

Speak up for Christianity, Cameron tells Archbishop: PM calls on the Church to defend 'values and moral code' of the Bible

- **PM said it's easier to be Jewish or Muslim in Britain than in a secular country like France**
- **Britons 'treasured' responsibility, hard work, charity, compassion, humility, self-sacrifice, love and pride in working for the common good, says PM**
- **Even admitted he was only a 'vaguely practising' Christian with 'full of doubts' about theological issues**

By [Tim Shipman](#)

Last updated at 9:52 PM on 16th December 2011



Taking a moral stand: Prime Minister David Cameron said it was time to teach right from wrong

David Cameron last night called on the Archbishop of Canterbury to lead a return to the 'moral code' of the Bible.

In a highly personal speech about faith, the Prime Minister accused Dr Rowan Williams of failing to speak 'to the whole nation' when he criticised Government austerity policies and expressed sympathy with the summer rioters.

Mr Cameron declared Britain 'a Christian country' and said politicians and churchmen should not be afraid to say so.

He warned that a failure to 'stand up and defend' the values and morals taught by the Bible helped spark the riots and fuelled terrorism.

At Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, where Dr Williams used to teach, Mr Cameron said the time has come for public figures to teach 'right from wrong', and questioned whether the Church of England has done enough to defend those values in the face of the 'moral neutrality' that pervades modern life.

And taking aim at the Archbishop, Mr Cameron tackled head-on his public criticisms of the Government over the last 12 months.

The speech was a bold Christmas gamble by Mr Cameron. In making a speech about religion, he did

something that Tony Blair always longed to do but was talked out of by spin doctor Alastair Campbell, who flatly told him: 'We don't do God.'

The clash between the Government and Church is at its most acute since former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Robert Runcie clashed with Margaret Thatcher's government in the 1980s.

The Prime Minister appeared emboldened by his opinion poll bounce since his decision to wield the veto during the Eurozone crisis summit in Brussels last week.

Admitting that he had 'entered the lion's den' by addressing an audience of churchmen, Mr Cameron said: 'I certainly don't object to the Archbishop of Canterbury expressing his views on politics.'



Challenged: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, should take the lead in promoting Christian teachings, according to the Prime Minister

'But just as it is legitimate for religious leaders to make political comments, he shouldn't be surprised when I respond.'

'I believe the Church of England has a unique opportunity to help shape the future of our communities. But to do so it must keep on the agenda that speaks to the whole country.'

At an event to mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible, he said: 'We are a Christian country and we should not be afraid to say so.'

'The Bible has helped to give Britain a set of values and morals which make Britain what it is today. Values and morals we should actively stand up and defend.'

'Whether you look at the riots last summer, the financial crash and the expenses scandal or the on-going terrorist threat from Islamist extremists around the world, one thing is clear, moral neutrality or passive tolerance just isn't going to cut it any more.'



David Cameron said it was 'easier for people to practise other faiths when Britain had confidence in its Christian identity'

'Put simply, for too long we have been unwilling to distinguish right from wrong. "Live and let live" has too often become "do what you please".

'Bad choices have too often been defended as just different lifestyles. To be confident in saying something is wrong is not a sign of weakness, it's a strength.'

Mr Cameron's demands for a 'moral code' were directed at human rights apologists and Left-wing politicians who recoil from promoting Britain's Christian heritage.

But they also covered the hand-wringing pronouncements of many senior churchmen, who refuse to condemn lawbreaking by rioters and show unwillingness to take on militant Islam for fear of offending Muslims.

The PM said an 'almost fearful, passive tolerance of religious extremism' had let Islamic extremism grow unchallenged and called for the promotion of 'Christian values' saying it was 'profoundly wrong' to believe that promoting Christianity would 'do down other faiths'.



Dr Rowan Williams

ROWAN ON THE ATTACK

JUNE 2011: In a two-page article for the New Statesman magazine, the Archbishop voices criticism of Coalition policies under the title: 'The government needs to know how afraid people are.'

He says: 'With remarkable speed, we are being committed to radical, long-term policies for which no one voted. At the very least, there is an understandable anxiety about what democracy means in such a context. Government badly needs to hear

just how much plain fear there is around questions such as these at present.'

NOVEMBER 2010: On plans to expect the long-term unemployed to work for their benefits, he said: 'People who are struggling to find work and a secure future are I think driven into a sort of downward spiral of uncertainty, even despair when the pressure's on in that way.'

'And quite often it can make people start feeling vulnerable... that's the kind of unfairness that I feel.'