

POPE'S CRITICS GO BALLISTIC

Since Pope Benedict XVI announced that he would visit the United Kingdom in September, his critics have gone ballistic. The following is a sample of some of the commentary leading up to his visit. All comments appear in their original form:

The Independent, 4/2/2010: "The Pope, to put it baldly, is now too embattled and too damaged by the worldwide revelations of abuse and cover-up to be able to come to this country without controversy, protests and distaste."

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, New Scotsman, 6/10/2010: "A statement said they find it 'offensive that this visit results from an invitation to the Pope as Head of State, giving him that recognition and pretended legitimacy which he claims in opposition to the principles of the Reformation.'"

"Describing the Papacy as 'deceitful and unrighteous,' the Free Presbyterians highlighted recent global exposure of child abuse by Roman Catholic clergy, and suggest the Pope has connived in a cover-up."

Cristina Odone, Sunday Telegraph, 9/5/2010: "These are different times. Catholics have watched in horror as, almost daily and almost in every country, broken men and women have come forth to tell of their ordeal at the hands of abusive priests." (Our italic.)

Sinead O'Connor, The Guardian, 9/5/2010: "'Catholic' has become a word associated with negativity, with abuse, with violence, but the essence of Catholicism is beautiful. The fact is, tragically, it's been brought into disrepute by the people running it."

"Benedict is in no position to call himself Christ's representative. The pope should stand down, the Vatican should stand down, not only because of the cover-up, they're

incredibly arrogant, they're anti-Christian. They don't have the remotest relationship with God."

Peter Tatchell, *Telegraph*, 9/8/2010: "Benedict XVI put the interests and image of the church before the welfare of children and young people. He is unfit to remain as Pope. He should resign."

Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, *The Irish Post*, 9/8/2010: "This anti-Catholicism of which Adamus complains is shared by most British Catholics, sickened by their church hierarchy's dogma driven policies on contraception, homosexuality and even abortion. That is why Mass attendance here has halved in just 20 years and why only a quarter of Catholics agree with the official line on abortion—and fewer still on homosexuality and contraception."

Bernard Wynne, a spokesman for Catholic Voices for Reform, *Telegraph*, 9/8/2010: "The church, I think, is deeply misogynist and we have to change that."

Julie Burchill, *Independent*, 9/8/2010: "How broad-minded this country is, when we consider that the British taxpayer will shortly be shelling out millions of pounds to protect a former member of the Hitler Youth who believes Anglicans will burn in Hell when the Pope visits this country next week—Just after we commemorate the beginning of the Nazi Blitz on this country! Tolerant or WHAT!"

"The behaviour of the Church during the Second World War, and to the Jews generally, was vile—and REALLY makes me wonder if it wouldn't have been possible to pick a Pope who HADN'T been in the Hitler Youth? Closer to home, let alone legions of child-raping holy men, only last week a leading light in the Catholic Church defended its role in moving a priest believed to be involved in three bombings which killed nine people, including Catholics, in the village of Claudy, Co Londonderry,

in 1972. The youngest was an eight-year-old girl: 'suffer little children,' indeed."

Peter Tatchell, CNN.com, 9/16/2010: "We do not believe that the pope should be honored with a state visit, given his role in the cover up of child sex abuse by Catholic clergy. Even today, he is refusing to hand the Vatican's secret sex abuse files to the police in countries worldwide. He is protecting the abusers. This makes him complicit with sex crimes against children. Such a person does not deserve the honor of a state visit."

"Pius XII was no saint. The fact that Pope Benedict wants to makes him a saint shows how far he has strayed from the moral and ethical values of most Catholics and most of humanity."

Reverend Ian Paisley, 9/16/2010: "We are here for a very solemn and serious reason today, the whole day is nonsense.... I have just seen the statement made today which says that if you pay £25 to be at the Mass in Scotland your sins will be forgiven. No man can forgive sins but Christ himself, it is misleading nonsense."

Andrew Copson, British Humanist Association Chief Executive website: "The Protest the Pope campaign is calling on the British government to disassociate itself from the Pope's intolerant teachings on issues such as women's rights, gay equality and the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV. On these and many other issues, Benedict is out of step with the majority of British people, including most Catholics."

"The Pope's attitude to lesbian and gay people is just one of the many stances that the Vatican State holds which are damaging to human dignity and human rights."

Pepper Harow, Protest the Pope: "We really think that we got the message across that the Pope is not welcome on a State visit. His outspoken state policies on homosexuality, condoms, education and abortion, as well as the child abuse scandal,

continue to affect the rights of millions of individuals across the world and mean that he should not be given the honour of a State visit.”

Atheism UK website: “This is yet another example of hypocrisy of the church. What we have here is an institution that claims moral superiority and preaches respect for life. That it is able to abandon its own teachings when it suits them is deplorable and dishonest. It seems the church does not care what crimes it commits, just so long as they do not get caught. It’s clear that the Catholic Church places the survival of the Institution above the welfare of ordinary men, women and children.”

“We do not wish to see a man who calls himself ‘God’s Vicar on Earth’ and is thereby purely deluded, coming to this country and spreading his poisonous and demonstrable false doctrine to the people of this country, not to mention that he is implicated in the cover up of child rape and that he is making British taxpayers pay for the privilege in these financially troubled times.”

Richard Dawkins, *New Humanist Magazine*: “Go home to your tinpot Mussolini-concocted principality, and don’t come back.”

Humanist Society of Scotland: “There are particular grounds in Northern Ireland for opposition to the visit. First of all, there is strong evidence that Pope Benedict was complicit in the cover-up of the abuse of children throughout the island by continuing to insist that accusations of paedophilia within the priesthood should be treated by the Church’s own exclusive jurisdiction. Secondly, the Pope’s insistence that the Catholic Church maintains its own schools is prolonging segregated education, which is detrimental to the future of peace.”

Geoffrey Robertson, Human Rights Lawyer: “For 30 years, as Cardinal Ratzinger, from 1981 on, he was in charge of what to

do about paedophile priests and he declined on the whole to even defrock them. It's been many centuries since a Pope has resigned but it would be a very dignified and honourable action.... We've got to see that tens of thousands of children who have been raped by priests...as a human rights atrocity. It's gone on throughout the world. Wherever the church is, there have been abusers."

National Secular Society Website: "You can show your disapproval of Ratzinger by protesting against the legal bans that the Vatican has fought for on abortion and stem cell research. And also for his obdurate, and breathtakingly irresponsible, opposition to contraception. It fuels a population growth that is unsustainable. Women in poverty-stricken circumstances in countries with dwindling resources are doomed to have large families that they cannot support and who frequently starve. And his using all means, even dishonest ones, to prevent condom use causing untold numbers to die unnecessarily of AIDS because the only known barrier against the disease, condoms, is denied to them."

"Gay people from around the country will also be coming to put two fingers up to Benedict's constant defamation and insults. He calls gay relationships—however loving and committed they may be—'intrinsically disordered' and 'morally evil'. He even says that sympathising with gay people who are being persecuted is a sin. Make no mistake, the Vatican has declared war on gay people and this is the time to start the fightback."

"Ratzinger is, without doubt, guilty of enabling this culture of secrecy and betrayal to continue throughout the thirty years he has been at the top of the Vatican hierarchy both as a Cardinal and as Pope. He has done little to correct it because he still considers that the reputation of the church is more important than the future lives of children who are mercilessly abused, indeed raped, by his priests."

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society: "I cannot believe that we are lauding the head of an organisation that not only insults and denigrates homosexuals, tries to restrict the rights of women by banning contraception and abortion, but deliberately lies about the effectiveness of condoms in the fight against AIDS. This invitation is a rebuke to all those Britons who are incensed by the horrific revelations that are emerging daily about the Vatican's activities. The Government should be sharply criticising rather than welcoming this man."

"We are not going to try to arrest the pope, but we do want him to know that his teachings are profoundly inhumane and damaging to so many people."

"Protest the Pope started as a protest about the cost of this visit, but others have joined that have different issues with Ratzinger – women who want to take their rightful place in the churches life, priests who want to see an end to the celibacy rules, gay people who are– when they are indentified–driven from the seminaries and the priesthood."