

The author's aim in writing this commentary is to "push open the door a bit" to let others understand Stein's opus. In publishing this work, the door was pushed *halfway*, not just a bit. Borden-Sharkey presents, clarifies, and expounds the different terms and nuances Stein used in her work. In this point, the author did a good job and contributed to the furtherance of Steinian studies. But the door is still halfway closed, since the readers are challenged by the author to *descend* to the meaning of being. Many already did the ascent but equally important and much more difficult to do is to descend to the meaning of being for it requires a contemplative gaze and a simplicity of a child, something that the present world does not acknowledge as a legitimate way of knowing. Borden-Sharkey showed this point throughout the book though couched in heavy philosophical language. The meaning of being is just too rich to be grasped in an instant nor it can be understood in a discursive way. One should have the courage to admit that since being is multifaceted, human effort is not enough to understand it and that being is much bigger than what we think it is. One has to enter into its mystery. No surprise here since St. Edith Stein as author of *Finite and Eternal Being* is a woman whose life is centered on contemplation and whose being is a complete gift and surrender to the Being of beings. Her quest for the meaning of being led her to complete descent and martyrdom. She shed her blood for the Truth of beings. It is in this sense that Stein is a teacher, a *doctor* in the strict sense of the term.

Borden-Sharkey attempted to open the door a bit. In this way, she did a service for those who are struggling with the work of St. Edith Stein but also for those whose search for the meaning of their being is not so clear. It is for us to fully open it. And not to do so is a loss to an otherwise fruitful effort of the author. The book thus goes beyond mere academic work; it leads to wisdom and challenges all not to remain in the surface of reality.

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Christianity, then and now, has always been met with opposition by some quarters. The message of Christ, she preaches and lives, is not always understood and welcomed by all. This aspect of Christian religion is the theme of Fabio Ruggiero's book entitled *La follia dei cristiani. La reazione pagana al cristianesimo nei secoli I-V*. Focusing on the antipathy against the Christians from the first until the fifth century, Ruggiero brings to light the varying views against the Christians in the Greco-Roman empire, where Christianity found herself as she grows and expands from Jerusalem to Rome.

In writing this opus, Ruggiero brings with him knowledge and experience that render him competent on the topic at hand. Presently, he works in the University of Bologna, teaching Patrology in the faculty of Emilia-Romagna. He has research interests on Early Christianity, New Testament and Christian Origins, Christian Apologetics, and

Jewish-Christian relations. With such credentials, he is considered an authoritative scholar to write about the topic of the present volume i.e. on accusation of madness against the Early Christians.

La follia dei Cristiani was first published in Milan, by Il Saggiatore in 1992, as part of a collection of works entitled *La Cultura*. The same work was reprinted in Rome by Citta Nuova Editrice, ten years after (in 2002), as part of a series of works entitled *I Volti della Storia* edited by Franco Cardini and Francesco Malgeri. The 2002 reprint does not acknowledge or mention the first printing in 1992. It is observed that the 1992 edition has a *Nota Conclusiva* placed at the end of the volume, while in the 2002 edition, the content of the *Nota Conclusiva* is integrated in the Introductory Note. The 2002 edition has two additional chapters, tackling Macario di Magnesia (XI), and Galerio e Massimiano (XII), and features an index at the end of the volume.

The 1992 volume had been reviewed by L. Jerphagnon. It was published in the journal *Latomus* by the Société d'Études Latines de Bruxelles, in October-December 1994 issue. Jerphagnon's review highlighted the framework of Ruggiero's work: the detachment of Christian practices and pronouncements from the original Judeo-Christian context, which made them utterly incomprehensible to the Greco-Roman mentality in the first five centuries of the Church. The same work had been reappraised in 2007, after its reprinting in 2002. Bazyli Degórski's review appeared in the *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II's* journal *Vox Patrum*, in its June 2007 issue. After summarizing the volume, Degórski acknowledged the highly scientific, historical, and patristic aspects of Ruggiero's work.

On the onset of his work, Ruggiero introduces his book as one aspiring to discuss the ancient accusation leveled against Christians. As highlighted by Manlio Simonetti in the preface, *La follia dei Cristiani* presents a thought all too familiar with Ancient Christianity scholars: accusation of madness and folly. In a novel way, Ruggiero inverts the usual order: basing his discussion on surviving or reconstructed ancient text of the Greco-Roman accusers, more than on the apologetic literature of Ancient Christianity. Through the present volume, Ruggiero cites generously Ancient Greco-Roman sources, though few are Christian. In this way, Ruggiero presents pagan accusations from pagan vantage point, and in their proper Greco-Roman source and context. By citing and recovering Greco-Roman polemics with underpinning philosophy, he illustrates from where these accusations came from. By weaving Greco-Roman and Christian texts harmoniously together, seeking the connection of each one, Ruggiero is able to construct a text demonstrating Greco-Roman accusations to Christians (backed by their centuries of philosophical, dialectical, and religious trainings and thoughts), through a reconstructed context (of the Ancient Christianity in the Greco-Roman world) of the first five centuries of Christianity. In his 1992 *Nota Conclusiva*, Ruggiero is quick to point out what the Greco-Roman polemicists missed: that Christianity is first and foremost a faith experience (albeit it is not devoid of reasonableness), more than a political and philosophical one.

The rational depth of the Roman Empire, indeed, saw foolishness in the nascent and formative years of Christianity. Christianity's dogma, mysticism, and concept of divine revelation seemed to reverse their thoughts and beliefs. That perfect misfit is not palpable

in the Greco-Roman world that does not see clearcut distinction from what is rational and religious experience. This moved some notable Greco-Roman personalities, from the first up to the fifth centuries, to denounce, though in some instance to acknowledge and defend, the enigma brought about by the seeming inherent unreasonableness of Christianity. Paul of Tarsus elaborates the mystery of incarnation of Christ through his hymn *Forma Dei*: Christ as God becoming man, and a suffering servant for humanity's salvation from sin and death. The notion of a god-man (subject to change) was met with opposition as it contradicted the Greco-Roman concept of God who he is mighty, powerful, thus spared from any pain and change. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, simply put, are follies for Greco-Roman world (even for the Jews). Pliny the Younger saw the martyrs' willingness to die as stubborn obstinacy for superstitions beliefs - a manifestation of poor mental flexibility. Apuleius of Madura mocked the Christian monotheism, seeing their souls as filthy latrines, that gather every possible and imaginable turpitude, scorn and trample the deities. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus saw Christianity as a religion of excess (through their beliefs on kindness and faith) beyond the threshold of what is tolerable for the Romans. Epictetus condemned Christian behavior as being unreasonable (*alogia*), as in the fearlessness of the Christian before death. Marcus Aurelius, being stoic himself, was disturbed by the Christians expressions and convictions of faith (not only internalized but expressed outwardly). Luciano of Samosata was kin to observe Christian detachment from anything worldly, even to life, as one based on their liberating belief in eternal life. Galen of Pergamum placed a negative verdict on the Christian usage of parables and stories of miracles (amissed with theoretical system). Celsius argued against Christianity for its deficiency of solid philosophical foundation. Porphyry of Tyre rejects, not the Christian deportment, but their use of allegorical exegetical method on the scriptures. Despite tolerance, Julian the Emperor perceived Christians as disease of the soul causing dementia and madness to their Greco-Roman identity. With tolerance, the desire to be martyrs finds expression in the introduction of monastic life. This way of life, of flight from the world found critics in Ausonius and Rutilian. They understood monasticism as misanthropic isolation, a distortion of the soul, excessive exaltation of virginity even to the point of disregarding married life and being antisocial. The monks, as were the martyrs in the early Christianity, were dubbed as crazy. From the primitive Christian community, through the age of martyrs and monks, even to this day, critics of Christianity always find barrage of accusation of madness against Christians.

Ruggiero writes in a manner accessible and understandable to simple readers but without compromising the scholarship of his work. Through his consistency in backing his claims and conclusions with texts from the Greco-Roman polemical literature, the present volume breathes an air of academic rigor. At the end of his work, Ruggiero provides an index and bibliographical source of Greco-Roman literature, through which his readers can verify and further enrich their understanding of the topic at hand.

In *La follia dei Cristiani*, Ruggiero successfully recreates and explores the Greco-Roman accusation of madness levelled against the Christians of the first five centuries of the Church. Missing, however, in Ruggiero's work is the context of Christian faith (Jewish origin and the fulfillment of the promised salvation) that could enlighten the accusation of foolishness against Christians. Framing the accusations and effects of

the Christian evangelization through the inherent missionary and sacramental characters of the Church could have enlightened or explained further the seeming madness of Christians and the threat they post to the stability of the Roman empire; that human life includes a transcendent dimension, and not merely driven by nature, body, and reason; that it has spiritual layer that at times can be beyond human understanding; that eventually Christianity finds her way to express her faith in a way palpable to the Greco—Roman world, albeit not necessarily compatible. This could have been a fitting discussion in an expanded *Nota Conclusiva*. But again, Ruggiero may just have stuck to the objective of his book: to present accusation of madness levelled against Christians in the ancient times. For that intent, he succeeds.

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Sheffler, D. T. *Plato and Christian Personalism*. Hildebrand Press, 2025. pp 188. ISBN 978-1-939773-44-1.

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There is a peculiar kind of philosophical awkwardness that arises when two thinkers who ought to be friends have been kept apart by misunderstanding. D. T. Sheffler opens his remarkable study with precisely this image: *Platonism and Christian personalism* are like two guests at a party who share far more than either suspects, estranged not by genuine incompatibility but by the accumulated distortions of centuries of hasty reading. The task Sheffler sets himself is to pour the wine, nudge the conversation, and let the family resemblance speak for itself. The result is one of the most philosophically serious and theologically suggestive works to emerge from the Hildebrand Project in recent years, a book that deserves a wide readership among scholars of ancient philosophy, Christian anthropology, and the personalist tradition alike.

The thesis is stated with admirable clarity in the preface: *all the central concerns of Christian personalism find their historical origin, though not their full expression and development, in Plato* (p. xviii). This is not a claim that Plato was a Christian *avant la lettre*, nor that the dialogues contain, in embryonic form, the full doctrine of the Imago Dei or the resurrection of the body. Sheffler is too careful a reader for such anachronism. His claim is more precise and, in its precision, more interesting: that the conceptual seeds from which personalism grew were first planted in Platonic soil, and that the personalist tradition has been too quick to disown its own genealogy.

The book is organized around five chapters, each targeting a specific node of tension between Plato and the personalist tradition. Chapter one surveys the charges: Étienne Gilson's claim that Plato's metaphysics leaves no room for the individual person, Joseph Ratzinger's insistence that the concept of person is a purely Christian theological invention, Karol Wojtyła's critique of "cosmological" anthropology, and Metropolitan John Zizioulas's argument that Platonic ontology makes personhood metaphysically impossible. Sheffler treats each interlocutor with genuine respect, granting the force of their objections before demonstrating, through careful textual analysis, that the charges rest on a systematically impoverished reading of the dialogues. Chapter two, on "Soul, Body, And Person," is where Sheffler's philosophical contribution is most acute. Against the standard personalist narrative, he argues that the soul in Plato occupies a genuinely