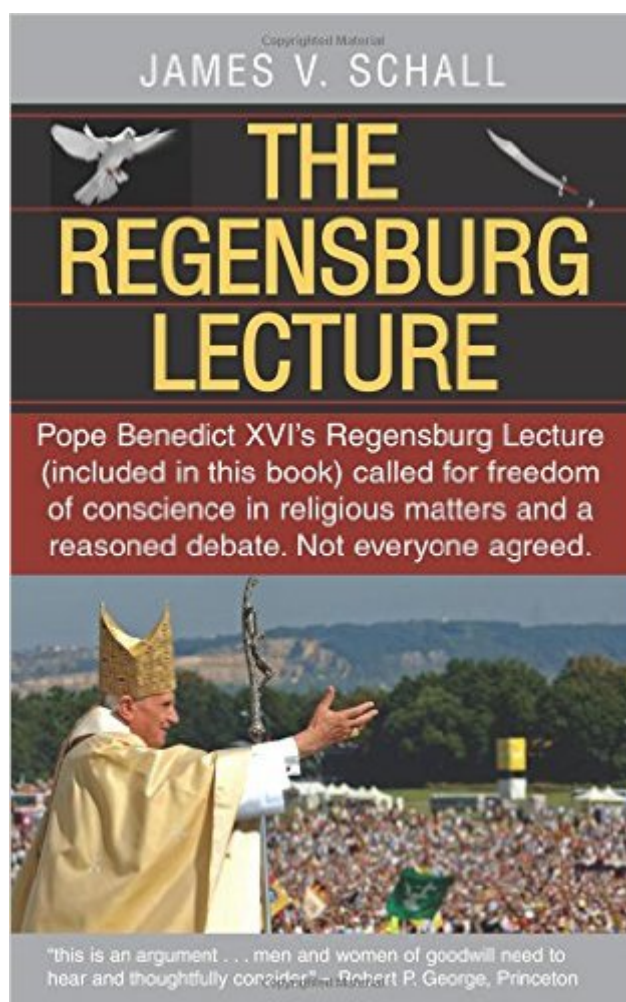


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The Regensburg Lecture



Synopsis

Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Lecture (included in the book) called for freedom of conscience in Religious matters and a reasoned debate. Not everyone agreed." Overshadowed by the violent reaction and rioting throughout the world, the September 12, 2006, lecture by Pope Benedict XVI at Regensburg, Germany, at the University where he once taught, is a multifaceted and brilliant speech that addresses the very nature of man's understanding of a free conscience, his thirst for knowledge in both reason and revelation, his understanding of the limitations of the will, and the nature of his ability to understand his neighbor. It explains the Church's historical claims that Christ himself is Logos (as the opening of John's Gospel proclaims), a term meaning "word", "logic," and "speech." One's faith is to be grounded in a self-limiting God, Who does not capriciously change the rules on humans but Who reveals himself to our reason as well as our hearts. As God Who respects his Creation enough to give man free will, and thus a free conscience and an ability to fail; Who leads man, through both reason and revelation, to Himself, always in peace and never in violence; Who is a God of Life, not Death. The lecture is only a few pages of text, yet it encapsulates not only theoretical history of the Church, but touches on the most poignant current problems the world witnesses, namely, the rise of terrorism and the confrontation between reason and will, between the Word and the Sword. Though incredibly timely, it is as timeless as the Gettysburg address, Pericles' funeral Oration, Plato's Apology, and Henry V's Speech on St. Crispin's Day. No doubt it will be studied and read for generations to come, not only by Catholics, not only by Christians but by men of good will world over. " What was obscured by all the controversy over Pope Benedict's lecture at Regensburg was the important argument about the interdependency of faith and reason that was the substance

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Customer Reviews

This book was my first introduction to Fr. Schall and I must say I was very impressed. This book is a great resource for those who have either read the Pope's Regensburg speech or have not read it yet, seeing as the first appendix contains the Pope's speech at Regensburg in its entirety. Fr. Schall really unlocks the genius of the Pope's address and really gets to the reality of what the Pope was saying and at the same time shows the incredible neglect by the media in the recent past in its treatment of what the Pope "said". This book is a must and a challenge for anyone in higher education who thinks that the Roman Catholic Church and her teachings about reality, God, and man are outdated. Fr. Schall demonstrates with certain clarity that Pope Benedict XVI clearly understands the current cultural problems and makes them clear in this work, namely the abandonment of the objective rational world in religion and politics. Also given in this wonderful work is the foundational answer to getting our culture back on track in order to realize the true good for you and all peoples.

Hold all the instant biographies and analyses of Pope Benedict, however useful in whole or (mostly) part. Hold the plethora of books and writings by him (many scholarly, some indifferently translated). This is a primary reference on his fundamental thought in the context of what may remain his most important public statement. That statement regarding the dialogue between Christianity and Islam is appended here in a finally sound translation. And despite the relative speed with which Fr. Schall has released this commentary, it is a first rate job which thoroughly explicates the Regensburg address and will likely constitute an important source on it for a long time. Benedict opened this talk in an academic setting with reference to a similar dialogue, between a Byzantine and a Muslim, centuries ago. It posed a question, and not an unfamiliar one, to the Muslim world from the Christian concerning religion and violence--not necessarily an answer. It moves quickly to an exploration of concepts of the Godhead and rationality, Muslim and Christian, which apparently only the pope, out of all the Western world, is these days willing to publicly address. That this talk was mis-translated and lambasted is perhaps a more astonishing and baleful sign of the times than that of certain Muslim militants who reacted violently in the days following the speech. Can the heirs of "the Enlightenment" any longer even tolerate the mere posing and exploration of large questions in an academic setting, supposedly one of the Enlightenment's most important institutions? The English

speaking mass media (which Christians Catholic or non-Catholic should not mistake for the legitimate heir of anything) has answered no. Thus the Regensburg lecture has already, among other effects, oddly posed questions concerning societal order to the present West at least as pressing as they do to the Muslim world. That political correctness spells the end of liberty, in the classic American sense, has never been more dramatically demonstrated. Fr. Schall quickly moves into a full exploration of all resonances of the Regensburg address, particularly as they relate to what is popularly called "terrorism" and its consequences for what remains of the Western political order. For the posing of the ancient question about an arbitrary deity, as opposed to a God self-limiting in His loving rationality, is double-edged. Fr. Schall brings in Benedict's concerns with the dissolution of European and Western culture generally, a de-hellenization which, undermining the church's embracing of classical era rational thought and natural law, leaves the West at present particularly vulnerable. This is finally seen to occur as much because of the West's own, mysterious inner breakdown as due to any outside threat. This book is an indispensable guide which takes up Benedict's challenge at Regensburg--namely to articulate an agreed protocol at the highest levels of both Western culture and the Muslim world, so as walk both slowly backwards from an abyss.

The Regensburg lecture by Benedict XVI who as Joseph Ratzinger was formerly an academic at that university. He had written over 70 books and over 100 essays. The Regensburg lecture furthermore was by him as a head of state on a state visit to Germany. The lecture was brief and erudite on the subject of knowledge and man's understanding. Schall considers that given the context it was deliberate and precise and the Islamic community was one of its intended targets. Schall who is Professor of Government at Georgetown University is also a Catholic cleric and as such has insight into Benedict's thinking. Some critics have suggested that had he removed the reference to Mohammed then the lecture would have passed unnoticed. Schall argues that to have left out such a reference would have restricted the purpose of the lecture and the Muslim reaction could not have been altogether unexpected. To have left it out would have restricted the purpose of the lecture. By using a medieval Byzantine Emperor in the 14th century he raised an issue that still exists and there has been a failure to confront Islam on an intellectual basis. "Is violence justified on grounds of religious purpose?". The internal problem for Muslims is that that some Muslims say that there is no relation between Islam and violence while others do claim that violence is used to foster their cause. Benedict apologised if his words offended anyone but he did not withdraw his basic comment. Schall suggests that 15- 25 % of the total Muslim world population support the notion of the legitimacy of violence both in principle and in the Koran. It is not enough to

repeat endlessly that Islam is a religion of peace while not explaining the the violence that comes from the depth of their faith. Benedict's thesis is that the rapprochement of the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance and was Divinely intended. Acts 16:6-10 describes how St Paul who was commanded to preach to the gentiles saw the roads to Asia blocked and in a dream saw a Macedonian who pleaded with him "to come to Macedonia and help us". The rapprochement of Biblical faith and Greek inquiry is linked in St John's Gospel which opens saying "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God". The Greek for Word is logos that also means reason. Paul in Romans 12 :1-2 speaks of worship in harmony with the eternal Word and reason. This is not a new construct but represents the Old Testament revelation of God as " I am". In a footnote Benedict refers to a chapter in a book where he elaborated on this point. (Introduction to Christianity, London 1969, Chapter The Biblical belief in God). Schall argues that it is important to face up to the distinction between God as being logos - reason and the Muslim view that god is governed by action - sola voluntas. This term implies that God's power is not limited by even by the principle of contradiction and it becomes blasphemy to even imply otherwise. This is a transcendent god that transcends reason makes reason subservient to the will. Having reached this point of a universal voluntarism (the will rather the intellect is the ultimate principle of reality) Benedict goes on to look at ways Europe has moved away from reason. This he calls dehellenisation. This characterises the systematic effort to remove Greek philosophy, that is reason, from the requirements of the mind. Benedict lists three stages of dehellenisation. The first was the Reformers detachment of philosophy from faith. The sola scriptura sought a "pure faith detached from philosophy. [In the writer's view this is less of a British problem as the British tradition does not have Luther's bible. Luther inserted allein - alone into Romans 3 :28. This is not found in the Wycliffe bible of 1382 or Tyndale in 1526 , or Douay in 1582 or KJV in 1611 which all say the same thing. Luther Bible 1545 27 Wo bleibt nun der Ruhm? Er ist ausgeschlossen. Durch das Gesetz? Durch der Werke Gesetz? Nicht also, sondern durch des Glaubens Gesetz. 28 So halten wir nun dafür, daß der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben. KJV 1611 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.]. Kant took this approach even further and set aside thinking to make room for faith and anchored faith in "practical" reason. In doing so faith has "no access to the whole". Thinking and faith are unrelated. Kant's moral principles become postulates not principles grounded in a nature that is itself the result of eternal law. Kant asks us to be "moral" without asking whether in reality "moral" is true or not. Kant, reduces religion to a system of conduct. He defines religion as "the acknowledgement that our

duties are God's commandments". He then describes the essence of religion as consisting in morality. Christianity is a religion and is true only in so far as it conforms to this definition. The second stage of dehellénisation is associated with 19th century Adolf Von Harnack. The Harnack message was that Jesus was said to have put an end to worship in favour of morality. Christianity was liberated from theology and philosophy. Christ was no longer divine or part of the Trinity. This thinking is based on Kant's "Critiques". Benedict then goes on to discuss the meaning and function of science. He regards only the interplay of mathematics and empirical elements can be considered scientific. Hence social sciences and history attempt to conform to this scientific approach. When this approach excludes God making it appear to be an unscientific question to discuss God we are faced with a reduction in the radius of both science and reason which needs to be questioned. These being attempting to construct ethical rules from social science end up being inadequate. The third stage of dehellénisation is multiculturalism. The main focus here is the exclusion of religion from philosophy. The West has long been averse to the questions which underlie its rationality. Benedict does not specifically mention Islam in this section having opened his lecture on that subject but he does close again quoting Manuel II saying not to act reasonably is contrary to the nature of God. Schall deals with Islam at length and this is perhaps why most people would buy the book. On politics Christianity, unlike the Old Testament and Islam which are both law states, does not have a political programme and political things are rightly the work of reason. If the voluntarist Allah is the true conception of God then Christians and Jews do not worship the same God that is. Schall has a chapter under Appendix II on Islamo-fascism. He traces the term to an editorial in the Washington Times Aug 12 2006. The editorial concludes "that this is not mainstream Islam it is a corruption of the faith". The Washington Times was among the first to use this designation in relation to a German born Muslim scholar Kalid Duran in an interview about his book An Introduction to Islam for Jews. Despite Muslim protests about the use of the term they stuck to their guns on the subject. Schall maintains that that description does not adequately describe what the bombers were. They are in fact missionaries and their approach is to threaten and conquer. Why they want to do it he concludes we cannot answer is because of our philosophy. That was written a month before Benedict's lecture.

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