

She proposes to extend her study to Steinian topics which still are under explored: politics, ethics, and *Geisteswissenschaften* (i.e. poetry and music). And if I may add, Metaphysics and Christian Spirituality can also benefit from Edith Stein's Philosophy of Spirit.

For those who do not share the Christian faith but whose thinking is open to the divine, the book of Sobrak-Seaton is replete with insights that prepare someone to receive the faith. Consider the following examples: the openness of the human being to himself and to others, the formation of human communities as reflection of the Trinity, the relationship between man and God, and Stein's Philosophy of Spirit culminating in union of lovers. These are themes heavy with Christian undertones which when thought seriously would hopefully move someone to embrace the Catholic faith. One of the evident pastoral values of philosophy is that it is an avenue of encounter between believers and unbelievers. This book obviously fulfills this point. It is a "space" where believers and unbelievers can dialogue in the spirit and witness of Edith Stein. She too did not give much importance to the faith but because of philosophy and God's grace, she was able to discover that the Truth is a person who is Jesus Christ himself.

Overall, the book of Sobrak-Seaton deepens what has already begun by Steinian scholars. Those who are interested in Edith Stein can heed the author's call to make this world more humane by forming communities in accord with Edith Stein's Philosophy of Spirit.

**Jose Adriand Emmanuel L. Layug**

**Regoli, Roberto. *Beyond the Crises in the Church. The Pontificate of Benedict XVI.* Translated and edited by Daniel Gallagher. Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2024. pp. 350. ISBN: 978-1587310713. (Original Italian edition - *Oltre la crisi della Chiesa: Il Pontificato di Benedetto XVI.* Torino, Lindau, 2016). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/1009pslxi184br2>**

From an outsider's point of view, the Church, though of divine origin and existence, may appear to be a greater than life figure, but upon closer examination, through inside knowledge, one may realize that it is still a human institution with human overseers. This truth about the Church is laid bare in Roberto Regoli's book entitled "Beyond the Crises in the Church: The Pontificate of Benedict XVI." First published in Italian in 2016, this work is made available in English in 2024. It is a work borne out of the author's passion and expertise on Church History, Courts and Elites, History of the Clergy, and more specifically on the History of Papacy, the Roman Curia, and pontifical diplomacy from the 19th to the 21st centuries. Currently, he is a professor of contemporary Church history at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, from where he took up several degrees, notable of which is his Doctorate in Ecclesiastical History. Concurrently, he heads the Department of Church History, as well as editor of *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*.

Regoli's book, both in Italian (2016) and English (2024) editions, has received several reviews. Andrea Ciampi, in her 2017 review, highlighted how the author treated

contemporary published facts with attention to details through historical methods and proper contextualization. Through this process, he passed from what seemed to be a journalistic report to writing contemporary history. Francis Rocca evaluated the 2024 translation and emphasized the author's intellectual honesty by not claiming any judgment on the entire pontificate of Benedict XVI, and the author's courage as he identified the strength of the latter as a theologian (not only to learned but even to non-specialists), and weakness as an administrator. In her review, Marianna Orlandi recognized the invaluable importance of the author's work in understanding the papacy as an institution in contemporary times. Outstanding among the many reviews of the author's work is that of Mons. Georg Gänswein, during the presentation of the book on May 20, 2016. Gänswein pointed out the author's brilliance in exposing the different phases of Benedict XVI's pontificate and keenness of the former to label 2010 as the black year in the latter's papacy. Gänswein stood up against the author's thought on the decline of papacy in the last three years (2010-2013) of Benedict XVI, and the development of the understanding on the Petrine office through Benedict XVI's minting of the title Pope Emeritus. These overwhelming reviews on the author's work demonstrated relevance among lay persons and theologians alike.

Writing a contemporary Church history, Regoli employs language and style that are current and thus easily understandable to present-day readers. In some instance, his writing appears to be a reportage as it presents facts and figures derived from newspapers and other social media (TV interviews, online articles, published diaries, etc.). Using these secondary sources was out of necessity, as there are no other available sources. As a matter of long-standing policy of the Vatican Apostolic Archives (formerly Vatican Secret Archives), documentary sources from the Vatican during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, those that are unpublished, are inaccessible to the public. The latest papal documents made public are those of Pius XII (1939-1958). Even with such limited access to primary sources, the author presents the context of the policies and decisions made by Benedict XVI, a context that can go as far back as he could research, and possibly make essential connections (e.g., Anglicanism and Paul VI). With meager sources but historical instruments and apparatus, the author is able to sustain the academic ambiance and historical approach throughout his work.

In this book, Regoli tries to go deeper, beyond the surface, beyond what is obvious in the naked eyes during the pontificate of Benedict XVI. He goes nearer to the Church's affairs between 2005-2013. In the process, the author brings the core aspects and characteristics of Benedict XVI's many crises in his pontificate, and magnifies an aspect of the Church often glossed over: her humanity. The author, as a historian, effectively humanizes the Church by writing about the human activities in the Church bureaucracy during the reign of Benedict XVI. He opens his narrative with a reconstructed political analysis before and during the 2005 Conclave (based on reports in the media and entries from books and diaries of participants), how different groups and factions of Cardinals fought each other just so their candidate could be enthroned on the Petrine throne. On the throne of Peter, Benedict XVI had to address money laundering and terrorist activities in the Vatican Bank. The situation moved Gotti Tedeschi to describe the Vatican as an environment exactly like other power environments: made up of liars, corrupt individuals, and blackmailers. It was not easy for Benedict XVI to implement reforms, and sweep

action for the centuries old structure of the Curia is not entirely suitable to the activities and problems the Church faces today (e.g. cyber security culminating with Vatileaks, transnational crimes). Benedict XVI had to address the Catholicism in Europe that is in a state of crisis, evident in the dwindling number of Catholics. The cases of sexual abuse of minors in Western countries had to be faced, coupled with the politics of democracies (especially in the USA under George Bush), although they took place decades ago. Frictions were not only with outside factor, but even within, with factions of cardinals and bishops who may not necessarily be aligned with the mind of Benedict XVI. All these, amplified further by the different media of communications, presented a tough challenge for a theologically trained Benedict XVI, who may not had the temperament of an administrator.

In presenting the ecumenical, inter-religious, and even diplomatic efforts, Regoli brings to light the flexibility of Benedict XVI; he who many have thought to be a firm theologian (e.g. on inter-religious dialogue and the acknowledgement of ethical pluralism). But Benedict did so without compromising the essentials: e.g. on ecumenism. The criteria for unity essentially pass through two aspects: the recognition of the papal primacy and the adherence to the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 1992, which can be understood as the crystallization of the reception of Vatican Council II. It is an ecumenism of reciprocity; mutually enriching as in the Church experience in dealing with Anglicans and Society of St Pius X. Though, one perceives the two fundamental themes of the Pope's magisterium: the rejection of ethical relativism and the concept of non-negotiable values. Under his watch, the papal network promoted a discourse of openness, beyond local absolutizations. In presenting these, the author may have introduced a distinction that can be of use in understanding the thoughts of this Pope: Old Benedict XVI (reasonable theologian) and Young Ratzinger (unbendable theologian), both synthesized in the pontiff's hermeneutic of reform in continuity.

Aside from the administrative works and approaches of Benedict XVI, Regoli discussed the theological depth of Benedict XVI, his outlook and vision for the Catholic Church in contemporary times as an Ark, an oasis for the world to encounter and exist with and for God. Benedict XVI wrote as a pope and a professor, explaining the challenge of rediscovering God on a personal level. His concept of a purist, observant minority Church may be true in the Western hemisphere, but not necessarily in the whole world. The Church in Europe, in particular, may be in winter, but She enjoys spring in other parts of the world. The Church in the West, however, finds warmth in the ecclesial movements fired by the Holy Spirit. This profound truth is reflected in the hope permeating the literary lines written by the theologian Pope. He may not be an administrator par excellence, as mirror in the state of the Roman Curia at the tail end of his reign, but no one will argue that Benedict XVI is one of the greatest theologians of the 21st century.

Regoli unfolds in his work the fact that Benedict XVI is more of a theologian and a professor than an administrator of a global Church. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ, the Incarnate Word of God: to bring the entire cosmos to the end intended by God for it; to bring man back to heaven! This is an aspect that is beyond Church crises; that Benedict XVI, in fact, gave emphasis on as a Theologian Pope. This

is evident in his encyclicals: *Deus Caritas est*, *Spees Salvi*, *Lumen Fidei* (an encyclical greatly associated with him). Benedict XVI presented a view of what is beyond crises in the Church, also through the three-volume series on Jesus of Nazareth, that even in crisis we can encounter the Lord. Affairs of the world, Benedict XVI did not neglect. Through *Caritas in Veritate*, he remains in touch with the world. But he led the faithful to see beyond the human face and affairs of the Church; to encounter the Incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth.

More than simply a documentation and filing of human Church events and details of a recent pontificate, which is meant for the use of future historians, Regoli's work can be considered as a manual on how to write contemporary history, as it is an example of history-writing. In presenting the contemporary history of the Church (2005-2013), Regoli humanizes the Church, which at times is seen by many as too big and too divine as an institution. Although Regoli could have discussed further the theological directions and themes in the pontificate of Benedict XVI, through which he could have truly gone beyond the crises in the Church, though an institution run by men, is nevertheless founded, sustained, and en route to God. However, Regoli is a contemporary Church historian, more than a theologian.

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**Cole, Basil, OP. *Angelic Virtues and Demonic Vices: Aquinas's Practical Principles for Reaching Heaven and Avoiding Hell*. Gastonia: TAN Books, 2023. pp. 288. ISBN: 978-1-5051-2921-2.**

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Christian morality entails nourishing a set of habitual practices that either lead to one's sanctification or condemnation. Using Thomistic principles to give a cohesive and rational account of ethics, Fr. Basil Cole, OP, explains that both virtues and vices have their own interconnected coalition that affects and informs human actions.

Fr. Cole gives a practical guide on the understanding of virtues and vices by likening them to a military chain of command wherein higher forces influence and direct the lower ones. Unlike other works written by the author on morality that are more academic in style, the current material is quite straightforward, easily digestible to audiences that may not be familiar with Aquinas's works.

Before delving into the virtues and vices themselves, Fr. Cole begins with Aquinas's view that the goal of every person is to be happy. Due to the frailty of human nature in the present life, man needs the aid of virtues to sustain him in his pursuit of ultimate happiness which can only be ultimately attained in God.

The regimental presentation of the vices begins with their queen: Pride is described as a disordered love for one's excellence and the refusal to be subjected and dependent on God. Lust is considered a sin against self-mastery while the demonic vice of vainglory makes one excessively look for attention, affirmation, and fame, leading to envy.