

Nadine Dorries misses the point

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I, inevitably, listened to more of the Today programme than usual this morning as I was on it. In the process I heard the Bishop of Buckingham debate with the Tory MP Nadine Dorries on whether or not the Church of England had a right to suggest people should vote, be concerned about poverty and nuclear power.

Dorries's view was clear. The Church, she said, should stick to those issues where people turned to it for guidance. Apparently in her opinion, because it was the only example she gave, this is about late stage abortion. She made the point twice if I recall correctly.

I have to say that I have never once thought about turning to the Church for advice on this issue, and never expect to do so. Nor, I suspect, would the vast majority do so, but it does definitely conform to the right-wing view that the Church should be primarily concerned with suppressing women's rights, condemning sex, and imposing control.

On the other hand, I would have hoped that the Bishop might have referred to what Jesus said his mission was, which was stated in Luke 4 where it is recorded that he said in his first reported public commentary that:

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor,
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and the recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

The third line is significant. Dorries accused the Church of being left wing. Maybe she should note that it has a built in bias to the poor by design.

And she also claimed the Bible is full of reports of the dangers of debt, which she sought to use to justify the Coalition's policies, by implication. She ignored the fact that the warnings also carry with them a very clear message on the solution which is that Jubilee - or release from debt - should occur. That is what setting the oppressed free in the year of the Lord's favour means - it is about declaring Jubilee, but it seems very unlikely she knew that.

As an exercise in missing the point it was spectacular.