

## *PURPOSE*

*Reflections* is the official newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. It seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors, and teachers.

## *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

Ellen White's Writings and Her Ministry . . . . .	1
The BRI and the New BRCs . . . . .	1
The Seventh South American Biblical Symposium . . . . .	2
Gerhard Pfandl Honored . . . . .	2
The Tomb of Herod the Great . . . . .	2
Benedict XVI and Jesus . . . . .	4
The Textus Receptus and Modern Bible Translations . . . . .	6
The Holy Spirit, Sickness, Prayer, and Healing . . . . .	10
A Commemoration and Its Secret . . . . .	11
Book Notes . . . . .	12

## *NEWS AND COMMENTS*

### **ELLEN WHITE'S WRITINGS AND HER MINISTRY**

In January 2007, the White Estate Board of Trustees voted to produce a book addressing Ellen White issues. The book will have a number of authors and contain more than twenty chapters with Merlin D. Burt being the editor. It will address a wide spectrum of issues in regard to Ellen White including revelation, inspiration, illumination, the gift of prophecy in Scripture, the relationship of her writings to the Bible, her role in Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, hermeneutics, her visions, her literary methods and use of sources, science, critics, and authority. The individual chapters are being reviewed by BRICOM (Biblical Research Institute Committee) to assist the editor and to provide additional critique. Twelve chapters were reviewed over the

course of one day during the October 2007 BRICOM meeting at Andrews University. It is planned to have the remaining chapters reviewed during the April 2008 meeting in Loma Linda. This important book will assist in providing answers to questions regarding Ellen White's writings and ministry.

Merlin D. Burt,  
Ellen G. White Estate  
Branch Office Andrews University

### **THE BRI AND THE NEW BRCs**

Two divisions have established their own Biblical Research Committee (BRC) based on the Guidelines voted by the GC Administrative Committee in 2006 and in cooperation with the Biblical Research Institute (BRI). The committee of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division met for the first time in November 4, 2007. The role of the committee was carefully delineated and the first steps were taken in defining a working agenda for the next three years. The first work of the Committee was to examine the document "Spiritualism and the Adventist Church in Africa: Guidelines." Some changes and additions were made. It was voted to refer it to the Executive Committee of the division for further discussion. The Executive Committee carefully analyzed it during its Year-End Meetings and asked the BRC to have the final draft ready for the Mid-Year Meetings.

The Inter-American Division appointed a Biblical Research Committee on November 2006, during the Year-End Meetings of the division. The Chairman of the Committee is Eli Henry. The first meeting took place

on November 29, 2007, at the division's headquarters in Miami, Florida. After discussing the nature and role of the Committee the members expressed their support for the goals of the Committee. Gerhard Pfandl gave a lecture on "Current Trends in Adventist Theology," which was well received and provided the opportunity for dynamic interaction. Topics for future discussion were listed and assigned to writers.

We are pleased to see these developments in areas where church growth is significant. We hope that the work of the Committees will contribute to some extent to the theological development of the church and to the fulfillment of its mission in those divisions.

Ángel M. Rodríguez, BRI

### THE SEVENTH SOUTH AMERICAN BIBLICAL SYMPOSIUM

In November 2007, the Seventh South-American Biblical-Theological Symposium met in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where in 1999 the second symposium had already assembled. Present were several hundred people including scholars and theologians of the South American Division, administrators, and local pastors and theology students. The event was hosted by the Universidad Adventista de Bolivia which did an outstanding job in organizing the meetings. The topic of the 2007 meeting was Christology. As usual, BRI and several North American scholars were invited to present lectures. In about three days thirteen plenary sessions and approximately 72 seminars were held. There was an excellent spirit of unity and joy.

At the end, a declaration prepared during the symposium was discussed and voted which expressed the belief of those assembled in the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, and living Christ who now serves in the heavenly sanctuary. It reaffirmed the group's full commitment to the Adventist faith, hope, lifestyle, and mission in the context of a biblical Christology. Statements on Scripture and its interpretation which form the foundation for Christology were followed by statements on the nature and ministry of Christ, the church as body of Christ, and the participants' determination to live intimately with Christ.

Point 4 of the consensus statement was especially interesting. It affirmed faith in the full divinity and complete humanity of Christ expressing that Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, possessed two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. Jesus was fully God and fully human. He is coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He offered Himself on the cross as the once-and-for-all sacrifice to redeem all those who would believe in Him. As a human being Christ was born into a world affected by sin and inherited the weaknesses of humanity "after four thousand years of sin." He had the same needs that all humans have and experienced their suffering. "However, he did not possess sinful passions nor any propensities towards evil."

While it was possible for Him to sin and while He was tempted in all things, He remained without sin.

The next symposium will be held in Brazil in July 2009.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

### GERHARD PFANDL HONORED

On Sabbath, November 17, 2007, in conjunction with a theological symposium in San Diego a Festschrift was presented to Gerhard Pfandl in celebration of his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. A group of his former students took the initiative, organized the project, and invited his friends, colleagues, and former students to contribute articles to it. The result has been an excellent collection of biblical, historical, and theological articles dealing with issues of theological interest to the Adventist and non-Adventist theological communities.

The significant contributions of Gerhard Pfandl to the theological thinking of the church in the classroom and through his work at the BRI give to the honor bestowed on him a solid foundation. The staff of BRI joins his former students in recognizing that precious labor of service to the Lord and his Church. We pray that the Lord may give him many more years in His service.

The hardcover volume was edited by three of his former students (Martin Pröbstle, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Martin G. Klingbeil) and is entitled, "For You Have Strengthened Me:"

*Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Gerhard Pfandl in Celebration of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (St. Peter am Hart, Austria: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2007). Copies can be ordered through BRI or directly from Martin Pröbstle, Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 4963 St. Peter am Hart, Austria. Price: € 25.00; US \$40.00.



Ángel M. Rodríguez, BRI

### THE TOMB OF HEROD THE GREAT

The news of the discovery of the tomb of Herod did not make headlines in major newspapers as had done the "discovery" of the tomb of Jesus a few weeks before. There is evidence that the tomb found earlier belonged to a Jesus, but there were not enough data that could connect the tomb to the burial of Jesus of Nazareth. On the other hand, popular media gave limited attention to the discovery of another tomb, now the one of Herod. Was it just another tomb? No, this discovery has the potential of finding the last monument of the most well-known ruler of the Jews after the Neo-Babylonian exile.

#### *The Site of the Discovery*

The discovery of Herod's tomb was neither by chance nor by the effort of tomb robbers that were seeking fame

or treasures. The discovery was the fruit of the efforts of archaeologists who have been systematically digging under the scorching Judean sun for more than three decades. The effort of finding Herod's tomb took more than thirty years, but it was not because the site had been lost or that there was a mystery about the location of the tomb. The place of Herod's tomb had been known for almost two millennia. Flavius Josephus, a first-century historian, had already described in detail how Herod had been buried in the fortress of Herodium (see Josephus, *Jewish War* 1:673), a fortress located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the middle of the wilderness. However, the remains of the tomb had not been found, raising suspicion over Josephus' account. Was the ancient text right?

Ehud Netzer, professor at the Hebrew University, believed that Josephus's description of Herod's burial was correct and had been working on the site since 1972. Archaeological work was interrupted several times due to political unrest in the area. The location, south of Bethlehem, is a military zone on Palestinian territory. This summer, as I visited the area, I experienced the difficulties entering the site which is in a sensitive and very volatile security zone.

However, challenges have not deterred Netzer to return to the area and continue his search. His careful archaeological work and persistence have rewarded him with the satisfaction of discovering the remainders of Herod's tomb after thirty-five years. Nevertheless, one should not misrepresent the work of Netzer as one dedicated to prove the account of Josephus. He has admitted that his confidence in the description of the burial of Herod was not his driving force (as Heinrich Schliemann's quest for Troy). Netzer's main objective was to study Herodian architecture as he is an expert in the monumental building remains left by Herod the Great.

#### *The Owner of the Tomb*

Herod the Great (73-4 B.C.) was indeed a major builder, perhaps the greatest in Judea after Solomon. His most magnificent work was the Temple of Jerusalem. Because of his work on the Second Temple, it could properly be called the Third Temple. He rebuilt the humble temple built by Zerubbabel and transformed it into one of the architectural marvels of his time. He was appointed by the Romans as a vassal king over a large part of the Southern Levant in 37 B.C. This territory was full of and surrounded by enemies. Herod being an Idumean was aware that the Jews hated the descendants of Esau. East of his territory lived the Nabateans who were outside Roman control, and in the south Egypt was a threat, even with a Roman presence. Herod was also conscious of the political turbulence in Rome and,

to be safe, he dotted his territory with fortress palaces that served as refuge places for him and his family.

The most famous of Herod's fortresses was Masada, whose remains are still impressive. A less known fortress, but one of the major ones in Herod's time, was Herodium. Herod built Herodium in commemoration of his victories over the Jews (see Josephus, *Jewish War* 1:265). He also decided to build a mausoleum in his honor at Herodium to commemorate his life after he died. However, this symbol of Herod's influence was one of the first places that the Jews sought to destroy as soon as they were able to revolt against Rome in A.D. 67. Herodium was taken by Jewish freedom-fighters (Zealots) as they tried to establish their independence. Netzer proposes that the Zealots wanted to erase the memory of the hated Herod and destroyed his tomb and his monuments.

#### *What Was Discovered?*

Herodium, as most ancient sites, had a settlement in the lower part of the site and an acropolis on higher ground. Herod prepared the lower Herodium with structures that could have been used as his funerary monuments. That is the reason why Netzer's team focused for years on digging the lower part of Herodium.

Josephus is not specific in regard to where in Herodium the tomb was built. In 2006 the team of archaeologists decided to move upward to the hill to find Herod's tomb. There they found a monumental staircase and the remains of a platform. Among the ruins of the structure that was there, archaeologists detected large white ashlar (specially cut stones), decorated urns, and pieces of a sarcophagus.

The sarcophagus was not an ordinary sarcophagus. It was beautifully adorned but not with Hellenistic/Roman iconography which would have been offensive to most Jews. The 2.5 meter long sarcophagus was decorated with

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rosettes and natural motifs. There is no inscription to provide a definitive identification. However, the quality of the

sarcophagus and the beauty of the artifact identifies it as royal. The fact that it was purposefully broken into pieces indicates that whoever was buried in the sarcophagus was hated by the perpetrators that desecrated this grave.

Even though Herod was a great builder and left monuments that still impress people today, he was hated by most of the Jews. One can admire the remains of Herod's architectural marvels at Masada, Jericho, and the still standing tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. But in spite of his efforts to be loved by his subjects, he was hated until his death and even after death. Why? Because of his cooperation with Rome, his ruthless rule, high taxes, and his Idumean origin. The case that this is Herod's tomb is indeed strong.

### *Meaning of the Discovery*

This discovery points to the relation between ancient texts and artifacts. The tomb of Herod is not another hoax on the public. It is far from being another baseless claim of a popular documentary. The discovery of Herod's tomb is an example of how the discipline of biblical archaeology is still being practiced properly.

The textual description of Josephus has been correlated with archaeological remains. The careful work of archaeologists illuminates audiences that are eager to learn about the ancient past. The quest for answers can take more than three decades and some are never answered in the lifetime of many archaeologists, but that does not deter them from digging up the past.

Efrain Velazquez II.,  
Adventist University of Antilles

## BENEDICT XVI AND JESUS

With Pope Benedict XVI the Catholic Church has a theologian on “the throne of St. Peter” who seems to know exactly what he does and who has already made quite an impact. In his speech in Regensburg he quoted the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391-1425) who had asked what new things Mohammed had brought apart from violence. Benedict's use of this quotation was followed by an outcry in the Islamic world. Some observers felt that the Pope had made a serious mistake, while others held that his uncompromising attitude and his insistence that Jesus and Christianity are unique may have advanced the readiness of Muslims to continue dialoguing with the Roman Church. They seem to appreciate people with clear convictions. Benedict XVI has also reminded Protestant Christians that they are not a church. Although this is part of catholic doctrine and not really new, Protestants were irritated that in the era of ecumenism this was stressed again. Benedict XVI addressed also his own church, recommending a return, at least partially, to administering the mass in Latin because he understands such an approach as a means of integration and advancing the unity of the Catholic Church. Finally, he published the book *Jesus of Nazareth* which was immediately translated into many languages and is sold widely. The English version is a translation from the German.

### I. *The Book “Jesus of Nazareth”*

*Jesus of Nazareth* is an intriguing book, containing interesting and thoughtful observations and theological insights. It consists of ten chapters, a glossary, and a bibliography. Following a foreword, Jesus is first presented as the new Moses. Then the author walks his audience through Jesus' baptism and temptation, he discusses the gospel of the kingdom, addresses parts of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer, deals with Jesus' disciples as His new family, and turns to the message of the parables. In

the Gospel of John he finds principal images which he interprets (water, vine and wine, bread, and shepherd). This is followed by a chapter on Peter's confession and Jesus' transfiguration. Finally, Jesus' identity as “Son of Man,” “the Son,” and “the I Am” is explained.

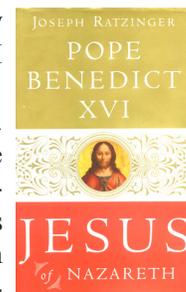
The book ends somewhat abruptly. This may be due to the fact that it is the first part of a larger work. A second volume is supposed to follow. Most chapters are theological rather than exegetical in nature. Benedict XVI does not necessarily speak to the average readers, because he includes theological discussions and reviews theological literature, yet the glossary indicates that lay people are the intended audience. The author's main concern seems to be to restore Jesus' true identity and present Him as the one in whom Christian faith is concentrated. This is a laudable goal. His convictions concerning Jesus come across clearly. He asks: “If we had to choose today, would Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, the son of the Father, have a chance?” (41) and states “. . . following Christ is not comfortable—and Jesus never said it would be, either” (109), but: “Jesus gives us ‘life’ because he gives us God. He can give us God because he himself is one with God, because he is the Son. He himself is the gift—he *is* ‘life’” (p. 354).

As indicated above the author writes as a theologian which explains the carefully crafted language. Sometimes he mentions issues but does not fully develop them. For instance, he presents different scholarly views on the kingdom of God including the ecclesiastical interpretation, but does not elaborate on the latter (49). Instead he focuses on Jesus. Talking about the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he correctly holds: “Jesus uses ideas that were current in the Judaism of his time. Hence we must not force our interpretation of this part of the text” (215) which would indicate that the text cannot be used as a valid argument in favor of the immortality of the soul. Nevertheless, he mentions an intermediate state between death and resurrection and thereby remains ambiguous (216-217).

### II. *Problems with the Book “Jesus of Nazareth”*

In spite of these concessions and a hidden acknowledgment of problems in the past--“ . . . the secular power of the papacy is no longer a temptation today . . .” (42)--he affirms catholic doctrines and positions. This has to be expected. By the way, this statement about the secular power of the papacy does not deny that the Catholic Church has secular power. On the contrary, it affirms it. However, it claims that today this power is no longer a temptation. Here are now some of the problems with the pope's book:

- Monasticism and asceticism (77) as well as mysticism seem to be endorsed (95, 131).



- In a passage dealing with the saints he stresses that on them “God has placed a particularly heavy burden of temptation . . . They are called to bear them through to the end for us ordinary souls and to help us persist on our way to the One who took upon himself the burden of us all” (164).
- The beast out of the sea (Rev 13a) is understood as the Roman imperial power (165).
- Biological evolution is presupposed, because “when you have lost God you have lost yourself; than you are nothing more than a random product of evolution” (166).
- The church is supposedly built on Peter (288). It is held that he has received a special commission from the Lord which is different from Paul’s because there is “continuity”—probably a hint to apostolic succession—and thus the primacy of Peter is affirmed (297).
- Throughout the book there is an emphasis on the sacraments (238, 243, 248). For instance, while discussing water in the Gospel of John, he remarks: “Spirit and water, heaven and earth, Christ and the Church, belong together. And that is how ‘rebirth’ happens. In the sacrament, water stands for the maternal earth, the holy Church, which welcomes creation into herself and stands in place of it” (240). The Eucharist is stressed most and is seen in many biblical texts in some of which others would have a hard time to find any reference to it. For instance, he connects Jesus’ first temptation with the multiplication of the loaves and the Eucharist (32-33; see also 252, 261, 269-270, 280, 289, 302).
- The author seems to uphold the Decalogue, although he talks about freedom from law (61). Later he says: “The ‘Law of Christ’ is freedom . . .” (100). He suggests that Jesus “‘spiritualizes’ the Law and in so doing makes it the path to life for all” (101). Discussing Psalm 15 he comes to the conclusion “that the condition for admission to God’s presence is simply the content of the Decalogue—with an emphasis on the inward search for God, on journeying toward him (first tablet) and on love of neighbor, on justice toward the individual and the community (second tablet)” (94). This quotation may affirm the Decalogue, however, our question would be how Benedict XVI understands salvation.
- In a section on the Sabbath (106-112) he enters into a dialogue with the Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner and concludes that at “the heart of the Sabbath disputes

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is the question about the Son of Man—the question about Jesus Christ himself.” The problem is not just the centrality of Jesus, but if Jesus is central, “the Sabbath loses its great social function. The Sabbath is one of the essential elements that hold Israel together. Centering upon Jesus breaks open this sacred structure and imperils an essential element that cements the unity of the People of God” (111). He then transitions to Sunday. For Christians—he does not even say early Christians—the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week, the beginning of creation, became the Lord’s day. “The essential elements of the Old Testament Sabbath then naturally passed over to the Lord’s day in the context of table fellowship with Jesus. The church thus recuperated the social function of the Sabbath as well . . . An unmistakable signal of this was the fact that Constantine’s Christian-inspired reform of legal system granted slaves certain freedoms on Sundays; the Lord’s day was thus introduced as a day of freedom and rest into the legal system now shaped on Christian principles. I find it extremely worrying that modern liturgists want to dismiss this social function of Sunday as a Constantinian aberration . . .” (112). This sounds as if he supported government enforced Sunday keeping, but as in other places he remains somewhat vague. Yet there is an interesting statement on page 121, “Likewise it soon became clear that the essential content of the Sabbath had to be reinterpreted in terms of the Lord’s day. The fight for Sunday is another of the Church’s major concerns in the present day, when there is so much to upset the rhythm of time that sustains society.”

### III. *The Pope’s Methodology*

We now turn to a crucial issue which is the Pope’s methodology of interpreting Scripture. Some impor-

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tant statements regarding his approach are found in the foreword. But throughout the book the issue comes up again and again.

The approach Benedict XVI takes is difficult to describe and may seem to be somewhat inconsistent and sometimes ambiguous. While he sounds more conservative, his approach is not always so.

He affirms the historical-critical method, which is understandable. His predecessor John Paul II had endorsed it, and he himself, as Cardinal Ratzinger, may have drafted the document that was accepted by the Catholic Church. However, his “yes” to this method is not one hundred percent. He thinks the method is important because interest

in history should not be lost. Christianity is dependent on history, and the method offers a historical, although critical approach. But the method is limited. “. . . the historical-critical method . . . is and remains an indispensable dimension of exegetical work. For it is of the very essence of biblical faith to be about real historical events” (xv). “For the time being, it is important . . . to recognize the limits of the historical-critical method itself” (xvi). What then are these limits? Benedict XVI is very precise in pointing out the problem areas:

- “. . . the historical method not only has to investigate the biblical word as a thing of the past, but also has to let it remain in the past . . . the one thing it cannot do is make it into something present *today* . . .” (xvi).
- “Because it is a historical method, it presupposes the uniformity of the context within which the events of history unfold. It must therefore treat the biblical words it investigates as human words. . . its specific object is the human word as human” (xvi-xvii).
- “The unity of all of these writings as one ‘Bible,’ however, is not something it can recognize as an immediate historical datum” (xvii)

This is a tacit acknowledgment that the historical-critical method is not conducive to faith. Therefore, he suggests the use of a complimentary method, namely

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canonical criticism (xviii). This would allow for attending to the content and unity of Scripture. He criticizes liberal exegesis (111, 186,

219, 323-324, 328) which is limited (184, 186). Obviously he is opposed to the assumption of a gap between the so-called historical Christ and the biblical Christ (xi). He also does not see opposition between Matthew’s poor and the poor in Luke (76) and rejects the ideas that “God cannot act in history” (35) and that He “says nothing and has nothing to say” (36).

So far so good, but following the critical approach he assigns Daniel to the 2nd century B.C. (56) and the so-called Deutero-Isaiah to the end of the Babylonian exile (347). Commenting on John 7 and the Feast of Tabernacles, he writes: “These water rituals are in the first place indications of the origin of the feast in the nature religions . . .” (244). Inspiration is affirmed, but connected with the church. Scripture emerges from the church. “The author does not speak as a private, self-contained subject. He speaks in a living community” (xx). On page 182 he uses “inspired” in quotation marks when speaking about Scripture and seems to suggest that inspiration is the maturation of Scripture “under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

In good catholic tradition he affirms “the four senses of Scripture” (xx) and supports allegorizing (184, 200-201, 279). He does not only use and rely on some Apocrypha

(30) and the church fathers (49, 207, 279)—although he admits that they may at times be wrong (212)—but stresses “the living tradition of the whole church” (xviii). Mentioning historical conditioning, he writes: “. . . the body of law in question is also historically conditioned and entirely open to criticism . . . Even within the Old Testament legislation, it undergoes further development. Newer prescriptions contradict older ones regarding the same object. These casuistic provisions . . . are nonetheless not directly divine, but are developed from the underlying deposit of divine law, and therefore subject to further development and correction” (124).

### Conclusion

Benedict XVI is certainly a brilliant theologian and administrator, and in some respect *Jesus of Nazareth* is a brilliant book, but it leaves Bible believing Christians unsatisfied. The author is bound by tradition, cannot really free himself to allow the

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text to talk for itself, and uses a methodological approach to Scripture which in some ways is conservative and in others is liberal. In the end it is—in good catholic fashion—the church that controls Scripture and not vice versa. As Adventists we laud the author’s emphasis on Jesus and his confession that he trusts the gospels (xxi) while wondering why he seems to have reservations with other biblical books. We are concerned about various doctrinal statements in the book and their implications.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

## THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS AND MODERN BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Among Adventists the question of the reliability of Bible translations and especially the question which Bible translation to choose have come up again. In his lectures Walter Veith, a zoologist, claims that the so-called *Textus Receptus* must be chosen on which the King James Version (KJV) and several translations into other modern languages are based. He arrives at this position partly because of certain conspiracy theories, which he espouses, rather than on the basis of a study of the original Greek manuscripts. This has caused some stir

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and irritation among church members and pastors in various countries. The question is whether it is better for Bible translations to rely on the *Textus Receptus*, which is supported by the majority of manuscripts, or to favor the scientific text (Nestle-Aland). Most modern Bibles are based upon the latter.

Today we have at our disposal a wealth of manuscripts of different ages and of varying quality (about 5,400 for the NT).<sup>1</sup> The autographs are all lost; thus, we must reconstruct the original wording as best as we can, using the manuscripts that are available to us. The publishers of the scientific text of the NT produced an eclectic text, a text not found in one manuscript only. Deviations from this text are carefully listed in the text-critical apparatus.

For the NT we are aware of two main text types: (1) The Alexandrian text (Egypt) whose manuscripts date back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. It is clearly the closest that we can come to the lost originals, and it forms the basis for modern scientific editions. (2) The Byzantine text (Constantinople). As far as we know, this text came into existence in the 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and became the basis of the later *Textus Receptus* and the KJV. The Byzantine type of text is found in the majority of manuscripts that have been preserved (about 80% of all of the extant manuscripts).<sup>2</sup> Beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> century it was slowly accepted by Greek Christianity.

### I. *The History of the Textus Receptus*

On March 1, 1516, the Catholic humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467-1536) published in Basel the first printed Greek NT, which was to appear in a total of five editions. Erasmus and his publisher Froben were in a great hurry, because Cardinal Ximenes of Spain was at work on his own edition. Since Ximenes obtained papal approbation for publication only in 1522, Erasmus triumphed in this competition.

For the publication of his text, Erasmus relied on six manuscripts that dated from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, being well aware of their inferior quality. None of these manuscripts were complete, and Erasmus changed the Greek text of his manuscripts here and there, frequently according to the Latin Vulgate. The manuscripts that Erasmus used, including annotations made in them, still exist so that his work can be analyzed relatively well.

In 1519 Erasmus presented approximately 1,100 copies of a second edition, which contained about 400 improvements. Martin Luther relied on this version for his German translation of the Bible (1522) as Tyndale did for his English translation (1525).

But Erasmus had also to endure criticism. For instance, he was accused of being an “Arian,” denying the divinity of Jesus, because originally he had omitted a passage from 1 John 5:7-8 that was found in the Vulgate but not in the Greek manuscripts: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (KJV). Starting in 1522, Erasmus printed this longer text, including the Trinitarian formula,

but explained in a footnote why he did not consider the wording to be original.<sup>3</sup>

In 1546 the Parisian publisher Robert Estienne (also known as “Stephanus,” 1503-1559) published his first edition of the Greek NT. The third edition, the so-called “Regia”

*In reality one single Textus Receptus does not exist.*

which was released in 1550, became very well known and is sometimes regarded as the standard text for the *Textus Receptus*. However, Stephanus noted that different readings were possible in several places. He was well aware that not everyone unreservedly approved of his text.

Theodor Beza, Calvin’s successor, published nine editions of the Greek NT between 1565 and 1604, essentially using Stephanus’ fourth edition (1551). Beza, however, modified the Greek text in some places without having any support in printed editions or manuscripts.

Between 1624 and 1678 the Elzevier family of Holland published seven editions of the NT. They mainly used Beza’s first edition. In 1633, in the foreword to their second edition they stated: “So you hold the text, now received by all” (“textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum”), from which the term *Textus Receptus* was derived.

All these editions more or less offer the *Textus Receptus* which essentially goes back to the first edition of Erasmus. Therefore, in reality one single *Textus Receptus* does not exist.<sup>4</sup>

### II. *Revelation 22:19 and the Textus Receptus*

According to the *Textus Receptus*, Revelation 22:19 reads: “God shall take away his part out of the *book* of life.” There is no extant Greek manuscript from the time before Erasmus that uses this wording. All of the older manuscripts read “*tree* of life.” How did the wording “book of life” come into existence? When Erasmus worked on his Greek NT, he had at his disposal only a single Greek manuscript of Revelation. Unfortunately, this copy lacked the last page containing the final verses (Revelation 22:16b-21). Erasmus did not take time to procure a complete Greek manuscript of Revelation. Instead, he translated the then-in-use Latin Vulgate text of Revelation 22:16-21 back into Greek. His translation differs substantially from the text found in the manuscripts. There are words in Erasmus’ text that today are not found in a single Greek manuscript. Whoever considers the *Textus Receptus* to be the inspired original text of the NT has to believe that the original Greek text of the NT was unknown until the year 1516 and must accept the Catholic priest and humanist Erasmus as an inspired writer of the New Testament. Here is a list of different versions of Revelation 22:19:

*Version*

New American Standard Bible (NASB) 1995

*Rev 22:19*

“... God shall take away his part from the *tree of life* . . .”

*Version*

Revised Standard Version (RSV) 1971  
New International Version (NIV) 1984

New English Translation (NET) 2005  
American Standard Version (ASV) 1901  
English Revised Version (ERV) 1885  
New King James Version (NKJV) 1982  
King James Version (KJV) 1611

*Rev 22:19*

“... God will take away his share in the *tree of life* . . .”

“... God will take away from him his share in the  
*tree of life* . . .”

“... God will take away his share in the *tree of life* . . .”

“... God shall take away his part from the *tree of life* . . .”

“... God shall take away his part from the *tree of life* . . .”

“... God shall take away his part from the *book of life* . . .”

“... God shall take away his part out of the *book of life* . . .”

In more than ten places in Revelation, Erasmus offers text forms that cannot be found in any manuscript today (e.g., Revelation 4:4; 5:14; 18:5). These facts should persuade everyone that the *Textus Receptus* is not identical with the original text of the NT.

### III. Arguments in Favor of and Against the *Textus Receptus*

The following is a compilation of the most important arguments in favor of the *Textus Receptus* (in italics) and their corresponding counter arguments:

- (1) *The Textus Receptus is the text of the reformers.* As much as we value the work of the reformers, they were not perfect. The idea that God entrusted the correct Greek text to them only is an assumption which cannot be proven. The originator of this text was a Catholic priest.
- (2) *The Textus Receptus is literally inspired and inerrant.* Adventists respect the reliability of God’s Word, although they do not advocate the theory of inspiration by dictation. Inspiration always refers to the original writings, not to the processes of copying and translating.
- (3) *The Textus Receptus goes back to the early Christians.* The oldest available sources of the majority texts reaches back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. John Chrysostom († 407) cited the Byzantine text of his time and is its oldest witness. However, the Alexandrian text type is 200 years older. Biblical quotations of the earliest church fathers are always closer to the modern scientific text than to the *Textus Receptus*.
- (4) *The damp climate of the Mediterranean area limited the durability of the good manuscripts of the Textus Receptus to 150 or 200 years. The dry, hot climate of Egypt made it possible for some of the bad Alexandrian manuscripts to survive there. Because of their many defects and their corruption through heresies they were later no longer used.* It is extremely improbable that only the “bad” manuscripts remained intact and that all of the allegedly “good” ones disappeared. After the division of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Greek

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increasingly became the language that was used in the Eastern Empire only. This fact explains why there and

at a relatively late date the majority text became important. In addition, the Mediterranean region is not damp and warm, but dry and warm. Even today many ancient manuscripts remain in Greece (e.g., Athos) and Italy (e.g., Rome).

(5) *There is Gnostic influence in the Alexandrian text type, while the Byzantine text is theologically orthodox.* One of the first great heretics, Marcion, came originally from Asia Minor. It is thus incorrect to conclude that Asia Minor and Greece guaranteed orthodoxy. On the other hand, the bishop of Alexandria excommunicated Origen, thus upholding orthodoxy. Later, in the Christological dispute, the Alexandrian Athanasius demonstrated again that Egypt adhered to healthy theological positions. The idea that the findings in Egypt imply that the manuscripts were also written there cannot be proven and is not likely.

*The quantity or sheer number of manuscripts should not be used to determine their quality.*

- (6) *The great faithfulness in the transmission of the Textus Receptus is proven by the startling uniformity of the text.* Differences are found in the manuscripts of the Byzantine text types. The editions of the *Textus Receptus* differ from each other as well.
- (7) *The Textus Receptus forms the majority of the manuscripts.* If it is true that the majority equals the truth, we should all become Catholics. Does a mistake become right when it is multiplied a thousand times? Furthermore, we would have to fall back to the Latin translation of the Vulgate. After all, there are about 8,000 extant manuscripts of the Vulgate, whereas there are only about 5,400 of the Greek NT. On the other hand, until the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Alexandrian text formed the majority. If one takes into consideration translations of this text type into other languages, then it is still the prevalent type. The quantity or sheer number of manuscripts should not be used to determine their quality.

- (8) *The Jesuits and the Catholic Church proved to be the greatest opponents of the Textus Receptus.* While Erasmus himself was a Catholic priest, the Bible believing Protestant Bengel (1687-1752) as well as Tischendorf (1815-1874) criticized the *Textus Receptus*. For centuries the text type of the *Textus Receptus* was handed down through the Greek-Orthodox church. Is the Greek-Orthodox church more reliable as a guardian of the original text than the Roman Catholic Church is? The greatest care is demanded with regard to all conspiracy theories.
- (9) *The precursors of the modern editions, Westcott (1825-1901) and Hort (1828-1892), were spiritualists.* In 1881 they published an edition of the Greek NT which created a sensation among scholars. It was attacked from many quarters, but on the whole it was received as the closest approximation to the original text of the NT. Their text laid the ground for the later editions of Nestle and Aland. Although the allegation that they were spiritualists could not be proven by historical examination, “King James Only activists” constantly perpetuate this idea.

#### IV. Differences

The differences between Bible translations based on the *Textus Receptus* and those following the eclectic text are not grave. Only very few passages are of greater significance. One estimates that 98% of the text of the NT reveals no appreciable variations. Champions of the *Textus Receptus* have often taken the differences too seriously.

- (1) *The Textus Receptus and Christological names.* One argument against modern editions is that they leave out Christological names and titles or shorten them. It is partly true that some names or titles of God are absent in modern scientific editions, but the *Textus Receptus* also contains verses in which a name or title of God is lacking or is abbreviated, e.g., John 12:1: “where Lazarus was, whom *Jesus* raised from the dead.” Here the *Textus Receptus* has omitted the name “*Jesus*.” Nobody can prove that the versions of the *Textus Receptus* reflect precisely the original text. Longer versions could easily be later extensions of the copyists.

- (2) *John 6:47.* It is argued that the theology of John 6:47 has become distorted because “on me [*Jesus*]” is

*Conspiracy theories cannot plausibly explain why all of the other verses were not immediately changed to insure the success of the shorter rendering. If intentional manipulation had been planned, this would have had to happen much more systematically.*

missing in the phrase dealing with believing. The KJV contains the old rendering: “He that believeth

on me hath everlasting life.” Of course it is vital to believe in *Jesus*, but this fact becomes very clear

in the context, regardless which text type is used, because “on me” is stated explicitly in John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:44-46. Conspiracy theories cannot plausibly explain why all of the other verses were not immediately changed to insure the success of the shorter rendering. If intentional manipulation had been planned, this would have had to happen much more systematically.

- (3) *Passages in modern Bibles that clearly demonstrate the divinity of Jesus.* Some biblical passages dealing with the divinity of *Jesus*, e.g., 2 Peter 1:1, are clearer in modern Bibles than in the *Textus Receptus*:

“...through the righteousness of God and our Savior *Jesus Christ*” (KJV).

“...through the righteousness of our God and Savior *Jesus Christ*” (NIV).

- (4) *No change in theology.* There are no textual differences that could be used as a real argument in favor of a changed theology. Always when the scientific text is a little shorter than the *Textus Receptus*, the omitted phrases can be found relatively easily in other biblical passages. Example: Colossians 1:14, “In whom we have redemption *through his blood*” (KJV). In modern Bibles the phrase “*through his blood*” is absent but is found elsewhere, e.g., in Ephesians 1:7.

- (5) *Theologically doubtful wordings in the Textus Receptus.* There are instances in which the majority text is problematic. The *Textus Receptus* of John 5:3-4 reads: “For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (KJV). This text is missing in modern Bibles or is relegated to the footnotes. However, the KJV reading results in an alarming theology: God is arbitrary, rewarding the strong and punishing the weak. Interestingly, Ellen G. White also calls this text into question (DA 201). She explains the text as portraying popular tradition, and she clearly does not believe in a divine work. The claim that the *Textus Receptus* is more orthodox cannot be substantiated.

#### V. Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White wrote about Erasmus: “Wycliffe’s Bible had been translated from the Latin text, which contained many errors. [...] In 1516, a year before the appearance of Luther’s theses, Erasmus had published his Greek and Latin version of the New Testament. Now for the first time the Word of God was printed in the original tongue. In this work many errors of former versions were corrected, and the sense was more clearly rendered” (GC 245).

E. G. White does not say that all mistakes were eliminated. She knew that, regrettably, mistakes also crept into the process of copying biblical texts: “Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you think there might have been

some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?’ This is all probable [...] All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth.” (ISM 16) “I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition” (EW 220-221).

E. G. White quoted from the *English Revised Version* (ERV) and the *American Revised Version* (ARV 1901, also known as the *American Standard Version* [ASV]), both of which are based on the Westcott-Hort Greek text of the NT.<sup>6</sup> According to her son, W. C. White, she gave her secretary specific instructions to use the version that best reflected her ideas. In her book *The Ministry of Healing* (1905), she took ten biblical texts from the ERV, more than fifty from the ARV and a few texts from other versions. That proves that she did not limit herself to the KJV. When she later made important statements about inspiration (*I Selected Messages* and the introduction to *The Great Controversy*), she did not warn against new translations. Evidently she saw in them no threat whatsoever to beliefs and theology.

#### VI. *Seventh-day Adventists and Modern Bible Translations*

Because Adventists treasure Scripture it is to be expected that they are concerned with Bible translations as they are based on different text types.<sup>7</sup> When the ERV appeared, a number of substantial articles were published in the *Review and Herald* commenting favorably on this new translation while being fully aware of the fact that it departed from the KJV.

Following a lively discussion among Adventists, official statements from the General Conference were presented in 1930 and 1931. They held that the KJV and the ARV could be used among Adventists, regardless of the differences. None of the employees should unnecessarily aggravate the discussion and each Adventist should be free to decide in favor of one or the other translation.

When new English translations appeared, the General Conference once again saw it necessary to come up with a statement (1954). The church justified the necessity for new translations with two arguments still valid today: first, new archaeological discoveries enrich our understanding, and, second, each living language is in constant fluctuation. Bible translations must take this into account.

The Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (BRI) published several articles in the past suggesting not to rely on the KJV only because it is not based on the best manuscripts.

#### VII. *Summary*

The academic world as well as many Adventists favor the scientific Greek text as a basis for modern Bible translations. Of course, it is possible that in case of new manuscript findings a fresh assessment of one or the other reading in modern scientific editions has to be made. Nevertheless, the current scientific editions

*The differences in both text types are minor and, therefore, should not undermine our confidence in the transmission and the validity of the biblical text.*

can be trusted, and supporters of the *Textus Receptus* should be aware of the weaknesses found in their favored text.

The differences in both text types are minor and, therefore, should not undermine our confidence in the transmission and the validity of the biblical text. It is neither scientifically legitimate nor pastorally advisable to deny modern and carefully rendered Bible translation their right to exist.

<sup>1</sup>For details see Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989).

<sup>2</sup>However, most of them come from the 9<sup>th</sup> century and later.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993), 715-716.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.bible-researcher.com/title.html> provides a complete list of all the differences in older and newer editions of the Greek NT.

<sup>5</sup>See [http://www.kjvonly.org/other/wescott\\_&\\_hort.htm](http://www.kjvonly.org/other/wescott_&_hort.htm).

<sup>6</sup>For more details see <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/kjvonly.htm> and <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/whitebible.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>See <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Which%20Version%20Can%20We%20Trust.htm>.

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## ***FOCUS ON SCRIPTURE***

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT, SICKNESS, PRAYER, AND HEALING**

There is a growing interest among some Adventists concerning the nature and role of the Holy Spirit. Questions related to the personality and individuality of the Spirit are being debated, motivated by opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity. Occasionally the power of the Spirit is emphasized and the result is a type of popular charismatic view of the function of the Spirit. Some are suggesting that in answer to our prayers for the sick God will send the Spirit as a healing power, making it almost unnecessary to consult physicians. The idea is that if we persevere in the prayer of faith the power of the Spirit will be manifested. This is a dangerous emphasis that could do serious spiritual, psychological, and physical damage to those who are sick.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, let me reaffirm that we obviously do not want to reject the Biblical view

that God can answer our prayers and heal those for whom we pray (James 5:13-15). But that does not exclude the use of the wisdom that God has granted us in the fight against diseases. That fight is part of the cosmic conflict, and God and humans are directly involved in it. He expects us to do our part through preventive medicine and by seeking ways to restore health using rational approaches.

The topic of God's direct intervention in human affairs in answer to our prayers for the sick raises important theological questions. Here I can only touch on some of the concerns. When dealing with this particular issue, we should realize that God interacts with us in at least three different ways.

First, there is the dramatic, supernatural way in which He *comes from the outside* and personally, directly, and radically alters the situation. The case of the opening of the Red Sea during the exodus from Egypt would be a good example of the irruption of the transcendental in human affairs in order to bring deliverance (Exod 14:21-22). In cases like that there was usually a glorious display of the power of God, and the person involved experienced deliverance or healing in a unique way (cf. 1 Kings 17:20-22). What is often overlooked is that this type of unequivocally divine intervention in human affairs is not the dominant way of God's interventions found in the Bible.

The second way God intervenes in answer to our prayers is less obvious, but still recognizable. He *works from within the situation*, guiding it and using humans—their knowledge, experience, and disposition—to answer our prayers. This is illustrated in the book of Esther, where deliverance apparently comes through actions of humans. But as the story develops, it is clear that God was involved in the process from beginning to end (cf. Esther 4:12-14; 8:17; Gen 14:14-16, 20). He is active under the apparent mantle of silence, producing at a particular moment an unexpected turn of events. In many cases the human instrumentality may be more visible, but for the one who prayed the resolution is clearly God's response to the request. The timing of the healing, the coincidences, the sudden reversal of the threatening experience, as well as the acknowledgment that human power had practically run out of options, confirm the conviction of faith that it was God who quietly intervened producing a wonderful miracle of love through human instrumentalities or other means (e.g., Isa 38:21; Luke 10:33-35). This type of "miracle" is today much more common among God's people than we realize.

The third way the Spirit intervenes in answering our prayers for the sick is by creating in the human heart a humble disposition to trust in God's loving will for us. Our prayer for the healing of the sick could be in conflict with God's will for the person (cf. Matt 6:9-10). Such a conflict does not mean that God is uninterested in their well-being. It simply means that the divine, loving intention does not coincide with our personal desires. In such cases, we simply trust in His love and wisdom knowing "that in

all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8:28). The important thing is to remember that in the *eschaton* God will answer all our prayers for the sick by bringing suffering and death to an end (Rev 21:4).

Anyone who argues that the healing power of the Spirit makes practically irrelevant the intervention of proper medical care does a disservice to the sick and distorts the biblical teaching on the prayer for the sick and the work of the Spirit.

Ángel M. Rodríguez, BRI

## SCRIPTURE APPLIED—A BIBLE STUDY

### A COMMEMORATION AND ITS SECRET

It is good to remember certain events that took place in the past, for instance, one's childhood and family, one's wedding, the birth of one's children, and one's baptism. It is easier to remember an event, if a symbol is connected to it or if certain feasts are celebrated. Therefore, we celebrate, for example, mother's day, anniversaries, birthdays, or have a class reunion. Christians partake of the Lord's Supper to remember what Jesus has done for them, when He died on the cross.

#### I. The Foot Washing

Closely connected to the Lord's Supper is the ordinance of the Foot washing. The Lord's Supper is explicitly mentioned by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul but not by John. On the other hand, the foot washing is explicitly mentioned by John but not by the other Gospels. Nevertheless, they belong together (John 13:1-16, 26-27).

- Luke 22:24-27 - In connection with the Lord's Supper there was a dispute among the disciples about which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.
- John 13:1-17 - Jesus instituted the foot washing indicating that before God all humans are equal. The foot washing was and is an expression of humility and fellowship with Jesus and each other.
- John 13:14-15 - These verses contain Jesus' clear command to practice foot washing.
- John 13:17 - Jesus promises that those will be blessed who practice foot washing.

The foot washing is not a meritorious work but points to humility and love among Christians, indicating that they are willing to serve one another. Foot washing means participation in and fellowship with Christ and each other. It points to cleansing from sin and equality among the people

of God without denying that there are different functions including leadership.

## II. *The Lord's Supper*

- Luke 22:7-13 - Preparation for Passover (cf. Exod 12) which is the festival of salvation.
- Luke 22:14-20; - Transformation of the Passover to the Lord's Supper by Jesus and its duration (Matt 26:29).
- 1 Cor 5:6-8 - Jesus is the true Passover.

### 1. *The Lord's Supper a Non-Bloody Sacrifice?*

- Heb 9:27-28 - Christ's sacrifice is unrepeatable.
- Heb 9:22-26 - Non-bloody sacrifices do not bring about forgiveness of sins.
- Heb 10:12,14-18 - Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is sufficient.

### 2. *The Meaning of the Lord's Supper*

- 1 Cor 11:17-29 - A commemoration of what Jesus did for us, a sign of the new covenant between God and us, proclamation pointing from Jesus' death to His second coming.
- 1 Cor 10:16-17 - Partaking of the Lord's Supper means fellowship with Christ and His people. We accept Christ's sacrifice personally.

### 3. *"This is" or "This Means?"*

- Matt 26:26 - "This is my blood" (Mark 14:24; cf. John 6:35, 48, 51, 54, 56).
- Luke 22:20 - "This cup . . . is the new covenant in my blood."
- John 8:12; 10:9; 15:1 - Jesus says about Himself: I am the light, the door, the vine. These texts indicate that a symbolic understanding is required. The same is true for the emblems of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper was instituted prior to Jesus' death. The bread and wine that He held in His hands were not His actual body and blood. Paul makes it clear that the Lord's Supper is taken in remembrance to what Jesus has done for

us. With the Lord's Supper we receive a wonderful blessing and count on the special presence of the Holy Spirit. We are also looking forward to the time when we will take it in Jesus' direct presence.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

## BOOK NOTES

Hans Heinz and Daniel Heinz, *Das Christentum begegnet dem Islam: Eine religiöse Herausforderung*, Zurich: Advent-Verlag, 2007. 156 pp. CHF 13.90.

Islam as a religion is very much discussed in the Adventist Church today. One scholar even suggested to reinterpret the little horn of Daniel 7 and include modern Islam. This is not the approach taken by Hans and Daniel Heinz. Father and son, a theologian (Th.D.) and a church historian (Ph.D.), have written a very informative book about Islam to Christian-English the title *ity Encounters Challenge*. The in Switzerland. a series dealing



and its relationship ity. Translated into would be *Christian-Islam: A Religious* book was published It is volume 1 of with theology, histo- view of Seventh- Providing a detailed history of Islam from its beginning to the 21<sup>st</sup> century the authors point out the fragmentation of Islam into various denominations and sects, discuss Islam's theology, and inform the readers about its encounters with Christianity. The book also deals with the Islam renaissance in our days as well as with its fundamentalism. Although a challenge, the authors see in the revival of Islam a chance for Bible-oriented Christianity to begin a conversation. They are not shy to point out points of similarities and areas of serious differences. The appendix contains data concerning the growth of Islam on a worldwide scale, a chart that compares Christianity with Islam, a bibliography, a time table containing important events of history, and a glossary.

The book is written in an irenic tone without down-playing differences and glossing over unpleasant historical events. It is good to read and very instructive. A translation of the German original into English could be beneficial to the church worldwide.

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