

# POPE SUPPORTERS SPEAK UP

There are many who've denounced Pope Benedict XVI's speech in Germany, but there are also those who've supported the pontiff. Here are some of the quotes in support of the Pope's message and critical of the violent reactions to it:

- September 21, Bill Donohue, letter to *The New York Times*: "'The Pope's Act of Contrition' (editorial, Sept. 20) is unfair to Pope Benedict XVI. While the pope would never intentionally offend any world religion, he knows that true dialogue must be honest, and that is why his recent controversial remarks were not 'ill-considered comments.' They were deliberate and were intended to recall the necessity of conjoining faith and reason: it is the uncoupling of these twin values that has delivered so much needless death in history. Ironically, the Muslim response in many quarters has only underscored the veracity of the pope's remarks: a nun was shot to death in Somalia, apparently as a result; several churches were firebombed in the West Bank and Gaza; crowds in Kashmir and London have called for the death of the pope while burning him in effigy; a senior Turkish official compared the pope to Hitler; and an Internet posting by the Mujahedeen Shura Council has called upon Muslims 'to slit their throats,' meaning Catholics'."

- September 15, Fr. James Schall, S.J., on Ignatius Insight: "It is a brilliant, stunning lecture, and it is a lecture, not a papal pronouncement. It brings into focus just why there is a papacy and why Catholicism is an intellectual religion. Indeed, it is a lecture on why reason is reason and what this means. The scope of this lecture is simply breathtaking, but also intelligible to the ordinary mind... Civilization depends also on thinking rightly about God and man—all civilization, not just European or Muslim. Such is the reach of this lecture."

· September 18, Omar al-Rawi, integration officer of the Austrian Islamic Community quoted by AWA news agency (Austria), "We accept the explanation of Benedict XVI for his speech at the University of Regensburg...." Al-Rawi also said a fatwa against the pope, issued through al-Qaeda, was to be strongly condemned and rejected.

· September 18, Fr. Joseph Fessio, S.J., on Ignatius Insight: "It is at this point in the lecture that Benedict makes a statement which cannot be avoided or evaded if there is ever to be any dialogue between Christianity and Islam that is more than empty words and diplomatic gestures. For the Emperor, God's rationality is 'self-evident'. But for Muslim teaching, according to the editor of the book from which Benedict has been quoting, 'God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality'.... Benedict has struck bedrock. This is the challenge to Islam. This is the issue that lies beneath all the rest."

· September 18, Daniel Johnson in *The New York Sun*: "The passage that has aroused the ire of the ayatollahs was not a faux pas, still less an aberration. And Benedict is nothing if not consistent. From his earliest days, he has been true to his vocation as a priest and as an intellectual."

· September 18, Irshad Manji, Muslim feminist writer on the CBS Evening News: "As a faithful Muslim, I do not believe the pope should have apologized. I read what's been described as his inflammatory speech. Actually, he called for dialogue with the Muslim world. To ignore that larger context and to focus on a mere few words of the speech is like, well, it's like reducing the Quran, Islam's holy book, to its most blood-thirsty passages. We Muslims hate it when people do that. The hypocrisy of doing this to the pope stinks to high heaven."

· September 18, Jennifer Roback Morse on National Review Online: "You may disagree with the pope on the nature of God,

or about the possibilities of a rapprochement between science and religion. But no one can doubt that both reason and truth are in retreat in the modern world. Benedict's speech indicates that he wants to bring them back."

- September 19, Alicia Colon in *The New York Sun*: "While angry Muslims around the world work themselves into a murderous frenzy and give credence to the emperor's words, defenders of the religion of peace and liberal editors demand that the pope apologize for asking for dialogue."

- September 19, John L. Allen Jr. in *The New York Times*: "The uproar in the Muslim world over the comments is thus to some extent a case of 'German professor meets sound-bite culture,' with a phrase from a tightly wrapped academic argument shot into global circulation, provoking an unintended firestorm. In fact, had Benedict wanted to make a point about Islam, he wouldn't have left us guessing about what he meant. He's spoken and written on the subject before and since his election as pope, and a clear stance has emerged in the first 18 months of his pontificate. Benedict wants to be good neighbors, but he's definitely more of a hawk on Islam than was his predecessor, John Paul II."

- September 20, William Hawkins in *The Washington Times*: "Pope Benedict XVI's citation of 'the erudite Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologus' was historically accurate. Islamists did follow 'the command to spread by the sword the faith [Muhammad] preached.' They inhabit the kind of bellicose society liberalism has done so much to bleach out of America."

- September 21, Suzanne Fields in *The Washington Times*: "Pope Benedict XVI did the right thing, twice. In his talk to scholars in Germany he correctly put Islam in historical perspective, describing how Islam was perceived as 'evil and inhuman' by a 14th-century Christian emperor desperate for the help of other Christians to defend his country against Islamic conquest. (His fellow Christians didn't help.) The pope was

correct this week as well, to say he was 'deeply sorry for the reactions in some countries to a few passages.' He clearly wanted to put a lid on the violence without contradicting his earlier remarks. Benedict, reasonably enough, called for reflection to seek the 'true sense of his words' about how violence is the wrong approach to faith."

- September 21, Reuel Marc Gerecht on the Wall Street Journal Online: "Although many Muslims have apparently found Pope Benedict XVI's recent oration at the University of Regensburg deeply offensive, it is a welcome change from the pabulum that passes for 'interfaith' dialogue. Since 9/11, his lecture is one of the few by a major Western figure to highlight the spiritual and cultural troubles that beset the Muslim world.... Let us be frank: There is absolutely nothing in the pope's speech that isn't appropriate or pertinent to a civilized discussion of revealed religions and ethics."

- September 25, George Weigel in *USA Today*: "His lecture in Germany was, first of all, a celebration of human reason—the human capacity to know the truth of things. Our ability to think our way through to convictions we can know are true is the defining characteristic of our humanity and the spark of the divine within us. So reason and faith cannot be in conflict: True faith is reasonable faith, faith that makes sense, faith that can be proposed as reasonable to others.... I think that Benedict knew precisely the risks he was taking and thought the risks worthwhile. Why? Because he believes in the power of reason to cut through the fog of passion. Because he believes that serious problems—such as those posed by jihadist Islam—can be solved only by examining them at their roots."

- September 26, Dennis Prager on Townhall.com: "If the same people who attack Pope Pius XII for his silence regarding the greatest evil of his time are largely the same people who attack Pope Benedict XVI for confronting the greatest evil of his time, maybe it isn't a pope's confronting evil that

concerns Pius's critics, but simply defaming the Church."

- September 28, Deal W. Hudson on GOPUSA.com: "The Muslim reaction to the Regensburg speech will only strengthen the Western world's resolve to confront the threat of radical Islam, whether it is best called fascistic or jihadist. It will reinforce the resolve of Bush, Blair, and their supporters to stay the course in the Iraq war and keep the pressure on Iran to cease its nuclear enrichment program.... The god of radical Islam is nothing but, 'I Am Who Wills,' to emend slightly a line from the Book of Exodus. Now it's up to the Holy Father to find those leaders in the Muslim world, the kind who sat next to our Catholic negotiators in Cairo and Beijing, and defuse the time bomb that ticks ever faster."

- October 2, Lee Harris writing in *The Weekly Standard*: "He was using the emperor's question in order to offer a profound challenge to modern reason from within. Can modern reason really stand on the sidelines of a clash between a religion that commands jihad and a religion that forbids violent conversion? Can a committed atheist avoid taking the side of Manuel II Paleologus when he says: "God is not pleased by blood—and not acting reasonably is contrary to God's nature."

- October 4, Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch in *New York Press*: "He has called for a dialogue with the Muslim world.... Pope Benedict expressed no judgment on the truth or falsity of the emperor's statement, but he raised the need for dialogue. In response Muslims throughout the world, including many Muslim leaders and clergy, called for angry marches and the burning of churches, and urged the murder of the Pope."

- October 6, Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., interview with *National Catholic Reporter*: "I thought it was a very impressive address. The pope went amazingly far in laying out the principles of tolerance."