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DATE DEPOSITED

31 January 2020

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The Thames Flows into the Tiber: Benedict XVI, performative ecumenism, and the place of Christians in a secular society

On 16 to 19 September 2010, Pope Benedict XVI visited the United Kingdom. [****] This made him only the second pope ever to do so while in office, and the first to do so with the full status – though not, by mutual agreement, the full trappings and pageantry – of a State Visit. (St John Paul II’s apostolic journey in 1982 was, due to diplomatic sensitivities around the Falklands War with Argentina, officially designated as a Pastoral Visit.) While this is neither the time nor place to recount the Visit in full, enjoyable though that would be, it is worth recalling how *surprisingly* successful it was.

Although John Paul’s visit was itself a great success, it was perhaps not unreasonable to think of this as an anomaly: a ‘one-off’ religious leader whose charisma, media-savviness, and indeed nationality – British Catholicism has a significant Polish contingent (see Polish Catholic Mission 2005) – might account for the popularity of the 1982 events. By contrast, Benedict, normally depicted in the British media as either a retiring, donnish old man, or as a repressive autocrat (‘God’s Rottweiler’, the ‘Panzer Cardinal’), was thought unlikely to attract much interest, enthusiasm or affection *even* from Britain’s Catholics in the run-up to the Papal Visit. Indeed, prior to the Visit it was common to read media reports prophesying a ‘damp squib’, characterized by badly organized, half-empty events, and a pope amply demonstrating how out of touch he – and, of course, the faith he represents – is with modern Britain, British Catholics, and especially young people.¹ Between 1982 and 2010, moreover, the country had secularized (even) further: the proportion of Britons claiming no religious affiliation, for example, rose from three-in-ten to five-in-ten over this period (Bullivant 2017: 8). [****] Several other negatives, constantly chewed over in the press in the run-up to

¹ Parts of this paragraph have been reworked from Bullivant 2012.

September 2010 (see Knott et al. 2013: 155-71), seemed also to augur, if not doom, then at least disappointment: the cost of the Visit, especially at a time of public-spending austerity; the shadow of the sexual abuse crisis; various administrative and organizational difficulties; alleged low uptake of tickets; and a very real possibility of ecumenical awkwardness.

It is this latter point that I will explore in some detail here, albeit from a perhaps unusual angle. For the ‘meat’ of my exposition will in fact concern Benedict’s speech to political and civic leaders, rather than the more directly ecumenically focused aspects of the trip. My main reason for this is quite plain. It is, I think, relatively easy to both be, and sound, ‘ecumenical’ when one is directly speaking to that brief. Accordingly, the Pope hit all the right notes remarks during both the ‘Ecumenical Celebration’ held at Westminster Abbey [****] (e.g., ‘...common heritage of our faith...’, ‘...we must give thanks for the remarkable progress made towards this noble goal through the efforts of committed Christians of every denomination...’; ‘...the friendships we have forged, the dialogue which we have begun and the hope which guides us will provide strength and direction as we persevere on our common journey...’; 2010c), and when directly addressing the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace (e.g., ‘I wish to join you in giving thanks for the deep friendship that has grown between us and for the remarkable progress that has been made in so many areas of dialogue...’; 2010d). And of course, such texts will presumably have been cleared in advance with those in the Vatican specifically responsible for ecumenical matters. Rather, the real risk of ‘gaffes’ (or far worse) tend to come when one’s words are not being specifically tailored to a specific purpose. The most obvious example here, of course, is Benedict’s own 2006 ‘Regensburg Address’, a lecture *actually* about ‘Faith, Reason, and the University’, but which contained a quotation from a fourteenth-century Byzantine Emperor criticizing Islam with – in Benedict’s own distancing phrase - ‘a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find

unacceptable'. The quotation itself, however, was seized upon, prompting protests – and in some places, violence – across the world.

Admittedly, one would *really* have to misspeak in order to prompt violent reprisals from the Church of England. Nevertheless, the 2010 Papal Visit allowed ample scope for ecumenical awkwardness. The centrepiece of the visit was, after all, the Beatification of Cardinal Newman, a man perhaps best known in the popular mindset for having *left* Anglicanism. Any suggestion of triumphalism on this score would not, needless to say, have 'played well'. And in point of fact, the pope was keen to affirm the continuity between the 'Anglican' and 'Catholic' Newmans. Hence to quote again from his address at Lambeth Palace:

[****] In the figure of John Henry Newman... we celebrate a churchman whose ecclesial vision was nurtured by his Anglican background and matured during his many years of ordained ministry in the Church of England. He can teach us the virtues that ecumenism demands: on the one hand, he was moved to follow his conscience, even at great personal cost; and on the other hand, the warmth of his continued friendship with his former colleagues, led him to explore with them, in a truly eirenic spirit, the questions on which they differed, driven by a deep longing for unity in faith. (2010d)

Such comments, however fittingly diplomatic, should not, incidentally, be interpreted as being anything less than fully sincere. Joseph Ratzinger's longstanding appreciation of Newman, by no means excluding his Anglican writings, is well known (Ratzinger [1990] 2005). Perhaps less well known, though no less longstanding, is his recognition of an authentically Catholic element within the Anglican tradition. As he put it in an interview in the mid-1990s, for example:

[****] Much of Catholicism remained in Anglicanism, in fact... On the hand, England separated itself from Rome, distanced itself very resolutely from Rome... but on the other hand, there is a firm adherence to Catholic tradition. In Anglicanism there have always been vital currents which have strengthened the Catholic inheritance... A strong Catholic potency has always remained in Anglicanism... (1997: 145)

Newman aside, the ecumenical waters – the Thames flowing into the Tiber, one might say – were further muddied in September 2010, by the previous year's promulgation of the

apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. This authorized the creation of new structures, ‘Ordinariates’, to allow former Anglicans to enter into full communion with Catholic Church while retaining key elements of their ‘Anglican patrimony’ (Benedict XVI 2009). This initiative was not, it is fair to say, universally well-received. Indeed, in the words of the Anglican priest and scholar Andrew Goddard, [****] ‘This was interpreted by many as an aggressive move against the ecumenical spirit’ (2013: 200). And for the Catholic ecclesiologist Gerard Mannion:

Rome’s recent and direct intervention into intra-Anglican discord can be seen as, at the very best, inopportune, taking the generous view that there are sincerely ecumenical intentions behind [it]. At worst... more critical voices would perceive the intervention as an ecumenically irresponsible act that serves nobody in the church entirely well. (2013: 111-2)

While neither of these views, I might add, is remotely close to my own (see Bullivant 2016, 2018), it is certainly true that the ‘Ordinariate issue’ was an awkward one during the Visit.

When Benedict did, briefly, speak of it, he framed the project in explicitly ecumenical terms:

[****] This should be seen as a prophetic gesture that can contribute positively to the developing relations between Anglicans and Catholics. It helps us to set our sights on the ultimate goal of all ecumenical activity: the restoration of full ecclesial communion in the context of which the mutual exchange of gifts from our respective spiritual patrimonies serves as an enrichment to us all. (2010e)

It is, however, instructive that these comments were made to the *Catholic bishops* of England, Wales, and Scotland, and not in front of any Anglicans themselves.

[****] ‘At once a good Catholic and a good Englishman’?

In light of the above, Benedict’s speech at Westminster Hall in the Houses of Parliament to ‘Representatives of British Society, including the Diplomatic Corps, Politicians, Academics and Business Leaders’ – sandwiched, incidentally, between the main ecumenical events of the Visit – becomes even more significant than it was already. While terms like ‘unprecedented’ and ‘historic’ get bandied around rather too liberally, this was

surely one occasion that truly deserved them. As Catherine Pepinster writes in her recent book *The Keys and Kingdom*:

[****] Westminster Hall has been at the centre of Britain's political and indeed, religious, history for generations... In September 2010, an event that would once have seemed unimaginable took place there. In the very spot where Thomas More and John Fisher were tried for their opposition to Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon, his break with Rome, and their refusal to sign the oath of supremacy, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the nation, urging that faith and reason should work together. Four surviving prime ministers listened... So poignant was the moment that many notable Catholics invited to witness the event shed tears as the pope walked past the brass plaque that marked the site of More's trial. (2017; see also Ivereigh 2010)

It was, by any measure, a remarkable occasion: the world's most visible religious leader lecturing representatives of a (largely and ever-increasingly) secular political system, not only as a valid and valued conversation partner, but even while dressed up, literally and metaphorically, in religious garb. Most remarkable, however, were the words the Pope Emeritus spoke to the assembled grandees. This speech, on the role of religion – or rather, crucially, of *religious people* – within civil societies, sketches a cogent vision of what one might call an authentically Christian *secularism*: a 'Benedict XVI Option', if you will.

As I am about to argue, it strikes me that this was, as well as a cogent piece of social and political theorizing, a rather deft piece of what one might call 'performative ecumenism'. Although this was not the explicit topic of the Westminster Hall speech, the choice of venue meant that Christian *disunity* down the centuries formed the 'frame' within which the Pope's words would be heard and interpreted. [****] True, the sheer fact that the Bishop of Rome could lecture Her Majesty's parliamentarians (having kept them waiting for forty minutes!), yards away from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and in the very room that St Thomas More was condemned suggests that Reformation-era divisions are, if not close to healing, then significantly less raw and bloodied than in the past. But that does not, in itself, solve the problem of *what to say*. What Benedict did was, in fact, rather clever. As we will see, rather than focusing on Westminster Hall principally as the site of More's being condemned to

death, he instead chose to concentrate on the Hall as one of the primary sites in which More, as indeed ‘the King’s good servant’, dutifully served civil society and the common good. This enabled Benedict to present a positive and constructive vision of what all Christians – *all* religious people, for that matter – have to contribute to society as citizens.

Some necessary (if, I readily admit, a bit boring) background here: Typically, the discourse both of and about secularism-as-a-political-theory (as opposed to ‘secularism’ as a socio-cultural descriptor, which is perhaps rather better termed *secularity*) dwells near-exclusively at the level of the state. That is to say, how might governments manage, mediate between, and/or neutralize different religious or religiously-rooted convictions and concerns in the public square? Religions and religious people are thus viewed as a practical ‘problem’ for politicians and legislators to ‘solve’. This attitude, while perhaps understandable from the within the domains of political and social theory, overlooks an important issue ‘from the other side’: How are religious groups and individuals themselves to mediate between their own (legitimate) convictions and concerns, both civil *and* religious?

At least in a modern democratic state, ‘the religious’ are not mere *subjects* of the political system. Rather they are, or should be, full and active stakeholders. And this is, as Jürgen Habermas has argued, in the state’s own best interests: a liberal state isn’t functioning properly if it must coerce participation and engagement (Ratzinger and Habermas 2006: 29-31, 48-9). They are not, then, good citizens *in spite of* being religious people: they are good citizens as well as, and because of, being religious people. It is not, therefore, a question of an either/or allegiance. Or as Cardinal Newman put it in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, ‘I see no inconsistency in my being at once a good Catholic and a good Englishman’ (quoted in Norman 1968: 91). (Though, as we shall see, that is not to imply that these two allegiances can never come into conflict.)

Although more commonly regarded as a *critic* of secularism, Habermas' sometime dialogue partner Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, in fact affirms a distinctive version of it. In order fully to appreciate this, it is necessary first to distinguish between two types of secularism – one of which Benedict indeed confronts; the other he sincerely affirms.

[****] **What is 'secularism'?**

Contemporary varieties of secularism have their roots in European attempts, in the wake of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wars of religion, to find a peaceful mediation between confessional groups in 'the public square' (Taylor 1998: 32). Generally speaking, there have been two basic ways of doing this, though in practice the distinctions may not quite be sharp, especially over time. In the first – historically represented, somewhat differently, by Hugo Grotius and Thomas Hobbes – religious reasons and arguments have no place in public life. Different people or groups are, of course, at liberty to hold religiously formulated views in private. But in order to participate in the shared space of public life, they must translate these into purely secular ones, based on premises which all people, regardless of their own (private) religious persuasions, can, if not accept, then at least reasonably entertain. On Charles Taylor's reading of this mode of secularism, 'the state' – and one may add here other public bodies too – 'upholds no religion, pursues no religious goals, religiously-defined goods have no place in the catalogue of ends it promotes' (1998: 35; see also Williams 2008).

In the second classic approach, however, an ecumenical 'common ground' is sought, and religious interests and arguments are permitted (and perhaps even strongly encouraged) insofar as they overlap with those of other religious and non-religious stakeholders in society. For the seventeenth-century philosopher [****] John Locke (to whom this mode of secularism is often traced), this meant that members of Christian 'Dissenting' sects, and not

merely those in communion with the Established Church of England, could fully participate in public life . This is an attractive solution to the problems generated by increasing pluralism, though how far such a ‘common ground’ may viably be extended is a vexed issue. For Locke, while the Church of England could share the public square with a discrete number of other Protestant sects, such toleration was not extended to [****] Catholics, [****] Muslims, or [****] atheists (Locke [1689] 1955). More relevantly to the current situation, the common ground of American ‘civic religion’ gradually (and not always smoothly) expanded over the centuries from generic Protestantism to a wide ‘shared Judeo-Christian heritage’ encompassing ‘Protestant-Catholic-Jew’. If and how this alleged ‘common ground’ can expand further to include American Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and atheists remains to be seen. Nevertheless, at least in theory, this mode of secularism permits non-secular arguments and convictions to play a role in public deliberations and practice – its ‘secularism’ consists in not privileging any particular religion, or denomination, over any other. In the United States, for example, most religious groups, Christian or not, qualify for tax exempt, charitable status; in Britain, the state actively funds Anglican schools, but also Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh ones (as well, of course, as a great number of non-faith schools as well). It will be well to keep this distinction between two ‘modes’ of secularism – one exclusionary, one conciliatory – in mind. For it is perfectly possible to confront one, while upholding a version of the other. And it is this which the Pope Emeritus does, as we shall see.

[**] The Benedict XVI Option**

As noted above, the historic invitation extended to Benedict XVI to address civil society at Westminster Hall symbolizes this second, ‘common ground’ mode of political secularism. This was a fact alluded to by the Pope himself. Recognizing and encouraging

this, the Pope was careful – and, based on his previous writings, we have every reason to believe sincere – to express his (in his own words):

[****] esteem for the Parliament which has existed on this site for centuries and which has had such a profound influence on the development of participative government among the nations, especially in the Commonwealth and the English-speaking world at large. Your common law tradition serves as the basis of legal systems in many parts of the world, and your particular vision of the respective rights and duties of the state and the individual, and of the separation of powers, remains an inspiration to many across the globe. (2010a)

Referring then specifically to the venue itself, he proceeds to acknowledge: ‘the countless men and women down the centuries who have played their part in the momentous events that have taken place within these walls and have shaped the lives of many generations of Britons, and others besides’ (ibid.). This sets up the hinge, around which the rest of the Pope’s talk revolves:

[****] In particular, I recall the figure of Saint Thomas More, the great English scholar and statesman, who is admired by believers and non-believers alike for the integrity with which he followed his conscience, even at the cost of displeasing the sovereign whose “good servant” he was, because he chose to serve God first. The dilemma which faced More in those difficult times, the perennial question of the relationship between what is owed to Caesar and what is owed to God, allows me the opportunity to reflect with you briefly on the proper place of religious belief within the political process. (ibid.)

This mention of More is, I believe, absolutely crucial. Note, first of all, the way in which Benedict introduces him. He (rightly enough) includes More – who served as both Speaker of the Commons, and as Lord Chancellor – within the line of Westminster Hall’s great statesmen, as a figure admired ‘by believers and non-believers’ alike. What he does not do, however, is spell out that it was also here, on 1 July 1535, that More was found guilty of treason by the civil authorities for refusing to accept Henry’s Act of Succession, and sentenced to death. It was this act, of course, for which More was canonized as a martyr four hundred years later by Pope Pius XI. Instead, the Pope alludes simply to ‘the cost of displeasing the sovereign whose “good servant” he was’, and More’s ‘dilemma... in those difficult times’.

The ‘German shepherd’ of popular caricature – pre-Papal Visit, at least – might have used More to lambaste a disobedient and illegal regime, vaunting man while usurping God, and with the blood of the saints on its hands; or – rather less exaggeratedly – to exalt fidelity to God and religion, over the claims of ‘this world’ (including, of course, politics and the state). But Pope Benedict, of course, did neither of those things; far from it, in fact. And his omission to mention More’s martyrdom explicitly was, I would contend, motivated by far more than simple tact towards his hosts.

More is, of course, a controversial figure. And at first glance, he is a strange choice for exemplifying our second, common-ground mode of secularism – the kind which, by and large, Benedict, Rowan Williams and Jürgen Habermas all agree to be suitable for a modern, plural, multifaith democracy. More can hardly be claimed as a promoter of religious tolerance. Though his personal involvement in executions for heresy has been exaggerated (see Martz 1990: 3-6; Ackroyd 1998: 290-1), there is no doubt that he – in common with the great majority of his contemporaries, and with the centuries-long precedent tradition of English law – approved of the punishment, when and where necessary. In his own words, ‘After the fyre of Smythfelde, hell dothe receyue them where the wretches burn foreuer’; obstinate heretics are, moreover, ‘well and worthely burned’ (quoted in Ackroyd 1998: 298). Nor did More accept the defence that such people were acting in accordance with their conscience (ibid.: 297). And neither does More, at first glance, appear to be the kind of loyally patriotic, public worthy, as would appease those who doubt that committed servants of God can indeed serve Caesar as well. Was he not, after all, a religious fanatic, and one who placed his *own* convictions not only over the demands of the State, but over the overwhelming consensus of both his political and religious peers also? A Catholic renegade who, in a line later to include Guy Fawkes, was imprisoned in the Tower and beheaded for treason?

Certainly, this is one interpretation of ‘the man for all seasons’. Yet it is not the only one of the man who, fittingly enough, was the first to commit the word ‘paradox’ to English literature (ibid.: 276). For viewed from another angle, More is indeed the very model of a God-*and*-Caesar, Church-*and*-State, religion-*and*-politics ‘at once a good Catholic and a good Englishman’. This was, let us not forget, someone whose whole adult life (his last eighteen months’ notwithstanding) had been given over to worldly affairs, as a lawyer, diplomat and politician. More’s entire life was one devoted to public service. Among the myriad positions he held (often concurrently) were: under-sheriff of London, commissioner for London’s sewers, under-treasurer of the Exchequer, Speaker of the Commons, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, High Steward of both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and Lord Chancellor. By all accounts, he acquitted himself diligently and successfully in all his endeavours, even while maintaining his position as one of the leading lights of Europe’s ‘new learning’, and (in his earlier years) maintaining a thriving private legal practice.

Piety and religious conviction were not, however, things which came to More only late in life. As a young man training to be a lawyer at Lincoln’s Inn, More was closely involved with – and perhaps lived at – the London Charterhouse (Ackroyd 1998: 92-107). Throughout his life he was a daily Massgoer, and an assiduous observer of devotions and fasting. Perhaps most striking of all, underneath the finery of his Lord Chancellor’s robes, he wore the hairshirt of a penitent. It is clear that More himself saw no contradiction here. For him, his religious and civic selves, and the convictions underlying them, formed a seamless garment. His famous claim to be ‘the King’s good servant, but God’s first’, whatever irony it carried when spoken from the scaffold, was perfectly sincere. (Indeed, Henry had himself once advised More to look ‘first upon God and next upon the King’ – see Monti 1997: 427.) More’s tragedy does not lie in *opposing* the things owed unto God to those owed unto Caesar. Even when, in conscience, he felt that he could not assent to Henry’s Act of Succession, he

refused repeatedly to voice his reasons in public lest they reflect badly on his divinely-appointed sovereign. And right up until his end, he regarded the claims of God and Caesar to be so closely interwoven that he could advise his executioner: ‘Pluck up they spirits, Man, and do not be afraid to do thine office’ (Ackroyd 1998: 394). More’s tragedy lies, rather, in the simple fact that even in mono-faith nations, God’s claims and Caesar’s can, and occasionally do, conflict.

Viewed in this light, More becomes a rather apt and illuminating figure to illustrate Benedict’s vision of the positive role of religion – and religious people – within a secular society. There is, as Benedict argues, a balance to be sought between ‘the legitimate claims of government and the rights of those subject to it’ (2010a), and which recognizes that the sacred and the secular ‘need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization’ (ibid.). In other words, religious communities and individuals do not contribute to civil society *in spite of* their religiousness (as our first mode of secularism both assumes and prescribes), but because of it – as, of course, in the case of ‘that great English scholar and statesman’ Sir Thomas More. Benedict goes so far as to identify key overlaps between the British version of a secularist democracy, and the ideal presented in Catholic social teaching.

[****] Britain has emerged as a pluralist democracy which places great value on freedom of speech, freedom of political affiliation and respect for the rule of law, with a strong sense of the individual’s rights and duties, and of the equality of all citizens before the law. While couched in different language, Catholic social teaching has much in common with this approach, in its overriding concern to safeguard the unique dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and in its emphasis on the duty of civil authority to foster the common good. (ibid.)

Once again, we have in this sentiment not a confrontation with secularism, but rather an affirmation of one variety of it – the broadly Lockean approach, maintaining the possibility of a common ground between differing worldviews. So far as it goes, there is no *inherent*

contradiction here between God and Caesar. One can be both God's good servant, and Her Majesty's government's too.

Importantly, however, this does not mean that the two either cannot, or do not, ever come into conflict. Of course they do. Benedict continues:

[****] And yet the fundamental questions at stake in Thomas More's trial continue to present themselves in ever-changing terms as new social conditions emerge. Each generation, as it seeks to advance the common good, must ask anew: what are the requirements that governments may reasonably impose upon citizens, and how far do they extend? (ibid.)

He is insistent, in particular, that 'while there are many areas in which the Church and public authorities can work together for the good of citizens', however 'for such cooperation to be possible, religious bodies – including institutions linked to the Catholic Church – need to be free to act in accordance with their own principles and specific convictions based upon the faith and the official teaching of the Church' (ibid.). This point applies equally, of course, to other religious groups. And it is here that the fundamental tension embedded within the 'common-ground' model comes sharply into focus. What about those issues where there is no common ground?

This question, 'the real challenge for democracy', is one to which Benedict offers no detailed answer. But what he does do is caution against one possible, seductive 'solution' – i.e., that proffered by our first, 'exclusionary' mode of secularism.

[****] There are those who advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere... And there are those who argue – paradoxically with the intention of eliminating discrimination – that Christians in public roles should be required at times to act against their conscience. These are worrying signs of a failure to appreciate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public square. (ibid.)

Confronting *this* version of secularism formed a leitmotiv throughout several of the Pope's speeches during the Papal Visit. In his maiden address to the Queen at Holyroodhouse, for example, he remarked 'let us not forget how the exclusion of God, religion and virtue from

public life leads ultimately to a truncated vision of man and society' (2010b). He later adds, significantly:

[****] Today, the United Kingdom strives to be a modern and multicultural society. In this challenging enterprise, may it always maintain its respect for those traditional values and cultural expressions that more aggressive forms of secularism no longer value or even tolerate. (ibid.)

Or, as he put it in the address at the Westminster Hall, in a sentence that in many ways sums up the central point: [****] 'Religion... is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation' (2010a).

[****] **Conclusion**

Benedict, like Thomas More before him, is not naive. 'The relationship between what is owed to Caesar and what is owed to God' is indeed a 'perennial question' (ibid), and neither side of the equation may straightforwardly subsume the other. But the possibility, and even inevitability, of tension and conflict – multiplied, of course, by the multiplication of different religious and non-religious viewpoints; a challenge common to all Christian and other religious groups – does not obviate the fact that, overall, the two sides are mutually productive. The privatization of religion may well solve certain problems, but it will likely create others far worse (not least through alienating religious citizens from the structures and institutions which they are meant to value, respect and participate in). To put it in other words, although he was canonized for his martyrdom, Thomas More's sanctity did not *begin* when, in conscience, he felt forced to disobey the State. Rather, from a Christian perspective, his sanctity was already (and perhaps equally) present when he was discharging his duties – and thus contributing to the common good of all London's citizens – as the commissioner for sewers.

The 2010 Papal Visit was, contrary to all prior expectations, generally regarded as a triumph. [****] A *Sunday Times* headline on the final day, 'Rottweiler? No, he's a holy

grandad’, sums up the change in media mood rather well. The *News of the World* even went so far as to dub Benedict the ‘People’s Pope’ (‘People’s’, as in ‘Diana, the People’s Princess’, being among the highest honours that a British tabloid may bestow). While this was so for several reasons, not least among them was Benedict’s sensitive navigation of what might have been – though, in the event, most assuredly wasn’t – a very difficult piece of diplomacy, both political and ecumenical. [****]

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