nature, sociobiology, and revelation. It is a hopeful book because Morse promises us that if we begin to really pay attention to what we are doing, we can improve our lives. For Morse, the vision of the free society must be humanized. We can humanize our lives by realizing how dependent we are on each other—we all must matter to someone.

For those of us who usually recoil at the prospect of reading a self-help book, I can only suggest that this book is not really a self-help book in the way that “How to Hook-up with More Women” is a self-help book. Smart Sex is smart enough to know that no book can provide the easy answers that can make us happy. Still, Jennifer Morse has generously provided help by beginning to light the path toward happiness and fulfillment through living as if life really were a gift from God.

Anne Hendershott
University of San Diego


In God and the World, German journalist Peter Seewald interviews the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, on the inscrutable mysteries of the Catholic faith. The book was first published in German in 2000 and subsequently translated into English. During his years as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger granted three in-depth interviews that were subsequently published as books. Two of those became bestsellers—The Ratzinger Report (1985), in which the Cardinal was interviewed by journalist Vittorio Messori, and Salt of the Earth (1997), in which he was interviewed by Peter Seewald. Because of the success of the two latter books, the Cardinal agreed to a subsequent interview with Seewald which resulted in God and the World.

The Cardinal and Seewald engaged in a series of conversations that took place over a three day period at the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino. This locale was particularly poignant given the Holy Father's devotion to St. Benedict and his assumption of the name
Benedict Seewald employed a quasi-question-and-answer approach throughout the interview process during which he either asked direct questions of the Cardinal or made extensive commentary and waited for a response from him. The end result is a wide-ranging dialog between the two men on Catholic theology. Most impressively, the Cardinal’s ability to spontaneously respond with deeply insightful and fully formed answers is a clear indication of his formidable intellectual skills as a theologian and of the depth of his faith.

Anyone familiar with Benedict XVI’s background knows that he is a former academic who spent the better part of twenty years as a professor of theology at various leading universities in Germany. Additionally, he is a prolific writer with an extensive number of scholarly articles and books to his credit. The corpus of his theological writings has clearly established Benedict XVI as a one of the foremost Catholic theologians of this era. In God and the World, the range and depth of his theological insights is readily apparent.

God and the World is organized into four sections. The first section is a Prologue which focuses on the virtues of “Faith, Hope and Love.” The rest of the book is organized into three parts: God, Jesus Christ, and The Church. The Prologue consists of some seventy pages and encompasses a wide range of topics such as the image of God, the current crisis of faith in the world, the role of reason in faith, and the contradiction between good and evil in man.

In the remainder of God and the World, the Cardinal essentially outlines salvation history and the role of the Church. In doing so, the book becomes almost catechetical in nature in its discussion of Christian theology. The section entitled “God” examines the nature of God, creation, the Fall, and the Old Covenant. In reflecting on the disorder that original sin has interjected into mankind’s relationship with God and with one another, the Cardinal notes: “And we then see that this is portrayed in the Bible in a way that is marvelous from the psychological viewpoint, how in their conversation after the Fall Adam and Eve blame each other and each unloads his guilt onto the other. The disruption of the relationship with God, then, immediately sets them at odds with each other. For anyone who has turned against God has by the same token turned against others” (87). The Cardinal outlines how “God set to work at once to rebuild the relationship and make it right” (88). In a subsequent discussion on heaven, hell, purgatory, and the need for man’s redemption and purification, the Cardinal comments, “I would go so far as to say that if there was no purgatory, then we would have to invent it, for who would dare say of himself that he was able to stand directly before God” (130).
The section on Christology is particularly well done with chapters on the incarnation, Christ as god-man, the Trinity, Our Lady, and the Cross. Commenting on the Last Supper, the Cardinal states: “The institution of the Eucharist represents the sum total of what Christ is” (325). In pondering Christ’s words used in the Consecration, the Cardinal concludes: “In these few words, as we see, lies a synthesis of the history of religion—of the history of Israel’s faith, as well as of Jesus’ own being and work, which finally becomes a sacrament and an abiding presence” (326). In a moving passage on the Agony in the Garden, the Cardinal reflects on Christ’s struggle to assume the sins of humanity and overcome the wayward nature of man brought about by original sin. “Jesus has to overcome man’s inward resistance against God. He must overcome the inner temptation to do it some other way. And now this temptation reaches its zenith” (327).

The section on the Church includes discussion of the nature of the Church, the sacraments, and the future of the Church. Here the Cardinal speculates that the future Church may indeed be a smaller Church but one that is nonetheless is open to all and responsible for society as a whole. He prognosticates that one of the greatest threats to the Church is public pressure for a watered down, appeasing Christianity. The Cardinal notes: “And I think the situation may absolutely develop here in which there must be resistance against the dictatorship of this apparent tolerance, which eliminates the scandal of the faith by declaring it intolerant” (454).

*God and the World* is a book that provides keen insights into the Catholic faith in general and Pope Benedict’s reflective wisdom in particular. The book is compelling to read and retains a spontaneous, conversational style throughout. Furthermore, it can be read either topically or sequentially without any loss of understanding.

Eileen P. Kelly
Ithaca College