

THE FILTHY LENS OF GARRY WILLS

In his 2006 address at Regensburg University, Pope Benedict XVI described how Islam was perceived as “evil and inhuman” by a 14th-century Christian emperor who was under siege by Muslims. The central point of the pope’s address was to call attention to what happens when faith is uncoupled from reason, and vice versa.

As if to prove his point about faith being severed from reason, Muslims who disagreed with the pope’s remarks shot a nun to death, firebombed churches, and took to the streets calling upon fellow Muslims to “slit their [Christians’] throats.” In a recent op-ed written by Garry Wills that was published by the *Washington Post*, Wills blamed the pope, not the barbarians. “When Pope Benedict XVI tried at the University of Regensburg in 2006 to open a dialogue with Muslims, he did it so clumsily that riots and killings resulted.”

After the pope’s Regensburg address, he was praised by many prominent Catholics, Jews, and Muslims: Cardinal Avery Dulles lauded the pope for “laying out the principles of tolerance”; Reuel Marc Gerecht commended the pope for offering “a welcome change from the pabulum that passes as ‘interfaith’ dialogue”; and Irshad Manji said the pope’s speech did not warrant an apology to the “hypocrites” who blasted him. But according to Wills, they are all wrong. More than that, the bloodshed that followed the pope’s comments was his doing.

Wills claims to be an authority on Catholicism. Yet he is an ardent champion of abortion and gay rights. More important, he rejects the teaching authority of the Church if exercised without lay involvement and agreement; the Church’s teachings on papal infallibility; the ordained priesthood; the doctrine

of the Real Presence in the Eucharist; apostolic succession; and the Immaculate Conception and Assumption. He also calls the Church "a victimizer with Satan."

It is through this filthy lens that Wills sees Catholicism, thus allowing him to make patently foolish statements about Pope Benedict.