A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

The second half of Isaiah after the liberation of the Israelites when Cyrus conquered Babylon

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him
and to loose the belts of kings,
to open doors before him that gates may not be closed:

'For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name,
I name you, though you do not know me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me,
that people may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.'

the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.
He will swallow up death for ever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.
It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.
And he will swallow up on this mountain we have waited for him, that he might save us.
This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'
For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

(The psalm echoes the joy of Liberation)

The response to the psalm is

Ascribe to the LORD glory and power.

O sing a new song to the LORD;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Tell among the nations his glory,
and his wonders among all the peoples.

Ascribe to the LORD glory and power.

For the LORD is great and highly to be praised,
to be feared above all gods.
For the gods of the nations are naught.
It was the LORD who made the heavens.

Ascribe to the LORD glory and power.

Ascribe to the LORD, you families of peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and power;
ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name.
Bring an offering and enter his courts.

Ascribe to the LORD glory and power.

Worship the LORD in holy splendour.
O tremble before him, all the earth.
Say to the nations, 'The LORD is king.'
He will judge the peoples in fairness.

Ascribe to the LORD glory and power.

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

A letter to a new Christian community

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus

Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

enlighten the eyes of our hearts,

so that we may know the hope to which he has called us.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

At that time: The Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle Jesus in his words. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

In 1944 the Netherlands (Holland) as we call them was almost liberated by Winter. The British and American allies had stalled because they could not cross the wide river Rhine. During this war, Pope Pius XII had not spoken out against the round-up of Jews throughout Europe. He had been Papal ambassador to Germany in the 1930and knew of the violence being inflicted on its citizens, 2,000 Catholic priests had died in Dachau alone. The Dutch Bishops decided to speak out against the deportations of which by that time were rising to their peak. After this criticism the ruthless occupying authorities cut off supplies and utilities to innocent civilians and the Dutch people suffered from cold and hunger in the terrible Winter of 1944.

The first duty of the state is to protect its people, to provide stability so that the citizens may flourish. For this we pay taxes and other transactions and profits are taxed. Those who work for the state have a specific duty to their state to obey the legislation which can disturb the conscience of a medic charged with care, and to resolve the dilemma of what is care and what is appropriate treatment. A soldier has to obey orders but may have difficulty interpreting them and carrying them out.

The church has always respected lawful authority, St Peter's letter said respect the Emperor but many were to die for not worshipping him as a God. The Protestant Tudors oversaw the death of many Catholics for not recognising the Monarch as head of the Church.

Our ultimate responsibility is to God and to our conscience, Thomas More said he died "the King's good servant but God's first". St John Henry Newman is his 19th century defence of the Pope's ability to teach authoritatively what the Church as a whole believed would drink to the Pope but to conscience first. He had clarified his position earlier in the letter by writing "Unless a man is able to say to himself, as in the Presence of God, that he must not, and dare not, act upon the

Papal injunction, he is bound to obey it and would commit a great sin in disobeying it".

Jesus resolves the question he is being asked by allowing legal obedience to the occupier without alienating the nationalist violent men who ultimately would bring about the destroying violence of the Roman army who were to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70.

Our choices have perhaps been nearer to Newman's idea, to accept the states legislation in a democracy unless our conscience advises us it would be a great sin to obey it.