinal hill without thinking it was theft, and that the unification of Italy was achieved through one of the greatest land grabs in European history. The Vatican is suspicious of secularism, with due cause sometimes but sometimes not. Again, we are seeing in these weeks the Vatican seeing itself as being attacked by forces which it sees as not having the best interests of the Church

at heart. I mean the secular media's reporting of the clerical sex abuse scandals. Rome is in danger of getting back into its fortress. Beneath all the media reports lie deep-seated attitudes and historical forces at work. But I believe the papacy must not retreat but follow Christ's command to Peter in John's Gospel last Sunday to "feed my sheep".

Indeed, all followers of Christ are commanded by Our Lord Himself to do all they can to push forward the mission of the Body of Christ, that is: **to proclaim the Good News; to bring the message of salvation and the kingdom of God into every facet of human life; and to transform our culture through the power and love of Jesus Christ.** This mission inevitably puts every Christian into tension and occasionally into conflict with the State.

What about the UK today with a General Election on 6th May? Where should Catholics position themselves so to speak? What are the issues? How do we navigate our way through the daily media barrage? There are two magnificent documents to help us with broad principles. The first was the Holy Father's Encyclical Letter of 29 June 2009, "**Caritas in Veritate**" (Charity in Truth). It should be essential reading for every thinking Christian, Catholics and fellow Christians. It deals with all the great social, economic and environmental issues of our times, not least the banking crisis and credit crunch, with simply expressed profundity rooted in Sacred Scripture and in the Church's tradition of teaching, especially Pope Paul's encyclical, "Populorum Progressio" of 1967 and Pope John Paul II's "Centesimus Annus" of 1991. The second magnificent document comes from our own Bishops' Conference and is called "**Choosing the Common Good**", published recently to guide members of the Church and others, setting out principles which we can apply as we try to choose which parliamentary candidate to support. The two fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching are the **dignity of each and every person** and the **common good**. These two principles are linked and feed into each other. Not only is the content of the greatest importance, but 'Choosing the Common Good' is written in English prose at its finest: indeed, it could be given to students in sixth forms and at university as an example of the best of English writing. Both documents, in my humble view, represent the very best of the Catholic Church, a great service to humanity and wise, masterly analyses of our world and our times. One of the many tragedies of the sex abuse scandals is

that they have virtually buried the Good News of the Church's contributions on the great issues of our time. One must not despair, but it does make one literally weep.

The good news for you is that I am not going to summarise 'Choosing the Common Good' or 'Caritas in Veritate'. I couldn't do it. It would be impertinent to try. Above all, if you haven't read them, I urge you to do so. 'Caritas in Veritate' is only £1.95 from the CTS, less than a bus fare (unless like me you have free bus passes!). 'Choosing the Common Good' is available on-line (www.catholicchurch.org.uk – a splendid web-site). If you haven't got a computer I'll get you a copy.

The really thorough thing to do, of course, is to read these two great documents and then, with their rich teaching ringing in your ears, plough your way through the party manifestos of the main political parties to see how well each measures up to Catholic teaching in this or that area. Can I ask if anyone here has read the manifestos in their entirety? I assure you that it is very tiring to do so, and you need to set aside many hours, since they come to hundreds of pages between them. My own view is that **a Catholic could, with a clear conscience, vote for any of the current parliamentary parties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and for the Green Party, but not for the BNP.** However, there are policies which come close to Catholic teaching and those which scarcely do. No single party, of course, completely embraces Catholic teaching. In the UK the parties are like the curate's egg, although each, in its own way, has been influenced by aspects of Christian teaching, even if they don't realise it. It was Harold Wilson who said that the Labour Party owed more to Methodism than to Marxism. One is conscious also of the great omissions, or the big themes which are not really grappled with: not just how exactly we are going to get out of our vast debts, but the environmental challenges are not given anything like the importance they deserve (in contrast to the Pope's superb New Year 2010 message), and, of course, abortion is side-stepped because it has been reduced to a conscience issue.

Interestingly, the three main parties have picked up on a central point in both the papal encyclical and in the bishops' conference document: namely that the state is not the same as society; that government can only do so much, just as regulated markets can only do so much; that there is a third force at work, the

spirit of solidarity that comes from good citizenship, voluntary bodies, genuine neighbourliness, networks, the bonds that tie people and communities together, what is called “social capital”. As the document says: “far from being self-contained individuals, we are always mutually dependent.” It talks about “the centrality of personal responsibility and the gift of service to others.” Included is a brilliant passage on the pursuit of virtues, prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, together with faith, hope and charity. Impressively the bishops have taken a lead and are holding private seminars to encourage bankers to explore the ethical dimension of the economic crisis, to encourage the development of virtues rather than merely the expansion of rules and.

What are the State issues that most impinge morally on Catholics in today’s Britain? You know these as well as I. First, as the Bishops’ document says, is **Life itself**, the secular versus the Christian vision of life and death.

Christianity no longer forms the automatic backdrop for public or even private debate. There is no longer agreement that life begins at conception and is cherished thereafter. Human life is under threat both at the beginning and at the end of mortal life. On euthanasia we have a fight on our hands and we need to be ready for it and offer society an alternative vision.

In my experience young people, by the way, are quick to see that issues involving life or death are seamlessly woven together, that one cannot, for example, be against abortion and euthanasia yet passive in the face of poverty, famine, war and environmental problems; or the other way round. The Bishops’ document also brings this out.

Secondly, the Bishops’ document deals with **Poverty and Inequality and the Care of the Elderly**, then **Migration and Community Relations**. I suggest you read these sections, based firmly on the dignity of the each person and on Christ’s teaching. Then there is a section on **the global community and ecology**, the need, I quote, “urgently to recover a sense of the integrity and sacredness of the whole of God’s creation, of which we are not the masters but the stewards.” Fifthly, there comes **marriage and family life**. The Church is not rosy-eyed about family life, but seeks to make contributions to public debate from experience of real life conditions. Then there is a section on **the role of faith communities**. The hugely important point is made that the State must not be allowed to see faith communities as concerned with church-based worship or RE teaching (a weakness in the Lib Dem manifesto’s section on faith schools, for example). Religious belief informs our lives at every point.

There are two areas, however, which I think are disappointingly omitted from the Bishops' document, 'Choosing the Common Good', except by implication. One is the the State's insistence on **performance measurement**, as against the Church's emphasis on the **worth of human beings**, whether they are patients, prisoners, police officers, employees in industry or children at school. I don't say that it is bad to look at ways of assessing performance – indeed, it is something any self-critical and healthy organisation needs to do - but performance is only one aspect of our work and preoccupation with performance can obstruct other and sometimes more important aspects of what we are trying to do. We are in tension with the State over this because our vision of what we do has a dimension that goes beyond anything with which the State can deal.

In schools, for example, teachers need to assess formally a child's performance at various key stages, but the worth of each boy and girl is another matter. Each human being is unique, made in God's image, with an eternal destiny. It is each child now who matters. Children are not just potential adults. Childhood and youth are important in themselves and have as much meaning as any other stage of life. Yet society somehow seems intent on robbing children of their childhood, especially the pressure towards the sexualisation of young people. It is pleasing to see, at last, that the clothes fashion industry is being forced to review its products for young girls. Schools must seek to protect childhood and to lift from children the burden of unnecessary or premature anxieties. Catholic schools must seek to give an example to all in this regard.

League Tables, whether in schools or in hospitals or in police authorities, are in some respects pagan: success in the table is everything; failures go to the wall.

The second area of which the Bishops' document does not speak is that of **sex and relationships education**, and it is an area on which all political parties are unsatisfactory and need watching like hawks.

In the context of high rates of sexually transmitted diseases and of teenage pregnancies government-sponsored sex education has tended to emphasise the importance of "safe" sex and has encouraged the use of artificial contraception and a technical kind of sex educations in schools as the best solution to unwanted pregnancy and the health risks of casual sexual liaisons. This approach has been both morally corrosive and practically ineffective – the

incidence of the major bacterial sexually transmitted infections has soared. This state strategy suffers from the assumption that social and moral problems can be solved in a technical way without addressing moral principles.

Sex education should stress the fundamental importance of respect for self and respect for the other, along with the ideal of sex being exclusively within marriage and then how to move on our journey when ideals are broken. We also have to help our pupils to gain God's help and forgiveness when they get things wrong, as we all do. Above all, sex education should be seen as one aspect only of education in personal relationships and, therefore, as existing always within a wider context. It is crucial for the moral health of our society that we rediscover the true place of sex in human relationships.

Moreover, the Church has consistently argued that the meaning of marriage is not set by society alone. The essential meaning of marriage is given in God's plan of creation and that, therefore, it must be between male and female. While some states, such as our own, have approved so-called "same-sex marriages" in law, such unions are state approved partnerships and, whatever their benefits to the individuals concerned, they cannot be deemed to be true marriages in the eyes of the Church or within the context of Christian tradition, developed from Scripture.

In this respect, as elsewhere, what is emerging is a new ordering of things which the State authorities permit. Committed Christians, like practising Moslems and Jews, have to promote their own principles and faith values, ignoring what the State makes possible. There are parallel universes, so to speak. Sadly, many in the UK think that because the State permits something then it must be all right. The Church, in co-operation as far as possible with other Christians, will have to insist increasingly that this is certainly not the case. We have to wrestle with what is our proper due to the state, where we can reasonably interact with the State, where we can tolerate the parallel universes, as it were, and where we must draw the line and even make a stand.

In conclusion, I should also say that the State does not set out to attack the Catholic Church, although there are some in all parties who dislike the Church intensely. Rather it is that the UK is no longer one single moral community. There are members of many and sometimes conflicting communities. The law sometimes has a merely regulatory role, like a referee, in matters about which

people might deeply disagree. So the Church has to operate in a pluralistic society. We need to make our distinctive contributions, seek to evangelise in accordance with our divine mission, and protect our own beliefs and moral principles, even to the point of resistance one day, although more likely we will find ourselves increasingly seeing the law as enabling others to do what they wish, even if these choices, such as abortion or euthanasia, are repugnant to us. The Church today in Britain is just one of many faith communities and other communities existing within a framework of the State which very largely no longer sees itself as Christian in spirit and outlook, but sees its role as holding the ring for a pluralism of values and beliefs.

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