

Readings

First Testament: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
Psalm: Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 (4)
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Gospel: Mark 13:33-37

Commentary

These readings offer insight into the current political climate as the United States prepares for the possibility of a Black President. This is written several weeks before the election. The focus in the readings is on the willingness of Paul to identify himself with the Corinthians, to whom he is writing. The psychologist and traumatologist Elizabeth F. Howell explains the difficulty Paul had identifying himself with the Corinthians as a corollary to loving them as himself. This is something everyone in the United States should face. We are all Americans.

Howell maintains that we avoid such identification through psychological defensive mechanisms that Freud originally labeled repression, but which she labels disassociation. Paul disassociated himself from the Corinthians, to the point that the manuscripts containing 1 Corinthians 1:4 are inconsistent. I see that inconsistency as a sign of disassociation that Howell describes. In the future, the better all living in the United States are able to associate with one another, the better off the country will be. That is the faith, hope, and charity residing in these Lectionary readings.

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Annotated Bibliography

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly and tangential details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some interesting scholarly details.

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

Isaiah 63:7-64:11

Paul Niskanen, "Yhwh as Father, Redeemer, and Potter in Isaiah 63:7-64:11"¹

Though there are many implied references, Isaiah 63:1 is one of the few direct references to the LORD as Father. Such primary human relationships as paternity form the basis of much psychological human development, development that researchers are yet far from examining systematically.

¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 397-407.

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Isaiah 63:7—64:11

William H. Irwin, C.S.B., review of Burkard M. Zapff, Jesaia 56—66²

This is the official German Catholic commentary to go with the translation of Isaiah. Zapff argues that “the lament of the servants of God—in Isa 63:7—64:11 is Israel’s [the people] response to the promises of Isaiah 60—62.” In other words, Israel laments that God has not fulfilled the promises. Zapff makes many worthwhile cross-references to other parts of Isaiah and other biblical texts.

Isaiah 63:7—64:8

John Paul Heil, "Jesus with the Wild Animals in Mark 1:13"³

The Lectionary does not refer to wild animals. In a paragraph-long sentence, Heil explains what Isaiah means.

That God’s Spirit descends upon Jesus as God’s beloved Son in the context of the people of Israel repenting and confessing their sins in preparation for God’s new exodus or “way” of salvation recalls for the audience of Mark [from which the Lectionary Gospel draws this Sunday] how God’s Spirit descended upon Israel as a son loved by God to guide them on the “way” in a new exodus context of repentance from their sinfulness in straying from God’s “way” (Isa 63:7—64:8).

Isaiah 63:17

Matthew J. Lynch, "Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b—63:6 in Isaiah's Zion Traditions"⁴

Lynch explains, “... the ‘fear’ of Yhwh (such as the nations exhibit) carries a positive sense in Isaiah, often designating the appropriately humble response to Yhwh’s kingship (Isa 66:2b; cf. 57:11; 63:17 [used here]; 66:5).” Isaiah 63:17 reads as follows:

Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways,
and harden our hearts so that we hear you not?
Return for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your heritage.

This Isaian lament readily applies to the racist content of United States culture.

² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 4 (July 2007) 804.

³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 1 (July 2006) 69.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 2 (July 2008) 253.

Isaiah 64:1-4
Matthew J. Lynch, "Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b—63:6 in
Isaiah's Zion Traditions"⁵

Lynch continues to explain Isaiah,

... it should be no surprise that theophanic themes are again picked up in the lament immediately following (63:7—61:12), in which the community pleads with Yhwh to reenact the Sinai theophany and bring deliverance (64:1-3 [used here]) even though that same community had been experiencing Yhwh's warrior judgment (63:10).

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 (4)

The Codex Sinaiticus has these verses.⁶

I am uncomfortable with verse 2, which seems to include *the God of Jacob*, though *God of Jacob* is not in the Lectionary.

Psalm 80:1-2, 3

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy⁷

Barker asserts that the Psalmist "drawing down the LORD into the temple was a major element of the temple service." Today, that is the function of the Consecration of the Mass.

Psalm 80:18-20

Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M., "One in Human Likeness and the Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel 7"⁸

Di Lella draws attention to Psalm 80:18, *the son of man*, which "is a lofty designation for `man.'" Di Lella goes on, "... the distress of Israel in the psalm is similar to the plight of the Jews in Daniel."

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 2 (July 2008) 259.

⁶ <http://www.codex-sinaiticus.net/en/manuscript.aspx?book=26&chapter=80&inputControl=420&lid=en&side=r&zoomSlider=0#> 081012.

⁷ London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003, 60, 186.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1 (July 1977) 2, 15.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

1 Corinthians 1:4

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998)	... for the grace of God bestowed on you ...
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410)	... in gratia Dei, quae data est vobis ...
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610)	... for the grace of God that is given you ...
<u>King James</u> (1611)	... for the grace of God which is given you ...
<u>Catholic RSV</u> (1969)	... because of the grace of God which was given you ...
<u>New American</u> (NAB) (1970)	... for the grace of God bestowed on you ...
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985)	... for the grace of God which you have been given ...

The word *you* is my reason for examining this verse. The original Greek manuscripts pose a problem, because an alternative reading would be *us*. The manuscripts represent the memory of the Church collecting the original data. At that point, we become involved with what the psychoanalysts label *projective identification*, a relationship between patient and analyst. So, which is it, *you* or *us* on whom grace is bestowed. Is Paul identifying himself with the Corinthians? From other studies, I do not think so, because they seemed to have something of an adversarial relationship.

For relevance in the world of today, psychoanalyst and traumatologist Elizabeth F. Howell quotes Toni Morrison.⁹

“Africanism” is the “vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny.”

In a footnote, Howell continues.¹⁰

Morrison writes of her discovery that “traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed and unshaped by, the four-hundred-year-old presence of the first Africans (and) assumes that the characteristics of our national literature emanate from a particular ‘Americanness’ that is separate from, and unaccountable to, this presence” (pp. 4-5). Morrison continues,

⁹ Elizabeth F. Howell, The Dissociative Mind (New York: Routledge, 2005) 182, citing Toni Morrison Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 52.

¹⁰ Elizabeth F. Howell, The Dissociative Mind (New York: Routledge, 2005) fn. 2, pages 264-265.

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These speculations have led me to wonder whether the major and championed characteristics of our national literature—individualism, masculinity, social engagement vs. historical isolation; acute and ambiguous moral problematics; the thematics of innocence coupled with an obsession with figuration of death and hell—are not in fact responses to a dark, abiding signing Africanist presence. It has occurred to me that the very manner by which American literature distinguishes itself as a coherent entity exists because of this unsettled and unsettling population (p. 6).

Morrison notes that “because European sources of cultural hegemony were dispersed but not yet valorized in the new country—the process of organizing American coherence through a distancing Africanism because the operative mode of a new cultural hegemony “(p. 8). She adds that so many of the first Americans were, most of all, unfree. They were escaping various forms of ostracism, poverty, even imprisonment in their native counties, and the [traumatized Europeans twisted reality so that the] slave population offered

itself up as surrogate selves for meditation on problems of human freedom, its lure and its elusiveness. This black population was available for mediations on terror—the terror of European outcasts, their dread of failure, powerlessness, Nature [sic] without limits, natal loneliness, internal aggression, evil, sin, greed. In other words, this slave population was understood to have offered itself up for reflections on human freedom in terms other than the abstractions of human potential and the rights of man (pp. 37-38).

Just as Saint Paul struggled to shape his personal identity in the context of 1 Corinthians 1:4, so do Christians in the United States struggle to shape their identities in the context of one another. Christianity requires such identification in order to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

1 Corinthians

Jeffrey R. Asher, review of Karl Olav Sandnes, Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles¹¹

Sandnes includes “numerous passages in 1 Corinthians.” Asher asserts, “This work is an important secondary source for anyone who is interested in Paul’s letters ...”

1 Cor 1:1-11

“William O. Walker, Jr., “1 Corinthians 15:29-34 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation”¹²

In arguing that the passage the Lectionary uses is Pauline, Walker asserts,

Verses 1-28 proclaim the fact of Christ’s resurrection “as the common ground of all Christian preaching and faith” (vv. 1-11), insist that a denial of resurrection negates Christ’s resurrection and thus invalidates Christian faith itself (vv. 12-19), and the final destruction of death (vv. 20-28).

1 Cor 1:6

Basil S. Davis, “Severianus of Gabala and Galatians 6:6-10”¹³

Davis asserts that Paul is not accepting an identity with the Corinthians, “they had turned away from the One who called them ... in the grace of Christ (1:6).”

1 Cor 1:8

Alan C. Mitchell, review of Chris VanLandingham, Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul¹⁴

Mitchell writes that VanLandingham “... fails to make a distinction between grace offered and grace accepted or rejected.” Mitchell states “VanLandingham’s boldest claim is that Paul had no notion of justification by faith ...”

1 Cor 2:1-5

Richard J. Dillon, review of Tor Vegge, Paulus und das antike Schulwesen: Schule und Bildung des Paulus¹⁵

Dillon does not like the scholarship of Vegge, referring to his “selectively critical attitude,” “exaggeration,” “springs some serious leaks,” “resisting significant recent progress in Pauline study,” and “arguments *ex convenientia*.”

¹¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 480-481.

¹² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 1 (July 2007) 85, 87.

¹³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 2 (July 2007) 300.

¹⁴ Theological Studies, Vol. 69, No. 3 (September 2008) 683.

¹⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 626.

Psalm 85:8

Mark 13:33-37

Mark 13:28-37

Elliott C. Maloney, O.S.B., review of Salvador Villota Herrero, Palabras sin ocaso: Función interpretiva de Mc 13,28-37 en el discurso escatológica de Marcos¹⁶

While Maloney does not like the excruciating detail in the 425-page book, he agrees that Villota Herrero made “a good explanation of the importance of 13:28-37 for the whole Gospel ...” the Lectionary does not use the core passage, which is in verse 31, “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

After-Action Report

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Reading 142A, October 12, 2008

My friend, Marge Nocks has retired to a nursing home in Richmond and, therefore, is no longer able to share the ride with me to the Bethlehem Monastery of Poor Clares in Barhamsville, New Kent County, Virginia. Her comments had been the main source of these “After-Action Reports.” May all readers please keep Marge, her daughter, the Abbess, Mother Clare, and me in their prayers.

¹⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 1 (July 2008) 174, 175.