

Mormonism that was not present until recently. By defining the limits of assimilation as well as the minimal spiritual core of what it means to be Mormon, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now ready to replicate the process on a world-wide basis.

The two books examined in this review are helpful to all those interested not only in the religious traditions that they treat, but, more importantly, in the dynamics of assimilation versus identity. Thus their insights are of value to students of both religious and secular culture.

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Hebblethwaite, Peter. *The Next Pope*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. 186 pp. \$20.00.

In this behind-the-scenes look at the forces that will choose the successor of John Paul II and decide, to quite an extent, the future of the Roman Catholic Church, Peter Hebblethwaite reveals the intricate and often politicized process by which the college of cardinals will choose one of their own as the next pope.

As John Paul II, having survived an assassination attempt and serious illnesses, is in the eighteenth year of his pontificate, a billion Roman Catholics and millions of others around the world cannot help but wonder who will succeed the most-traveled and most widely-known Roman pontiff in history.

The pope himself has recently revised the way his successor will be elected. While faithful to a long-established tradition, he has fine-tuned papal election procedures that Pope Paul VI instituted in 1975. Among other things, John Paul II has ordered improved secrecy measures, secluding the cardinal electors to a new compound built specifically for the election. He has reasserted the controversial rule set in 1970 barring cardinals more than 80 years old from participating in the conclave. He has also reiterated a series of solemn oaths that those who attend papal elections must take, never to reveal any details of the proceedings. The Sistine Chapel, where the conclaves are held, will be swept for listening devices and recording instruments. Some voting procedures have been eliminated, reinforcing the secret ballot. The pope offered no explanation, however, as to why he decided to alter the rules governing a deadlocked conclave. If, after four balloting sessions and a two-thirds-plus-one majority, the cardinals have failed to elect a pope, they could abandon the procedure by a simple majority approval instead of a unanimous agreement. At that point, a new pontiff could be elected with a simple majority. This could have substantial effect on the next election.

An expert on Roman Catholic affairs, a papal biographer and confidant to some of his church's key leaders, Peter Hebblethwaite was probably the scholar best suited to analyze the new discipline and to reflect on the next papal conclave. He died December 18, 1994 while the book was being printed. One can only be sorry that he was unable to write a biography of the current pope as he did of both John XXIII and Paul VI.

This is a short book, but none of it is extraneous or repetitious. It is fascinating reading and, if I am not mistaken, nothing like it yet exists. With the keen eye of an expert historian, the author begins with a sketch of the conclave

process and recent changes in papal instructions. He then outlines landmark features from papal elections of the past two centuries and the lessons one can draw from them. One chapter deals with the election of Karol Wojtyła and his pontificate as John Paul II, particularly in relation to the Second Vatican Council and certain key encyclicals.

By far the most intriguing sections of the book are Hebblethwaite's speculations about who is or is not *papabile* and why. Readers will be surprised, pleased, and worried by the candidates put forth. He also examines the issues that will most likely influence the next conclave's decisions, including the cardinals' nationalities, the alienation of theologians, and the ordination of women.

The result is an engaging and informative account of the mystery-shrouded process in which some 120 cardinals, literally sealed off from the rest of the world, will elect the 265<sup>th</sup> pontiff.

Whether such a study is premature or not is debatable. Yet thinking Roman Catholics and millions of others ought to be considering the directions that the Roman Catholic Church could take in the third millennium. Hebblethwaite states: "A conclave is a moment of freedom, a chance for the church to make a fresh start" (172). Reading this book should assist one in facing, discussing, and evaluating the next papal election more knowledgeably.

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Isichei, Elizabeth. *A History of Christianity in Africa*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 1995. xl + 410 pp. Paper, \$19.90.

This new book on the history of Christianity in Africa is a remarkable achievement. In just over 400 pages the author succeeds in giving a well-organized, well-researched, and well-written account of the history of Christianity on the entire African continent, from antiquity to the present. The material is presented chronologically and regionally. The first chapter sketches the birth and development of the church in North Africa, Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia, and the near-eclipse of the church in the Maghrib. Except for Egypt and Ethiopia, it was not until ca. 1500 that any further African church history can be reported. Thus the second chapter deals with the "Churches of the Middle Years" and covers the period of 1500-1800, while the third chapter describes the outburst of missionary activity in the nineteenth century. This is followed by a few chapters which, in more detail, sketch the developments in Southern Africa, East and East-Central Africa, and West Africa until ca. 1900. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on West-Central Africa and North Africa, but take the reader beyond the *terminus ad quem* of the preceding chapters to more recent times. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 bring the reader back to Southern Africa, East and East-Central Africa, and West Africa and cover the 1900-1960 period. This is followed by a final chapter about post-1960 developments. The thirteen maps are extremely helpful.

Most African church history has been written by non-Africans and has tended to emphasize the role of mission organizations and mission churches. Having lived and worked in different regions of Africa for 16 years, Elizabeth Isichei has by and large succeeded in avoiding this unfortunate bias. Her observations about