

(Papal Visit)
H.A. [Signature]

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S.F.P., WITNESS BRAIN ? REUBEN,

Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell, MP, to the
East Grinstead Young Conservatives at East Court,
East Grinstead, Sussex.
at 8 pm, Friday, 5th December, 1980

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Little serious discussion has yet taken place on the implications of a possible visit to Great Britain by the Pope a year or two hence. The sooner such discussion begins, the better; for the implications of the event, if it happens, are far-reaching, and if there proved to be a substantial body of opinion to which those implications, once thoroughly considered and understood, were unacceptable, I am convinced that neither the Pope himself nor those from whom the invitation to him came nor Her Majesty's Government would, provided adequate time were available for embarrassment and discourtesy to be avoided, wish to ignore that opinion.

Let it be stressed at the outset that the implications to which I allude are not concerned with any tenets of religion. It may or may not be of happy augury that numerous adherents of non-Christian religions are now resident in Britain; but a visit to this country on their account by one of the prominent leaders of their respective faiths would have no such consequences as the presence of the Pope, and there would be no reason in principle why Her Majesty should not be advised, if she wished, to accord her royal welcome to any such visitor.

In particular, the question of a papal visit in no way turns upon differences of religious belief and practice between Roman Catholics and other Christians. Speaking for myself, though I know there are many who would not agree, I reverence the imperishable and incalculable position of Rome and the Papacy in the origin, rise and prevalence of Christianity and in the life of the universal Church, of which all believers, consciously or unconsciously, reluctantly or joyfully, are heirs.

I say again, the issue is not religious. It is not credal,

theological, liturgical or ecclesiastical. It is political. That is why a politician has the right, and arguably the duty, to address himself to it in public. Before doing so, I must remove another cause of possible misconception. His Holiness is a head of state, and it was as such that Her Majesty for the second time during her reign entered his territory and met him in person this year. But the visit proposed would not be a state visit, the visit of one head of state to another. It is to be, we are told, "pastoral", a visit to members of his flock. But to allege that, by being so described or even intended, the visit could be divested of its public character and therefore of its political implications, is a mere prevarication, behind which no one serious or sincere, whatever his own ultimate judgment on the matter, could take refuge from responsibility.

If the Pope visits Great Britain, he will do so in consequence of a political decision taken by Her Majesty's Government, a decision therefore which may be as freely and openly discussed as any other political decision of government. If that is doubted, let me ask this: if it had been conveyed to His Holiness, in the utmost privacy and confidence, that Her Majesty's Government entertained any reservation as to the wisdom of his accepting the invitation conveyed to him by the Roman hierarchy in this country, does anyone suppose that he would have disregarded that intimation? or, more realistically, does anyone doubt that the invitation would not have been publicly extended in the first place? The Government is, and will be, responsible. No modality can alter that. The expressions of satisfaction at the prospect of a papal visit which have been placed in the Sovereign's mouth are as fully covered by ministerial responsibility as the Sovereign's other public utterances. The person and personal opinions of the Sovereign, whatever they may be, are no more involved or called in question by discussion of

the proposed visit than by discussion of acts of foreign policy or domestic legislation. It is the peculiar happiness of our constitution that the Sovereign remains outside and above all political debate, even when that debate touches the estate and prerogative of the Crown itself - as indeed this debate very closely does.

It may be that in fact the Government's political decision was taken, amid its many preoccupations, rather by omission than otherwise, and that no proposition clearly setting out the implications and seeking a deliberate conclusion has ever been before the Cabinet. That would not lessen or alter the Government's political responsibility; but it would strengthen the justification, if justification were needed, for encouraging timely discussion and reflection.

It is a peculiarity of this political issue that it affects differently different parts of the state. Directly, it involves Northern Ireland and Wales not at all. Since the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland in 1869 and in Wales in 1914 no single proposition regarding the relationship of church and state any longer holds good for the United Kingdom as a whole. The political implications of a papal visit only concern Wales and Ulster indirectly, by virtue of their being integral parts of the same United Kingdom as Scotland and England. In Scotland and in England, on the other hand, which do comprise over 90% of the population of the whole kingdom, there is an established national church, of which the sovereign is either (as in England) the governor or (as in Scotland) shares the headship.

There is, so far as I am aware, no parallel to this anywhere in the world. Many states regulate and even subsidise the practice of religion; others are explicitly secular, some of them proclaiming aggressively the total separation of church and state; others express themselves as approving and supporting a particular religion, sect or church; in yet others again the sovereigns are themselves gods or incarnations of gods. In England and ~~Scotland~~ alone, under the

only true - that is, prescriptive - monarchy in the world, does the person of the monarch unite the headship of the state and the headship of the church: the church is both secular and religious, and this remains true despite the fact that religious dissent and diversity enjoy complete toleration and freedom within our country.

Nevertheless the relationship of the Crown to the Church of Scotland and its supreme body, the General Assembly, is profoundly different from its relationship to the Church of England, and the significance of that relationship is immensely greater in England than in Scotland - so much so, that the question of a papal visit could be said to be, in the first place, an essentially English question. Only in England is the source of lawful authority in the national church identical with the source of secular authority in the United Kingdom, namely, the Crown in Parliament, by which, or by the consent of which, the worship and doctrine of the Church of England continue to be determined. Only in England is the Crown the supreme judicial authority in the national church. Thus the political nerve which is directly touched by a papal visit is an English nerve, though the consequences are transmitted through the whole body politic because it is the sovereignty and independence of the nation as a whole which they ultimately affect.

It is constitutionally and logically unthinkable for England to contain both the Queen and the Pope. Before that could happen, the essential character of the one or the other would have had to be surrendered. If the Queen is "on earth supreme governor of the Church in England", then His Holiness is not in this realm "Christ's vicar upon earth". Either the Pope's authority is not universal or the Church of England is not the Catholic and Apostolic Church in this land. The assertion which His Holiness personifies and the assertion which Her Majesty personifies are irreconcilable. Like so many others, this irresolvable conflict can be endured at a respectful distance. Even in entering the Vatican, the Queen leaves

the conflict undisturbed, since the claim which her existence asserts is a claim to national and not to universal supremacy. Let no one suppose, however, that when a Pope sets foot on the soil of England, one claim, one assertion, has not by that very act given place to the other.

It is not difficult to know which it would be. Not one jot of its claim will - or indeed can, without forfeiting its nature - the papacy abate. The bull Regnans in Excelsis, which absolved the subjects of the first Elizabeth from their allegiance to a heretical monarch, will remain unrecalled. The bull Apostolicae Curae will continue to declare that the priests of the Church of England are no priests and its sacraments are no sacraments. I make no complaint of all this; those who expect the Roman Church to renounce its imperial heritage deceive themselves. My complaint lies in the other direction. It lies against those who are ready on every occasion to renounce their national inheritance of liberty and sovereignty.

The royal supremacy in the Church of England is no mere fiction and historical relic that has survived from the Tudor age. It is a living reality, without which the Church of England could not be the Church of England and the British nation could not be the British nation. In England the supremacy of the Crown in Parliament is the guarantee to millions that their inheritance in the Church can never be taken away from them by arbitrary decision or clerical fashion and that the Church of England will never be narrowed into one sect among other sects nor dissolved and lost in an international and amorphous Christianity. But the British nation as a whole, of which England and the English are but a part, nevertheless shares in that national consciousness of independent identity of which the royal supremacy is not the least potent expression.

Eight years ago the Crown in Parliament found it possible solemnly to renounce the sole right not only to tax the Queen's subjects but to make the laws of this realm and to judge its causes.

The sovereign, though still declared "supreme as well in all spiritual and ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal", is now almost daily dragged, by her own subjects amongst others, before foreign courts, to be censured and her judgments overturned. It may perhaps be thought an exercise in pedantry and historicism to discuss the implications of a papal visit to Great Britain when apparently more real aspects of national sovereignty - aspects, too, unambiguously applicable to the whole United Kingdom - have been lost and the campaign to regain them has scarcely begun. I do not agree. The full realisation of our nationhood was achieved in the Reformation, and its English manifestation was the substitution of the royal supremacy for the Roman imperium. Symbols live when concrete things perish. The last possessions of a nation, without which it cannot renew itself, are its national symbols. Can the British people in 1980 really be indifferent when their government is able to sacrifice those symbols without ^{appearing} even/to be conscious that it is doing so?