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THEOLOGICAL
FOCUS

The Roman Catholic Church—Continuity and Change. The Pontificate of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis

By Hans Heinz

Despite what many had hoped for, the Roman Catholic Church did not stabilize after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The euphoric atmosphere of the mid-twentieth century was followed by a “process of demise.”² The pontificate of John Paul II was “the worst crisis since the protestant Reformation.”³ Hardly anything was left from the euphoria of the council.⁴ Pope Paul VI (1963–1978) had sped up the crisis with his liberality—he allowed for the annulment of some marriages, the laicizing of priests, the concession of the resignation from religious orders, and the toleration of independent local churches. During this period there also developed a friendlier atmosphere toward religion in society at large, but neither Rome nor the churches of the Reformation could profit from this.

The “Restorer” from Poland

The Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyla, elected as Pope John Paul II on October 17, 1978, was the first non-Italian pope in 450 years. Both traditional and progressive forces within the Catholic Church hoped to find strong support for their respective agendas.

Even in the non-Christian world people remembered the Polish poet Juliusz Slowacki’s prediction that in the nineteenth century the world would be saved by a Polish pope.⁵ Initially, the new pope seemed to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of both church and world. One had the impression that the *aggiornamento*—that is, the “becoming modern” of the church (John XXIII)—finally took shape. The dynamic pope liked to joke and converse with journalists; he appeared to be open and worldly. He waived the *pluralis majestaticus*, the “us” in his speeches, and simply said, “I.” He despised the *sedia gestatoria*, the papal armchair upon which the pope was customarily carried. He held World Youth Days to meet with young people. He used modern media and traveled on more than one hundred mission trips throughout the world. A darling of the masses,⁶ he seemed to be considered almost a superstar. He was “more beautiful than Jesus Christ,”⁷ as some nuns enthused. To the countless masses of pilgrims on St. Peter’s Square, he appeared as “showpiece of the church” and “a gift of heaven.”⁸ John Paul II promoted “interreligious ecumenism” with the World Prayer Meeting in Assisi (1986 and 2002) and promoted a new openness toward Jews, Muslims, and representatives of other religions. Thus, this pope quickly became the “most well-known person” of his time.⁹ With 960 beatifica-

tions and three hundred canonizations he supported the piety of Catholic believers. The masterpiece of his political influence, however, was his involvement in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Lech Walesa, the well-known leader of Solidarność, the Polish labor union, and later president of Poland, correctly stated, “Without the Pope no Solidarność and no liberation of Poland from Communism.”¹⁰ This declaration sheds light on what a commission of the Italian parliament claimed to have uncovered: that Leonid Breschnew himself, the Russian president, had given orders to assassinate the pope in 1981.¹¹ Soon, however, it became clear what the Polish pope actually intended within the church. The outward openness was followed by a consistent inward consolidation. His closest associate, cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, played a large part in this theological regression toward pre-conciliar positions. One Catholic ecumenist saw in Ratzinger the “great inquisitor” of the church during this period. Now the laicizing of priests was stopped, the law of celibacy was confirmed,¹² the preaching of laity was forbidden, liberation theology was attacked,¹³ and women in the priesthood were conclusively excluded¹⁴ because male priests alone represent Christ.¹⁵ Just like Pius XII, who had eliminated the *Nouvelle théologie* with utmost rigor, i.e. he removed theologians like Henri de Lubac and Yve Congar, now theologians who were wary of supporting progressiveness were reprimanded. One could name liberation theologians like Ernesto Cardenal and Leonardo Boff, moral theologian Jacques Pohier, dogmatic theologians like Hans Küng, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Tissa Balasuriya as well as ethicist Charles E. Curran, who had criticized Pope Paul VI because of his encyclical *Humanae vitae* in which he had spoken against the birth control pill.

This ambivalence between outward openness and a tightness within the church led to the accusation that Pope John Paul II had betrayed the council¹⁶ and that he was “the most contradictory Pope of the 20th century.”¹⁷ He was seen as a reactionist, clothed as a reformer, brotherly in his demeanor and yet authoritarian, a spiritual autocrat, but cordial in his social interactions. In common parlance he was called “Papa Jekyll and Karol Hyde.” Journalists spoke about Pope John Paul II as a paradoxical “bridge builder and misanthrope” at the same time,¹⁸ and a critical theologian called him “very intend not to reform.”¹⁹ The fact that John Paul II was a sympathizer of *Opus Dei*—an ultraconservative secret fraternity whose purpose was “to get the council [Vatican II] eliminated from our minds,”²⁰ and who in 1989 demanded an oath of allegiance from all clergy that was stricter than even the one proposed by Paul VI (1967)²¹—fits this perspective. His Marian piety was interpreted in the same traditional sense. His motto was *Totus tuus*, “Fully yours.” He credited Mary for saving him from the intended assassination, and in his eyes the final victor was not Christ but His mother: “When the victory comes, it will be a victory through Mary.”²²

With this ambivalence, the Polish pope created many “construction zones” within the church. Regarding ecumenical questions, hardly anything was clarified. While the pope issued a confession of guilt in 2000, it is remarkable that the darkness of the Catholic Church’s past was relegated more to certain individuals than to the institutional church. Much remained “contradictory”²³ and “half-hearted.”²⁴ The Roman Catholic dogmas retained their significance and are still indispensable presuppositions for the unity of Christians. Similarly, the primacy of the papacy remained in force as regulatory “principle of unity” and the papal decisions that were made *Ex cathedra* to restore this unity remained untouched.²⁵ Even reaching out to other churches and religions—1982 with the Anglican Church, 1986 with the Jews, and 2001 with the Muslims—could not hide the fact that Rome still boasted to possess “Catholic fullness” over against the “Protestant deficiencies.”²⁶ The pope, so one commentator said, dealt with others as “a wolf clothed in the sheep skin of communication.”²⁷

This consistent refusal to change one’s own position while at the same time expecting others to stretch to the limit can be seen in ethical areas like the issues of birth control and abortion. Rome’s unflinching position earned the church the recognition of being a “moral superpower,” while at the same time the church was criticized of thereby indirectly fostering misery and poverty in the world

When John Paul II died on April 2, 2005, the longest pontificate since Pius IX (1846–1878) ended. Karol Wojtyła had a splendid beginning as an ever-smiling man but died as an incurably sick person. Some have seen in this a picture of the hoped-for change for the church and its actual regression.²⁸ While many church members demanded immediate canonization (*santo subito*),²⁹ some clairvoyantly saw in his fate a symbol of a “Potemkin Church”³⁰—from the outside still shiny and radiant, but inside old and fossilized.³¹

The Strategic Thinker from Germany

The election of cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005 came as no surprise. He was his predecessor’s closest colleague, responsible for much of John Paul II’s course of restoration. Many of the progressive Catholics were deeply disappointed.³² In Italy Ratzinger was called *Cardinale No* and in England he was labeled “Panzerkardinal” and “God’s Rottweiler” (an aggressive German dog).³³ For German theologians, Ratzinger’s election was seen as a far-reaching “catastrophe for the church,”³⁴ for some saw in him the “reelected John Paul II.”³⁵ He chose the name “Benedict,” referring back to the founder of the Benedictine order, Benedict of Nursia in the fifth/sixth century, indicating a program of “Re-Christianization of Europe.”³⁶ Benedict is considered to be one of the most theologically learned popes in recent history. While John Paul II was a pope of mission, the German professor presented himself to the world first of all as a “teaching Pope.”

The goal and *modus operandi* of the new pope could be seen in his attempt to lead the church even closer to the pre-Vatican II position. Critical voices called him a pope of “past anterior.”³⁷ In 2007 he reinstated the old Latin rite for the mass (Tridentine Mass), while Vatican II had promoted mass in the vernacular language of the believers. He rehabilitated four bishops of the Pius fraternity, a fraternity very critical of the second Vatican council. Ratzinger avoided structural reforms and suppressed tendencies of the so-called “church from below,” or the clergy and lay initiative *We Are Church*, which had called for a cancellation of the prohibition on lay preaching and had also called for the possibility of women’s ordination.³⁸ Hot potatoes like the celibacy of priests he put off as long as possible. To the ordination of women he turned a deaf ear, because this was considered to be a “doctrinal matter” (*Lehrpunkt*), and he did not condone the medical use of birth control.³⁹ While he declined the kiss on the hand and chose the bishop’s cap instead of the *Tiara*, he nevertheless began to use the majestic plural “us” again.⁴⁰ According to one of Ratzinger’s former colleagues, all these restrictive steps gave the impression that the Roman Church risked becoming an isolated sect.⁴¹

Ratzinger, a highly trained theologian who had studied the doctrine of grace of the church father Augustine (fourth/fifth century) and the mysticism of the medieval saint Bonaventure (twelfth/thirteenth century), tried to assert himself especially through his publications. His goal was to point out the deficits and weaknesses of “western individualism” with its “empty freedom” and the “dictatorship of relativism.” He declared war on a world shaped by “positivistic, agnostic-intolerant contemporary culture.”⁴²

From the four encyclicals of Benedict the first stands out.⁴³ It carries the title *Deus caritas est* (“God is Love”). It is considered to be his “favorite encyclical”⁴⁴ and can be seen as “the clef”⁴⁵ or leitmotif of his entire pontificate. Benedict wanted to free the Christian *Agape* and the serving love (*caritas*) from *Eros*, the love that desires. With it he unambiguously affirmed marriage. It is only within marriage that human sexuality in its bodily expression can be lived. According to Benedict, these truths are at home especially in the Roman Catholic Church.

The highpoint of his literary productivity, however, is found in his “Jesus-Trilogy.”⁴⁶ The first volume, published in 2007, was considered a “foundational work of the Christian faith.”⁴⁷ Several million copies of his Jesus books were printed, and translated into some twenty languages in more than seventy-two countries. He wrote his works out of the awareness that a Christology built on biblical texts is indispensable for the Christian faith: “If we do not recognize Jesus anymore,” he wrote, “then the church is finished.”⁴⁸

The learned pope did not evade the results of the so-called “historical-critical method”⁴⁹—he calls it the “historical method”—and was convinced that this method “does not prohibit faith.”⁵⁰ The positive aspect

of his research is that he took very seriously the New Testament texts. Benedict consistently avoided the trap of the classical liberal Protestant “Life of Jesus” research (*Leben Jesu-Forschung*) from Samuel Reimarus to Albert Schweizer. The latter had speculatively tried to reconstruct the history behind the biblical text and by and large had failed in the attempt. Recent scholarship is convinced that every liberal interpreter only found the Jesus he was looking for. In contrast to such liberal approaches in Christological research, Benedict trusted the authenticity of the biblical texts to give answers to who Jesus was, what His message is, and about His divinity. In this he was in harmony with the tradition of other Roman Catholic Jesus scholars such as Karl Adam, Romano Guardini, Giovanni Papini, and Henri Daniel-Rops.⁵¹ Benedict did not evade modern Protestant Jesus research. He interacted with radical scholars like Rudolf Bultmann and more moderate ones like Joachim Jeremias, even though other important Protestant scholars like Günther Bornkamm, Ernst Käsemann, and Gerhard Ebeling were not considered. His Jesus books breathe a spirit of piety and hopeful joy. One can even detect an “Adventist” orientation, when Benedict confesses, “The anticipation of the second coming [of Jesus] must shape the Christian life and prayer.”⁵² Seen from that perspective it is understandable that his Jesus books were praised by evangelical commentators as “through and through Bible abiding,” whereas more liberal Protestants derided his books as “icon-paintings.”⁵³ Catholic critics speak about a picture of Jesus “from above” that is shaped by the Christology of the ancient church and the decisions of the major councils in the early church.⁵⁴

While the Pope published his theological concerns and made them available to the public, the moral crisis within the Vatican and the worldwide church deepened. Obviously, the reform efforts of Vatican II did not have much impact on the lives of some officials. According to Hans Küng, “alcoholics, deceivers and pedophiles”⁵⁵ tarnished the image of the church with their scandals. Attempts to end the corruption of the Vatican bank succeeded only partially. The pope “wanted to do more than he could.”⁵⁶ Some four hundred priests were dismissed because of sexual misconduct.⁵⁷ The scandal surrounding the ultraconservative Bishop Williamson, who denied the Holocaust, was one of the “dark moments” and turned out to be a turning point in Benedict’s pontificate.⁵⁸ In addition, the scandal regarding the so-called “Vatileaks” added new problems, when papal documents were stolen by a chamberlain and made public. In 2001, even while he was still a cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger had tried to keep the sexual misconduct of many clergy under lock and key.⁵⁹ But now more and more cases of sexual misconduct were uncovered in the United States, Germany, Austria, and other countries. Benedict’s successor, Francis, spoke of a “gay-lobby” in the Vatican.⁶⁰ Benedict himself talked about “filth in the church.”⁶¹ Gerhard Ludwig Müller, the prefect of the Congre-

gation of the Doctrine of the Faith under Benedict's successor, tried unsuccessfully to do away with these charges as a negative "campaign against the church."⁶² The pope was no longer able to control the crisis. These incidents may have contributed to Benedict's premature resignation in 2013. He himself spoke of his declining power and strength. One critic called his pontificate "broke, misfortunate, and full of glitches"⁶³ and said there were "intrigues and power struggles in the Vatican as in the time of the Renaissance."⁶⁴

But there were more problems than those glitches. Benedict also did not have a lucky hand when it came to church politics and ecumenical relations. At the very beginning of his pontificate he enraged the Muslim world with statements made in his Regensburg speech (2006). Benedict quoted the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1350–1425), who had said that violence in Islam was the only new thing that Mohamed had introduced in religion.⁶⁵ While, historically speaking, one could see some validity in the emperor's complaint, because Christian Byzantium had suffered for centuries under the attacks of Islamic Arabs and Turks, one wondered whether it was helpful for the current dialogue to fan the flames in such a way. The pope received a wave of protest from the Islamic world. Some called it "hate speech" and critics within his own church even questioned his adequate knowledge and understanding of world religions.⁶⁶

He made similar missteps in his dealing with the Jewish community. While he changed the wording for the intercessory prayer for the deliverance of Israel on Good Friday, 2008, from "blindness" and "darkness" to "illuminating the people" and the "knowledge of Christ," he also reinstated bishop Richard Nelson Williamson, who denied the Holocaust. Some accused him of anti-Semitism because of this.⁶⁷

But especially in the ecumenical dialogue with churches of the Protestant Reformation, the pope was rather unsympathetic. Ratzinger, born in a small rural town in Bavaria that was essentially left untouched by the storms of the sixteenth century, considered the Reformation of Martin Luther to be "superfluous" and unnecessary.⁶⁸ As cardinal, he had denied the Protestant churches the description and essential nature as "churches" in the declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000).⁶⁹ Those denominations in which the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery are not preserved "are not Churches in the proper sense" but only ecclesial communities.⁷⁰ For him, "there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him."⁷¹

Similarly, Benedict called the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*⁷² between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church in the year 1999 "a milestone on the way to unity," but this did not eliminate significantly different interpretations of this central Christian teaching.⁷³ He saw "disunity" amongst the Protestants as a problem and preferred

to dialogue with the Orthodox churches instead.⁷⁴ But even there the primacy of the pope remained the great obstacle to unity.⁷⁵ Benedict considered the Orthodox churches not as "sisters" but "lost daughters."⁷⁶

Within the Protestant world Benedict found the easiest access to the Anglican Church, because they had preserved the so-called "apostolic succession," which is so important in the eyes of Rome. But even they were not considered to be confessional equals. When the Anglican Church started to ordain women Benedict challenged Anglican clergy "to return to Rome."⁷⁷ This led to the rebuke Rome would "fish in Anglican waters."⁷⁸ His decision to call back Anglican priests to Rome and his anti-Protestantism came across as hurtful and slowed down ecumenical convergence.

On February 11, 2013 Benedict announced his resignation. His decision was called "a courageous step."⁷⁹ No other pope since Pope Coelestin V (1294) had resigned. With his resignation a "pale pontificate" came to an end. The crisis, however, continued and the church appeared to be "seriously sick."⁸⁰

The "Gutmensch"⁸¹ from Argentina

For many centuries Italian popes controlled the fate of the Roman Catholic Church. With the Polish Karol Wojtyla and the German Joseph Ratzinger this development came to an end. But they still reflected European Catholicism. This would change with Jorge Mario Bergoglio from South America. With the election of the Argentinian the conclave wanted to set a signal. He originated from the world of the so-called "poor church," the "church from below," where people were more concerned with their struggle of survival than with the survival of traditions. The "religion of regulations"⁸² that the two previous popes tried to steer was not the church's way to the hearts of the people.

A man was needed who, like the "good Pope" John XXII, would seek closeness with the people, who understood their needs and problems. This person was found in the cardinal from Buenos Aires. From the very beginning he appeared to the people as a "counterpart to the past."⁸³ The new pope from the "margins of the world," as he called himself, is the first Jesuit on the papal throne and the first pope to choose the name Francis. With his name he indicated that he wanted to be "a Pope of the Poor," for "Peter did not have a bank account."⁸⁴ The "Church of the Poor" did not play a role with his predecessors. Only John XXIII made some remarks about it. Thus, Bergoglio's election seemed to start a "Vatican spring"⁸⁵ that was interpreted as "a raid of the Holy Spirit on Rome"⁸⁶ and the hope was expressed that "more profound reforms"⁸⁷ would come.

Catholic believers around the world were electrified when the new pope greeted the masses in a very humble manner and declined to wear the costly *Mozetta* gown. "Now the carnival is finished," he is reported to have said.⁸⁸ His popularity increased when

the news spread that he paid his bills himself, drove an old car, and did not live in the apostolic palace but in the papal guest house. His criticism of some clerics' luxurious lifestyles received enthusiastic approval with the people.

Francis wanted a "new church." He does not wear a *Mithra*, he washes the feet of women and African people, and in his blessing *Urbi et Orbi* he does not use many foreign words. He appeared as an almost foreign object in the ossifying system of the Vatican. The people were fascinated with his affability. A pope who kisses babies, wears a clown's nose, and pays the entrance fee to the bathing beach for the poor could be expected to introduce more "far-reaching reforms"⁸⁹ and initiate "a new epoch."⁹⁰

But when the reforms tarried many became disappointed and impatient. The pope should not just "speak flippantly,"⁹¹ but also act, as some observed. He should start getting active in dealing with the church dogmas, and should advance the process of modernizing the church.⁹² Some entertained the suspicion that the pope was using his friendly and approachable manner to create an "alibi" to cover up his inactivity.⁹³

While one could detect a new way of doing things, the dogmatic positions remained the same as in "classical" Catholicism. Some critics even accused the pope of wanting to "distinguish himself at the church's expense,"⁹⁴ with words not followed by any action. One has to keep in mind, however, that the strength of resistant forces in the Vatican was and still is so great that some clear-sighted observers feared him unable to change much.⁹⁵ There is a gap between the "teaching of the church and the reality"⁹⁶ that is simply part of the life of the church. The pope himself called it a "malicious resistance" that tried to make his work in the Vatican more difficult.⁹⁷

Some traditionalists "did not like this Pope."⁹⁸ He was mocked as "lunatic Gaucho" and as a "compassion junky." He faced open rejection and even hate. Some felt his election was a mistake. One Vatican expert even claimed that he would not have been elected today.⁹⁹ In comparison to his predecessor he has been called "a theological zero."¹⁰⁰ One American cardinal accused him of leaving the church "without a leader."¹⁰¹ Some even spoke of negative campaigning against him. In a writing of protest in 2017, some traditionalist theologians accused the pope of propagating "heretical standpoints,"¹⁰² on account of his friendliness toward divorced people and his stance on other ethical questions (marriage, sexual morals, the receiving of sacraments).

Indeed, Francis seemed to fight a "campaign of destruction" against the Curia.¹⁰³ This became evident in his remarkable Christmas speech in 2014. In it he denounced the Curia as sick. Its representatives are full of haughtiness, he said, and characterized by a greed for luxury. They are sick of "spiritual Alzheimer's." They suffer a "memory loss of Jesus" and are "godless bureaucrats."¹⁰⁴ It seems that with the demission of the ultraconservative director for the

Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, and his replacement with the Jesuit and Spanish archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, the pope tried to buy some time for changes to be implemented.¹⁰⁵

This is remarkable because in matters of faith and morals Francis is quite conservative. While he rejects a return to the Latin mass, he nevertheless allows confession with the ultraconservative Pius fraternity. He also rejects the ordination of women and praises celibacy as a "positive experience."¹⁰⁶ Just as John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Francis also is a great admirer of Mary and opposes the violent liberation theology. In ecumenical dialogue he also tends to be more open with Orthodoxy than with Protestants and has refused communion with Protestants. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) one finds a brief appeal to "interreligious dialogue,"¹⁰⁷ but it simply recalls what has been said earlier.

However, because Francis criticizes the competitiveness among Christians and other religions, traditional forces within the Roman Catholic Church were vehemently opposed. When he visited a Pentecostal church in Italy, he was criticized of driving Catholics into the arms of sectarians and cults that spread rapidly in South America. Similarly, his visit with the Waldensians, from whom he asked forgiveness for the repression and persecution they had suffered in the Middle Ages by the Catholic Church, led to disapproving comments. Francis went beyond John Paul II and did something that Benedict would never have done: he did not just denounce individuals but spoke in the name of the church.

A new theological accent was set in his "green" encyclical *Laudation si* (2015). As was to be expected, it contained massive criticism of the capitalistic economic system, something that only Pope John XXIII ventured to do before. The new element in this encyclical is the joining of the church in the protection of the environment—a cause that had already existed in the secular realm for a long time.

If one asks about Francis' theological role models, one always finds people who were progressives in their time but who at the same time were staunch defenders of Rome. All are Jesuits: Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, Franz Xaver the Missionary, and more recently the French Henri de Lubac and Michel de Certeau.¹⁰⁸

The remarkable thing in the current pope's approach is his unusual commentary on current problems like divorce, remarriage, or homosexuality, while simultaneously indicating a hesitation to solve these very problems. Open questions—like women in the diaconate¹⁰⁹ or the reception of communion for those who have remarried—were addressed, but then immediately referred to seemingly never-ending commissions. The 2015 synod of the bishops in Rome was supposed to find solutions to the above-mentioned problems, but did "not find a direct answer,"¹¹⁰ as one cardinal bemoaned. There was only a "timid

openness,” deliberately kept rather vague: a “cautious compromise” that allows leaders of local churches to make the final decisions. Of course, this openness also caused reactions from hardliners who accused the pope of weak leadership.

The ambivalent character of this pontificate—his closeness to the people and the willingness to recognize areas in need of reform on the one hand,¹¹¹ and on the other hand his reluctance to really change things—leaves the observer with many open questions. Does Francis want to be the “man of practical reforms,” as his predecessor Benedict remarked,¹¹² hampered by resistance within the Vatican? Or is he just a “clever tactician” and “a superior strategist” who is not really interested in reforming and innovating the church?¹¹³

Since people today can no longer be reached with dogmas and strict regulations, the pope seems to keep members engaged by seeking dialogue with the world—as in the year 2016, which was called the “year of compassion.” Through announcements, small compromises, and much verbalizing he seeks to accommodate the people, but the substantial teachings of the church are not changed, just as was the case with his predecessors. When faced with questions in regard to the pope’s infallibility—that this concept is exaggerated and that some decisions of church councils ought to be rescinded, as was done three times in church history¹¹⁴—the pope simply keeps silent. This raises legitimate questions for any critical observer: what is the worth of this compassion if the system remains inflexible, even with those church laws that may be changed, like mandatory celibacy? Thus, even the current pope, in all his humbleness and kindness, cannot hide the fact there is resistance to change within the church. In light of this, some clear-sighted observers have even called this crisis of the Roman Catholic Church “hopeless.”¹¹⁵ The church and its highest representatives are apparently unable to set them free from the girdle they have imposed upon themselves.

We are left with the sobering insight that Rome still has the same ambivalent face: there is cautious change through adjustment and adaption, while at the same time one notices a marked continuity in essence. Rome is willing to undergo secondary reforms but in its dogmatic substance it remains persistent and static.

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¹¹¹This is the second and concluding article by Hans Heinz on the Roman Catholic Church. The first article was published in *Reflections*, vol. 59, July 2017.

¹¹²Joseph Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde: Christentum und katholische Kirche im neuen Jahrtausend. Ein Gespräch mit Peter*

Seewald (Augsburg: Weltbild, 2000), 129; Hans Küng called this period the “meager years” after the council (Hans Küng, “Zur Lage der katholischen Kirche,” in Norbert Greinacher and Hans Küng [Hg.], *Katholische Kirche—Wohin? Wider den Verrat am Konzil* [Munich: Pieper, 1986], 13) and Karl Rahner spoke about a “time of a wintery church” (see Hans Küng, *Ist die Kirche noch zu retten?* [Munich: Pieper, 2011], 29).

³ *Tiroler Tageszeitung* (Innsbruck), April 4, 2005, 2.

⁴ Hans Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, (Munich: Pieper, 2015), 225.

⁵ Horst Herrmann, *Papst Wojtyła—Der heilige Narr*, (Reinbek-Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983), 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁹ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), May 26, 2015, 18.

¹⁰ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Frankfurt/Main), June 3, 1991, 2.

¹¹ *Die Presse* (Wien), March 3, 2006, 7.

¹² Cf. Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 193, 213, 238.

¹³ The attack on liberation theology is visible already in 1979 in Puebla, Mexico, and in 1984 in a condemnation through cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

¹⁴ See the apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* from May 1999, 22.

¹⁵ *Erklärung der Kongregation für die Glaubenslehre zur Frage der Zulassung von Frauen zum Priesteramt* (October 15, 1976), 2nd ed. (Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 1995), 48.

¹⁶ So Hans Küng, in *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), March 26, 2005, 109.

¹⁷ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 227.

¹⁸ Horst Herrmann, *Benedikt XVI—Der neue Papst aus Deutschland* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2005), 109.

¹⁹ Herrmann, *Papst Wojtyła—Der heilige Narr*, 59.

²⁰ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 190f.

²¹ Josef Gelmi, *Papst Franziskus—Eine Revolution von oben* (Kevelaer: Lahn-Verlag, 2014), 162. John Paul II demanded theologians to accept papal opinions as teachings of the church even though they were not fixed as dogma.

²² Herrmann, *Benedikt XVI—Der neue Papst aus Deutschland*, 29.

²³ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 236.

²⁴ Hans Küng in *Kirche In* (Wien), November 2003, 31.

²⁵ Enzyklika *Ut unum sint*, May 1995, § 79, 88, 94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, § 14.

²⁷ Herrmann, *Papst Wojtyła—Der heilige Narr*, 201.

²⁸ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 224.

²⁹ John Paul II was beatified in 2011 and canonized in 2014.

³⁰ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 225.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 257.

³³ Herrmann, *Benedikt XVI—Der neue Papst aus Deutschland*, 81.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 46f.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁷ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), February 3, 2009, 1.

³⁸ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 300–302.

³⁹ Herrmann, *Benedikt XVI—Der neue Papst aus Deutschland*, 83, 92–119.

⁴⁰ *Sonntagsrundschau* (Linz), April 23, 2006, 3.

⁴¹ *Sieben Päpste*, 283.

⁴² *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), March 1, 2013, 13;

Peter Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche* (Munich: Droemer-Verlag, 2016), 210, 261.

⁴³ The last one (*Lumen fidei*) was published only by his successor.

- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 238.
- ⁴⁵ *Sonntagsrundschau* (Linz), April 23, 2006, 3.
- ⁴⁶ For a review of Benedict's books on Jesus, see also Ekkehardt Mueller, "Benedict XVI and Jesus," <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/church/benedict-xvi-and-jesus>, accessed December 9, 2018.
- ⁴⁷ Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 235.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ *Jesus von Nazareth* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 1:14.
- ⁵⁰ Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 235.
- ⁵¹ *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 1, 10f.
- ⁵² Ibid., vol. 2, 315.
- ⁵³ *Idea Spektrum*, July 12, 2017, 8.
- ⁵⁴ *Sieben Päpste*, 307. For the critical reviewer, his Jesus books are a "methodological backsliding into an uncritical use of historical sources"; cf. Volker Reinhardt, *Pontifex—Die Geschichte der Päpste*, (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2017), 867.
- ⁵⁵ *Sieben Päpste*, 336.
- ⁵⁶ Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 253.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 254.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 288.
- ⁶⁰ Seebald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 259.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 253.
- ⁶² Gelmi, *Papst Franziskus—Eine Revolution von oben*, 142.
- ⁶³ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 308.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ The emperor said, "Show me what new things Mohammed has brought? You will find only find bad behavior and inhumane acts, like this, when he commanded to propagate the faith that he preached by the sword" (quoted in Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 278).
- ⁶⁶ *Sieben Päpste*, 275.
- ⁶⁷ Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 280.
- ⁶⁸ Herrmann, *Benedikt XVI—Der neue Papst aus Deutschland*, 42.
- ⁶⁹ *Dominus Iesus*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html, accessed December 4, 2018.
- ⁷⁰ *Dominus Iesus*, § 17.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html, accessed December 4, 2018.
- ⁷³ So Benedict XVI in his response to Mark S. Hanson, president of the Lutheran World Federation, at the commemoration of the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation (*Idea-Spektrum* 16. November 2005, 12). According to Benedict, condemnations for heresy "are still true" as quoted in Walter Schöpsdau, "Rechtfertigungslehre: Von der Antwort der Katholischen Kirche zur Gemeinsamen offiziellen Feststellung" in *Materialdienst*, September–October 1999, 93.
- ⁷⁴ Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 233.
- ⁷⁵ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 277.
- ⁷⁶ Herrmann, *Benedikt XVI—Der neue Papst aus Deutschland*, 86.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 287.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 284.
- ⁷⁹ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 311.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 305.
- ⁸¹ The German term "Gutmensch" literally means *good human*. It is sometimes a cultural term similar to "do-gooder". The term implies that "Gutmenschen" have an overwhelming wish to be good and also have a supposedly moralizing and proselytizing behavior. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutmensch>, accessed December 4, 2018.
- ⁸² Herbert Kohlmaier, "Gedanken zu Glaube und Zeit" in *Plattform "Wir sind Kirche"* (Wien), February 28, 2017, 2.
- ⁸³ Gelmi, *Papst Franziskus—Eine Revolution von oben*, 11.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 82.
- ⁸⁵ Küng, *Sieben Päpste*, 316.
- ⁸⁶ Gelmi, *Papst Franziskus—Eine Revolution von oben*, 206.
- ⁸⁷ Kohlmaier, *Gedanken zu Glaube und Zeit*, 2.
- ⁸⁸ Gelmi, *Papst Franziskus—Eine Revolution von oben*, 43.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 33.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 168.
- ⁹¹ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), July 18, 2016, 5.
- ⁹² Ibid., March 15, 2016, 19.
- ⁹³ Ibid., January 12, 2016, 16.
- ⁹⁴ *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), May 23, 2015, 20.
- ⁹⁵ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), May 19, 2015, 23.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., October 18, 2014, 5.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., January 10, 2017, 19.
- ⁹⁸ *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), January 27, 2014, 39.
- ⁹⁹ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), April 12, 2016, 11.
- ¹⁰⁰ Andreas Englisch, *Der Kämpfer im Vatikan*, (Munich: Penguin, 2017), 164.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰² *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), October 9, 2017, 17.
- ¹⁰³ Englisch, *Der Kämpfer im Vatikan*, 121.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 122–127.
- ¹⁰⁵ With regards to the personal politics of Pope Francis, see Martin Bräuer, "Papst Franziskus und sein Personal" in *Materialdienst*, September–October 2017, 83–86.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), May 19, 2014, 21.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco-co/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#Ecumenical_dialogue, accessed December 4, 2018, 250–254.
- ¹⁰⁸ Antonio Spadaro, *Das Interview mit Papst Franziskus* (Freiburg: Herder, 2013), 13.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Salzburger Nachrichten* (Salzburg), May 19, 2016, 24.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., October 27, 2015, 5; Reinhardt, *Pontifex—Die Geschichte der Päpste*, 871.
- ¹¹¹ Francis spoke about the "15 sicknesses of the Curia" in *Die Presse* (Wien), December 29, 2014, 2f.
- ¹¹² Seewald, *Benedikt XVI—Letzte Gespräche*, 221.
- ¹¹³ *Sieben Päpste*, 333.
- ¹¹⁴ For instance, Pope Martin V acknowledged the decisions of the council of Constance (1415) about the superorder of the council above the Pope (Decree: *Haec Sancta*) and later he rescinded this decision. At the council of Basel (1439) the same procedure repeated itself when Pope Eugen IV rejected the decisions of Constance. Even Pope Pius II, before he was elected, welcomed the conciliarism but later as Pope he condemned it (1459).
- ¹¹⁵ Kohlmaier, *Gedanken zu Glaube und Zeit*, 4.

"Never give up your faith and hope in God. Cling to the promises."

Ellen Gould White, *The Upward Look*
(Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 176.

Lessons from Matthew 5

By Clinton Wahlen

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 is the first of Jesus’ five major discourses recorded by Matthew, each of which unfolds different facets of the kingdom of heaven. The first and last discourses act as bookends, describing the kingdom in its present and future dimensions respectively. The Sermon describes in far-reaching yet practical terms the character and practices of those who belong to the kingdom.

From a comparison of the other two Gospels that record this event, Luke 6:17–49 seems to be a shorter, independent report of the same sermon (cf. Matt 4:24–25; 5:1; Mark 3:7–13). Since Luke has the sayings on prayer (Luke 11:1–13) and worry (Luke 12:22–32) being given at other times, it appears that Jesus spoke many of the same or similar sayings on multiple occasions (see DA 488, 495).

Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

Apart from Matthew’s introductory (Matt 4:23–5:2) and concluding material (Matt 7:28–8:1), the sermon itself consists of three main sections:

1. The Beatitudes, which are blessings on citizens of the kingdom (Matt 5:3–12)
2. A More Abundant Righteousness (Matt 5:13–7:12)
 - General Principles (Matt 5:13–20)
 - Instruction on the Law (Matt 5:21–48)
 - Instruction on Worship (Matt 6:1–18)
 - Instruction on Attitudes toward God and Others (Matt 6:19–7:11)
 - Summary Principle: The Golden Rule (Matt 7:12)
3. Warnings of Future Judgment (Matt 7:13–27)

Interpretation of the Chapter

1. Verses 1–12

- Jesus goes up on a mountain (or high hill) with His disciples, apparently due to the size of the crowd. Those who follow Him up the hill include those healed by Him (cf. Matt 4:24–25; Luke 6:19).
- The beatitudes, which could be translated “How blessed are . . .” have aptly been described as reflecting the language of heaven (MB vii). They constitute eight promises of the blessings that citizens of the kingdom will receive. Even how these people are described is really an inherent promise of God’s

power to restore them into His image.

- The first and last beatitudes assure those who sense their spiritual poverty and who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake that the kingdom of heaven is theirs not only as a future hope but now, as they experience its blessings.
- Though believers mourn over sin, and its impact on themselves and others, they may rest assured that a better day is coming when they will sorrow no more (cf. Zech 12:10; John 16:20–22).
- The meek, like the poor in spirit, rely upon God and entrust their future wellbeing to Him (Ps 37:3, 7, 34). As unlikely as it might seem, it is these who will inherit the earth (it’s a *gift*)—not the strong who would take it by force—and they will inherit not this sin-damaged planet, but a transcendent kingdom of glory over which the Son of Man will reign (Ps 8:11; 16:27; 19:28; 24:30–31; 25:34).
- Those who long for righteousness as they do their daily sustenance of food and water are promised that their hopes will be satisfied, both in terms of a future righteous kingdom (Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–5; 32:1) and of a present reality as the will of God described in His word is fulfilled in their own life and experience (cf. Matt 4:4).
- “The merciful” refer to those who carry out concrete acts of kindness: giving alms (Matt 6:2–4), ministering to “sinners” (Matt 9:13), forgiving others (18:32–35), etc. And kindness comes back upon the giver (Matt 7:2, 12; Prov 11:25). But showing mercy does not come naturally to the selfish human heart. “Whenever one manifests a spirit of mercy and forgiveness, he does it not of himself, but through the influence of the divine Spirit moving upon his heart. ‘We love, because He first loved us.’ 1 John 4:19, R.V.” (MB 21; cf. Matt 10:8).
- Purity of heart can spring only from one that God has cleansed (Ps 51:10; Acts 15:9), through “the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5:26). When the Son of Man comes in His kingdom (Matt 26:64), “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every-

one who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2–3; cf. Rev 22:4).

- Although many in Israel longed to throw off the Roman yoke of oppression, Jesus labels His people “peacemakers” because they follow the ways of “the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6; cf. Rom 5:1) and thus can be called God’s children (cf. Matt 5:45).
- Although some people seem to bring persecution upon themselves by their own poor behavior and then mistakenly believe their suffering proves them right, it is those who are persecuted “for righteousness’ sake” and “suffer as a Christian” (1 Pet 4:16) who are promised God’s kingdom. Thus, they need not fear those who may kill the body but are ultimately unable to harm their future destiny (Matt 10:28). In fact, they can rejoice because their witness spreads the gospel further and receiving the reward of seeing people saved in God’s kingdom as a result.

2. Verses 13–20

- Jesus presents three further images of those who compose the kingdom. His followers are called “salt,” “light,” and are to have a “Pharisee-exceeding” righteousness. The permeating character of salt and light suggests there are no boundaries to the kingdom’s influence, while the third image affirms that its citizens will outshine all human attempts at producing righteousness.
 - i. Salt and light are contrasting metaphors. Salt mingles silently to be effective while light must stand apart and be visible to all.
 - ii. Nevertheless, the emphasis is not on the light itself but on the act of letting it shine.
 - iii. Like the reflected light of the moon, this light does not originate with the believers themselves (unlike Pharisaic righteousness), but is that which they receive from Jesus (John 1:9), and is associated with “good works.” It is to direct people’s attention to a greater light—that of the Father who is the source of all light and goodness (Matt 19:17).
- Up to this point, no one would suppose that Jesus was trying to destroy the law, so Jesus’ reassurance that He came to fulfill it acts as an introduction for His ensuing and extensive commentary on the spiritual nature of the law as well as

the goal of this teaching: to show how the law is truly to be fulfilled.

- i. The word “fulfill” is used most often in Matthew with regard to the fulfillment of prophecy (e.g., Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23), which is also pointed to here, but it can also refer to fulfilling or obeying the righteous requirements of the law (Matt 3:15).
 - ii. Every aspect of the law is to remain in force “till all is fulfilled,” which suggests that some elements, namely those which are ceremonial or typological, point forward to and will meet their fulfillment in future events.
 - iii. Jesus’ reference to the commandments shows He has the moral law in mind as His subsequent quotations of the Ten Commandments confirm (e.g., Matt 5:21, 27, 33; cf. Matt 19:17–29).
- Jesus’ articulation of an impossibly high standard of righteousness as the “low bar” for entering the kingdom shows the insufficiency of all human strivings. Accepting anything less than “kingdom-of-heaven righteousness” would, in fact, only serve to immortalize evil in the universe.

3. Verses 21–48

- Jesus explains this more abundant righteousness using six overarching propositions divided into groups of three. The first group dealing with murder, adultery, and divorce amplifies the sixth and seventh commandments (Matt 5:21–32), while the second group plumbs the depths of the third commandment, forbids retaliation, and commands loving one’s enemies (Matt 5:33–48).
- Although Jesus’ six alternative propositions are normally translated in English with strong contrasting statements (“but . . .”), the softer Greek connective conjunction *de* suggests that each proposition elaborates on what precedes it (“Yet I say to you . . .”).
- The emphasis of Jesus is on the inward thoughts of the heart. Virtually all outward acts of sin begin with inward thoughts: murder begins with anger (cf. 1 John 3:15), adultery begins with lust, and stealing begins with covetousness. Nevertheless, the entrance of evil desires or lustful thoughts are not themselves sin but temptation—unless

they are cherished rather than immediately repulsed as evil (Jas 1:14–15). Rather than trying to eliminate evil thoughts, we are urged to train our minds on the good (Phil 4:8; cf. Prov 16:3).

- The references to plucking out one's eye or cutting off one's hand should be taken metaphorically, not literally. They are avenues of temptation and may be the means by which sinful choices are made. Better even to lose a part of the body than for soul and body to be cast into hell. The Greek word translated "hell" (*geenna*) refers to God's judgment on the wicked, destroying "both soul and body" with unquenchable fire (Matt 10:28). This fiery destruction is referred to by both Jesus (Matt 7:19; 13:40–42, 49–50; 18:8–9; cf. 25:41) and John the Baptist (Matt 3:10, 12).
- The only basis given by Jesus as legitimate grounds for divorce is sexual infidelity. The word used here for sexual immorality (*porneia*) is broader than adultery. It refers to any sexual activity outside of a biblically legitimate marriage (cf. Matt 15:19), including same-sex relationships. Divorce and remarriage for any other reason is a form of adultery.
- Vows or oaths were often carefully formulated to sound binding by calling on God indirectly as witness to their truthfulness (cf. Matt 23:16–22), but actually made to be broken and thus violate the third commandment (Exod 20:7; cf. Lev 19:12). Jesus' blanket prohibition of oaths (except when placed under court oath, Matt 26:63–64) is stricter even than the teachings of the Qumran community. A believer's word should always be trustworthy without the need for any additional assurances (Jas 5:12).
- The negative command forbidding retaliation (quoting Exod 21:24 et al.)

is paired with the positive command to love one's enemies. Not insisting on one's rights or property shows a radical unselfishness and concern for the other person. The admonitions to turn the other cheek, give one's valuable outer cloak, go the extra mile, and not refuse requests to borrow money are simply examples of the principle to which others could easily be added, though challenging to fulfill.

- The final proposition to love one's enemies, a principle illustrated already by Elisha (2 Kgs 6:21–23), who is a type of Christ, is the most challenging of all. Yet, as Jesus points out, the Father shows kindness to all, even His enemies, providing for their needs with sunshine and rain. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and so, by such actions, believers show their genuine connection to God as His spiritual children. Jesus "tells us to be perfect as He is, in the same manner. We are to be centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe" (MB 77).

Application of the Chapter

Important lessons contained in this chapter include:

1. Regardless of how difficult life might be now, those who are truly blessed have the principles of heaven in their hearts.
2. To be truly whole and truly healthy in every way includes having healthy thoughts.
3. It is humanly impossible to achieve the righteousness that God requires of all who will enter heaven. Only a miracle of God's forgiving grace that transforms willing believers more and more into His image by the Holy Spirit can make it possible.
4. Putting these principles into practice in daily life will help us not only to be more like Jesus but to understand Him better and to love Him more. "God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach" (DA 311).

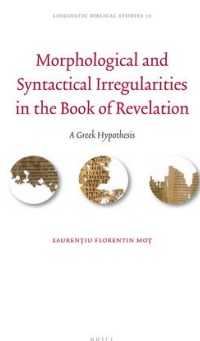
"And He loves us though we err. Now do not worry yourself out of the arms of the dear Saviour, but rest trustingly in faith. He loves you; He cares for you; He is blessing you, and will give you His peace and grace. He is saying to you, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.'"

Ellen Gould White, *The Upward Look* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 212.

BOOK NOTES

Laurentiu Florentin Mot Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities in the Book of Revelation: A Greek Hypothesis

(Leiden: Brill, 2015),
292 pp.
US\$179



This monograph, a revised form of the author’s dissertation, is the first comprehensive examination of the perceived grammatical and syntactical peculiarities of the book of Revelation from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Importantly, Mot evaluates the Greek language used based on ancient literary expectations rather than modern ones, aiming to describe in each case not what John “should have written, but trying to understand what is the function of the choice he made” (245). The study consists of four main chapters with a three-page summary and conclusion, an extensive bibliography (33 pp.), and indexes for ancient sources, modern authors, and subjects.

Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive review of literature on the peculiarities of the Greek language employed in the book of Revelation, beginning with the third-century writer Dionysius of Alexandria, but focusing more particularly on studies from the eighteenth century to the present. Chapter 2 is a fascinating overview of ancient literary conventions by Greek and Roman authors as to what was considered grammatical errors, including their definitions of barbarisms and solecisms. These conventions become the standard by which the grammar of the book of Revelation is measured.

Chapter 3, by far the largest part of the book, examines barbarisms and solecisms in detail. Mot categorizes them as alleged, explicable, and actual, based on previous studies and his own reading and study of Revelation. Of the many valuable insights and observations made throughout this chapter, Mot’s interpretation of “the most famous solecism” (113) in Revelation 1:4 is worth mentioning here as an example of how the study proceeds. The greeting in Greek, “from Him who is and who was and who is to come,” consists of the preposition *apo* (“from”), after which the genitive case is expected, but which is instead followed by two substantival participles in the nominative case. Consulting the manuscripts, Mot finds this solecism to have substantial support, leaving “no doubt” that this is the original reading (113). After analyzing the various explanations (beginning with Lorenzo Valla in the fifteenth century), including the “mainstream explanation” that it is an indeclinable name, Mot dismisses less likely possibilities, such as the suggestion that it is accidental, point-

ing to the other thirty-five occurrences of *apo* in Revelation, all of which are followed by the expected genitive forms—including the last part of verse 4 (“from the seven spirits”) and verse 5 (“from Jesus Christ”). Mot concludes that John “makes no mistake” here (115), arguing that the noun “God” in the genitive (*theou*) was deliberately omitted in order to focus the reader’s attention on who God is (appealing to a similar absence of the noun in Revelation 4:2–3). Interesting suggestions based on irregularities in Greek are abundant, such as the “clear demarcation” made between the Spirit of God and the demonic or evil spirits, by means of masculine (Rev 5:6) and neuter participles (Rev 16:14) respectively (171–172).

Implications from the study are drawn in chapter 4. Mot concludes that the Greek of Revelation is more regular than irregular, that John’s language is close to the Greek preserved in contemporary papyri and inscriptions (245), and that his grammar “is always intentional” (221, 246) but “seldom . . . for stylistic purposes” (221). He denies that the peculiarities sometimes result from John’s deficient understanding of the rules of Greek (245), but nevertheless affirms that the “deviant syntax” reflects his “linguistic limitations” (221)—that is, “what he could linguistically perform” (246). To this reader, at least, that sounds like a distinction without a difference.

Mot makes a valuable contribution to the study of the book of Revelation, including some important cautions relative to the use of the manuscript evidence in an attempt to identify what John originally wrote. For those seeking the original form of the text in particular verses, Mot’s conclusions with regard to John’s morphological and syntactical irregularities will be important to consider before drawing any conclusions regarding intrinsic probabilities for the weighing of manuscript evidence. In particular, there are important reasons to question explanations of irregular constructions made on the basis of the supposed influence of John’s Semitic language background. While traces of this influence are present, normally this does not seem to be the source of Revelation’s irregularities. Mot makes a convincing case that explanations based on Greek language considerations are more credible.

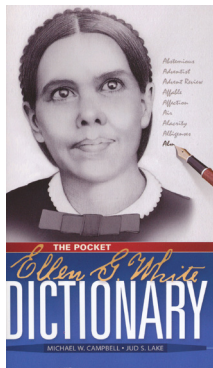
While not every reader will agree with the decisions made in particular cases, Mot’s broad consideration of the scholarly literature across many languages, ancient

and modern, as well as the depth of his analysis make this a book from which specialists in Greek and teachers of courses in the book of Revelation will learn much. However, it should be added that it is a challenging read, even for advanced students. Making it more difficult to use as a reference is the fact that the ancient sources index does not include biblical materials. This lacuna means that readers will be unable to find discussions of specific passages in Revelation without knowing the precise solecism or barbarism at issue in a particular verse. Also, because of the way the book is organized, discussion of some verses will be found in more than one place. Of more concern is the author's interpretation of some figures, which

seems at certain points to align more with a preterist than a historicist approach (e.g., the sea beast of Revelation 13:1 seems to be identified with "a leader of the [Roman?] empire," 175). Finally, there are more typographical errors than might be expected (e.g., "lenght" [50], "available" [155], "Buttmannn [167, 204], "Stanely" [191], "shinning" [197], "Torrah" [224]) and even occasional lapses in Greek (e.g., misplaced accents ["ἰδιωματα," 4], use of a grave accent when it should be acute (64), "λέει" [instead of "λέγει," 200]). Such distractions may lead some readers to underestimate an otherwise quality work.

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**Michael W. Campbell
and
Jud S. Lake, eds.
The Pocket Ellen G.
White Dictionary**
(Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018),
176 pp.
US\$7.99



The *Pocket Ellen G. White Dictionary* is, as the title indicates, a small and handy reference tool for basic information about the life and writings of Ellen G. White. It is a welcome resource that helps to better understand some of the terms and concepts she used. It includes basic terms of reference and jargon she used but also covers important people with whom she interacted and places she visited and worked at during her lifetime. It is illuminating to read the original meaning of such words as "groggery," "humors," "intercourse," "illy," "manliness," "womanliness," "panoply," "petulant/petulance," or "Rivulet Society" as White used them, to mention but a few.

The first part of the book has three short introductory chapters: "Who was Ellen G. White?," "Ellen G. White and the Bible," and "How to Interpret Ellen G. White's Writings." This is followed by 510 short articles in alphabetical order and a short chronology on the most important dates in White's life and ministry. Due to the nature and title of the book, the entries are rather short; many of them are only one or two lines long. The brevity of the articles is the great strength of the book, making it a readable, ready reference. At the same time, the brevity is also its deficiency.

The entry on the 1919 GC Session is found under "Bible Conference, 1919" whereas the 1888 GC Session is listed un-

der "General Conference Session of 1888." A cross-reference and even a separate entry on Minneapolis would have been helpful. Similarly, there are no entries for "Galatians" or "conservative." And entries on higher criticism, criticism of the Bible, and historical criticism are missing. Only a very brief entry on "criticism" is listed, which deals with a critical spirit. In the entry on "Inerrancy," a term White never used herself, the authors claim that "Ellen G. White made it clear that both the Bible and her writings have minor discrepancies in details that do not pertain to the focal message of revelation that was transmitted by the human messenger (see 1SM 38, 39)." Such a brief description and terse explanation leaves more questions open than it really answers and it reveals the dilemma and deficiency of such a short reference work. Readers who want more information will do well to consult the more comprehensive and detailed, albeit not as handy, *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, edited by Denis Fortin, Jerry Moon, Michael W. Campbell, and George R. Knight (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013). These quibbles aside, the book deserves wide distribution and should be on the desk of every church member interested in a brief overview of Ellen G. White and her writings.

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"Prayer is the breath of faith." (Frank M. Hasel)

Index to *Reflections*

The first issue of *Reflections* was published in January 2003. Since then, we've published many articles.

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