

THE REGENSBURG LECTURE by James Schall SJ, *St. Augustine's Press*: South Bend, Indiana, 2007, pp. 176, \$20 hbk.

The academic address *Faith, Reason, and the University – Memories and Reflections*, given at Regensburg University on 12 September 2006, was a call from Pope Benedict XVI for a reasoned debate and a spirit of the freedom of conscience in religious matters. Ironically it did not receive such a response. Within the next few days, effigies of the pope were being burned at various large protests across the world. The lecture was an academic theologian's reflections, upon returning to his alma mater as Supreme Pontiff, given at the university where he had taught from 1968–1977. While his image was being dragged through the streets in various Islamic countries, his thoughts were dragged through the press in most of the Western world. Benedict made reference to a comment of the 14th century Byzantine emperor, Manuel II Palaeologus, and was accused of making insensitive and derogatory remarks about Islam. There were instant and widespread calls for an apology, death threats, and diplomatic negotiations. A short reflection at his old university which sought to defend the importance of reason within faith rapidly became the subject of an unreasoned and disproportionate backlash.

Despite this response from sections of the Islamic community, any reading of the Pope's Regensburg Lecture will immediately show it to have very little concern with Islam. It was in no sense an attack on Islamic belief. The honest reader will notice that the lecture is focussed upon the important and inseparable link between faith and reason in the Christian tradition, and the critical role played by each in a correct understanding of the Christian faith and human rationality. Benedict is responding to what he sees as a crisis in the intellectual world: he is deeply concerned about theologians who downplay the importance of reason, as well as philosophers and other thinkers who adopt strident atheistic beliefs, in the process discrediting any form of faith and excluding its usage in intellectual dialogue. Benedict also seeks to address a wider worldly reality. Many acts of horrendous violence have been committed against peoples and nations in the name of God. This has sparked a wide range of opinions that view religious faith as nothing less than a fundamentalist fanaticism, a cancerous form of mass delusion going far beyond the hostility that faith experienced from the pens of Marx or Freud. The pope's Regensburg Lecture sought to repair the link between faith and reason, illustrating not only the reasonableness of God, but the truthfulness of His revelation.

Fr. James V. Schall SJ feared that the essential and important message of this speech by Benedict XVI would become lost in the furore which followed it. In view of this he has written this book, offering a detailed commentary on Benedict's lecture. Schall believes that if Benedict's lecture is received in the manner he intended, it will have a profound impact. He opines it would have a similar impact on the world as did John Paul II's first visit to Poland. Schall writes:

Events need not be words. But words can also be events. Words at their best are intended to move us. And they do move us. But academic words have a different purpose. They are intended primarily to enlighten us, to take our minds to the heart of what is. This enlightenment is the purpose of the Regensburg Lecture. It is what has been lacking in our understanding of where we are (p. 14).

Schall considers it prudent to point out that the ideas of Enlightenment discussed in the Regensburg Lecture are not to be equated with those of *The Enlightenment* or post-enlightenment rationality, which became reductionistic and rigid. These sought to exclude the mysteries of religious faith from reasoned

approach. Pope Benedict seeks a 'reason' which allows for faith to be viewed in a reasonable manner, and for reason itself to point to faith.

Schall begins his commentary by pointing out the specifically academic nature of the Lecture itself. As Benedict makes abundantly clear throughout his lecture, the university is the heart of where the human mind engages *Logos* (reason). At the beginning of his address, Benedict recalls with fondness his time at the University of Bonn, where theological discussions frequently occurred among historians, philosophers, philologists, and others, and where the two theological faculties regularly entered into discussions about the right use of reason and the reasonableness of faith. When such discussions are limited or excluded, humans become incapable of having any discourse about the nature of truth and our reasons for it. Consequently, this lack of discourse leads to perverted concepts about God, and false dichotomies between faith and reason, both of which lead to the cultural and political tensions evident in the modern world.

To understand the cause of these tensions, Benedict delves into a discussion about the Christian notion of the nature of God, namely that God is *Logos*. In other words, God creates things in order and with good reason – his nature is reasonable. This notion is what the Byzantine emperor, Manuel II Paleologus speculated about when discussing Islam with 'an educated Persian'. As the two discussed the theme of a holy war, the emperor suggested that violence is 'incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul'. The emperor suggests that the belief that God allows or commands violence in his name is a belief contrary to the essential nature of God, and discernible through faith and reason. 'Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats. . . ' (p. 134). This is why Benedict continues by saying that not only is God reasonable and that to act unreasonably is to act contrary to the nature of God, but that the faith God has given humanity is understood and lived out in accordance with the right use of reason.

But the real concern of Benedict at Regensburg was not only those who suggest that God can be unreasonable, but those, especially within Christendom and the academy, who seek to separate the interdependency of faith and reason. In his chapter entitled, 'Modernity and the Three Waves of Dehellenization', Schall discusses Benedict's three steps of dehellenisation (reminiscent of the three waves of modernity discussed by the late political philosopher, Leo Strauss). From the Reformation rejection of scholastic theology and its perversion of the pureness of Scripture that questioned the role of philosophy in Christian theology, to the notion, born in the 19th century with Adolf von Harnack, that Christianity should mistrust the work of speculative theology entirely, preferring to view practical Christianity as a religious life rather than a theological system, and culminating in today's cultural pluralism in which truth changes with time and any notion of a transcendent truth is itself 'unreasonable', Schall highlights Benedict's concern about the dehellenization – the separation of 'Athens' and 'Jerusalem' in Christian thought and the university setting. As Schall notes:

The Christian faith proposed itself to other cultures not as a conquest but as understanding of what was good in a culture, but also of what was unreasonable. What was unreasonable was against the true human good and ultimately against the possibility of faith. . . . But Benedict's point here is that because of the revelation of Greek reason and faith, a basis already existed for an approach to any other culture, even an 'unreasonable' one. . . . The effort to get behind the hellenization of Christianity to a pure form with the presumed burden of reason is itself contrary to the workings of the faith in its initial and formative period (pp. 111–112).

Schall's book may aid many in adopting a proper interest in the message delivered by Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg, and allow the speech to be explained outside the controversies with which it was greeted. The essential points of the Lecture that Schall highlights are important issues for all those engaged in academic theology or a Christian approach to philosophy. They are also relevant to Christians wishing to engage in other disciplines within the University. Yet Benedict's lecture is not the last word, and its precepts ought to be implemented, rather than admired, by those who agree with them. Schall's book is surely a good introduction to this effort.

DAVID EDWARD ROCKS OP

AN INTRODUCTION TO TORRANCE THEOLOGY: DISCOVERING THE INCARNATE SAVIOUR edited by Gerrit Scott Dawson, *T&T Clark*, 2007, £19.99 pbk

This book is a collection of essays by academics and pastors who have been students of the three Torrance brothers, Tom, James and David. They were originally papers given at a conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 2006. There is a preface by David W. Torrance, and to his very great credit, he explains that the Torrances themselves make no claim that there is such a thing as 'Torrance Theology.' This label is one used by their fans and critics, and by the publishers of the book. Broadly, it indicates the doctrinal character of the work of the Torrance brothers, and their clear devotion to Calvin, Barth and the Reformed dogmatic tradition. All three brothers are eminent pastors and scholars in the Church of Scotland, but whose work has been much loved and influential world-wide, especially in Presbyterian circles in the USA.

The first three essays, by Andrew Purves, Elmer M. Colyer and Gerrit Dawson are Christological, examining the person and work of Christ according to the Torrances. Essay 4, by Douglas F. Kelly looks at the philosophical underpinning of Tom Torrance's work ('The Realist Epistemology of Thomas F. Torrance') and essay 5, by Alan J. Torrance, examines the Bible as the ground of the work of James B. Torrance. The next three essays focus on pastoral and liturgical implications of the Torrance influence, while the last essay by C. Baxter Kruger, ('The Hermeneutical Nightmare and the Reconciling work of Jesus Christ') is much more like a sermon, although the author points out that it is a summary of his recent book. Clearly, this collection would be of great interest to all devotees of the Torrances, or anyone studying their work. The essays are formal analyses of the Torrances' teaching and preaching, but are suffused with the warmth and gratitude that the trio have inspired in their pupils and colleagues over the years. It could also be read with profit by anyone wishing to take soundings in the current state of Presbyterian theology in this particular doctrinal tradition. It might also be salutary for Catholics who seek in ecumenism a sort of escape from doctrine and dogma which they perceive as a negative factor in their own Church, to see that issues of classical Christology, soteriology and Trinitarian theology are still taken very seriously by mainstream groups in the Reformed tradition.

Space precludes commenting on all of the essays; generally, it is most interesting to see what the Torrances have retained from classical Calvinism, according to these essays, and what they have modified. For example, in the Introduction, David W. Torrance briefly refers to the fact that his brothers Tom and James, *pace* their evangelical critics, do not believe in universal salvation. Throughout the essays, the authors frequently refer to the primacy of grace, Sacred Scripture, justification by faith alone and other classic Calvinist themes in the Torrance