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Tony Blair at Saddleback

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Distinctly Catholic

At first blush, I was a bit surprised at the news that former UK prime Minister Tony Blair went to Pastor Rick Warren's Saddleback Church for one of those evening "conversations" the good reverend hosts. What could the newly converted RC, and lifelong Labor leader have in common with a conservative megachurch pastor?

The answer, of course, is that both men deal with the complicated and admittedly fraught issue of church-state relations in ways that are designed not to clarify, still less resolve, any difficulties, but to air-brush them with fuzzy talk about how dialogue and common values can make faith a positive force in the world. Of course, that is better than a return to the Crusades, which is what Cong. King, Mr. Beck and others seem to desire. Still, admit it - do you really think you would learn anything from a conversation between Blair and Warren? This was not a conversation, it was a photo-op with words. Both men puff each other up, both men win points for reaching out, both men win points for dialogue. Blair, like many politicians, conveys the impression that everything, absolutely everything, is negotiable. Warren conveys the air that theology is a complication, that we should seek purpose not truth, in our religious pilgrimage through life. I can't escape the idea that neither man could tell the difference between an Arian and an apple if their lives depended upon it.

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