

Personal Notes

Third Sunday of Advent, 008B, December 11, 2011

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Secularism is the unintended consequence of the ham-handed way in which the Papacy attempts to protect the Faithful from their own thoughts. Once the Faithful realize a degree of validity to their perceptions of theology, the papal directives to stop thinking—only result in increased thinking. Three examples fit the profile. The first two examples are from what happened in the United States, undoubtedly with approval from the Papacy.

First is the condemnation of certain movies by the former Legion of Decency. Marketers regarded the condemnation as means for increasing ticket sales. “Banned in Boston” turned into an advertising gimmick that ultimately eliminated the Legion of Decency.¹

Second is the March 29, 2011 condemnation of Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God by Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J.² The condemnation increased sales and use of the book. The condemnation also increased tension between church scholars and church administrators.

Finally, and most disturbingly, is the attack on the “gold standard” scholarly journal, often used in these Musings, Theological Studies. Phyllis Zagano revealed that attack in her September 16, 2011, National Catholic Reporter article, “Rethinking the theological thought police.”³ Zagano pointed out “attacking a professional journal does not protect doctrine. It mummifies it.”

The problem the Vatican has is with an article now almost seven years old, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Reconsider,” by Kenneth Himes and James Coriden. The Himes and Coriden article never made it into the Sunday Lectionary index; but the Vatican rebuttal did at Reading 76B, 140B, and 168B. Reading 76B is the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, which will come up next year.

Zagano describes Theological Studies as a seventy-one year old journal for professional theologians that has 2,848 subscribers in ninety countries. The problem may be these Personal Notes, which daily reach the 20,000 subscribers to www.jamesriverjournal.com College professors are supposed to present the relevant

¹ See Anthony Burke Smith, The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2010)

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http://www.fordham.edu/academics/programs_at_fordham/theology/faculty/elizabeth_a_johnson/ (accessed September 19, 2011);

<http://blog.cardinalnewmansociety.org/2011/03/31/bishops-condemn-book-by-fordham-theologian-sr-elizabeth-johnson/> (accessed September 19, 2011).

³ Phyllis Zagano, “Rethinking the theological thought police,” National Catholic Reporter: The Independent News Source, Vol. 47, No. 44 (September 16), 28 below the fold.

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scholarship for students to understand. As a retired Thomas Nelson Community College history Professor, that is what I continue to do, aiming at readers with high school competencies. That conduit works in two ways; first offering readers access to Biblical scholarship otherwise unavailable; second offering scholars access to readers otherwise unavailable. These Musings aim above the usual Third Grade level of sermons. The Vatican might not want to expose the Faithful to a scholarly article questioning the indissolubility of marriage.

With the Isaian Responsorial Antiphon, this Sunday, *My soul rejoices in my God*. The main reason is to participate enabling the Faithful to think about God. With Mary greeting Elizabeth, the Faithful can announce, *my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord*. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 is not about thought police and censorship. To the contrary, *test everything; retain what is good*. The Gospel of John 1:26 also encourages thinking, *there is one among you whom you do not recognize ...*. Such recognition takes thought, not only by the Vatican, but, more importantly, by the rest of the Faithful, each in individual circumstances.

Readings

First Reading:	Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
Responsorial Psalm:	Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54 (Isaiah 61:10b)
Second Reading:	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
Alleluia	Isaiah 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)
Gospel:	John 1:6-8, 19-28

Annotated Bibliography

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

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

Meaning changes significantly between the Lectionary and NABRE

Verse Lectionary

NABRE

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | ... glad <i>tidings</i> to the <i>poor</i> , | ... good <i>news</i> to the <i>afflicted</i> , |
| | to <i>heal</i> the brokenhearted ... | to <i>bind up</i> the brokenhearted |

There is a difference between *glad tidings* and *good news*; and between *poor* and *afflicted*. *To heal the brokenhearted* misses the point of *to bind up the brokenhearted*.

I am saving other differences for the next time through Cycle B.

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Isaiah 61:1-4

Bettye Collier-Thomas, Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1580-1979⁴

On March 3, 1974, the First Sunday in Lent, Pauli Murray (1910-1985), one of the first nursing graduates from Hampton Institute, preached on “Women Seeking Admission to Holy Orders—As Crucifiers Carrying the Cross”. She quoted Isaiah 61:1, to say *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ...* Indeed. It is too bad that no Roman Catholic priest would dare take such an approach to ordination, all the while praising the Mother of God.

Isaiah 61:1-3

Reed Lessing, review of Randall Heskett, Messianism within the Scriptural Scrolls of Isaiah⁵

Lessing writes, that “H. needs to defend his reasons for disjoining Isaianic texts just because they stand in tension.” That said, Lessing has high regard for Heskett.

... H. examines Isa 61:1-3 [1-2a used here] as the only explicitly messianic text in the scroll of Isaiah. Like the other texts surveyed from Isaiah, 61:1-3 is ambiguous, resulting in a wide range of suggestions identifying the speaker. Although the prebiblical form of this text may not have been intentionally messianic, there are enough warrants in the biblical text for later interpreters to read it as messianic, as did early Christians and possibly the Qumran community. In both cases, later interpreters exploited the ambiguity of the text and interpreted the text as messianic.

Sometimes prophecies only become prophetic through later Christian interpretation and insight.

Isa 61:1-2

John C. Poirier, “Jesus as an Elijianic Figure in Luke 4:16-30”⁶

Poirier titles Part II, the center of his argument, “The Elijianic Reading of Isaiah 61:1-2,” meaning contemporaries would have regarded this passage as referring to Elijah. Poirier observes that prophets ordinarily were not anointed, though Isaiah 61:1 proclaims *the LORD has anointed me*. The description fits Elijah.

⁴ San Francisco, CA 94103-1741: A Wiley Imprint: 1998, 240.

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 1 (January 2009) 139-140.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No, 2 (April 2009) 350, 351, 353, 356-362.

Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54 (Isaiah 61:10b)

Meaning changes significantly between the Lectionary and NABRE

Verse Lectionary

NABRE

46 *lowly servant*

handmaid's lowliness

The connotation from the Lectionary is internal to the servant; from the NABRE the lowliness is external.

I am saving other differences for the next time through Cycle B.

Luke 1:51-53

Alain Gignac, "Synchronic Observations on Luke 16:19-31 as Preparation for a Translation," in Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology, Stanley E. Porter and Mark J. Boda (eds.)⁷

Gignac observes, that the Magnificat is in the context of "a short story of reversal—as a very classic motif in the Ancient Near East—combined with a dialogue, [that] presupposes a complex editorial process, probably very far from Jesus' teaching. These genealogical observations, even though hypothetical, are fascinating."

Luke 1:42-55

Teresa Okure, S.H.C.J., "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42) in Africa"⁸
Okure explains,

His mother Mary also lives in Nazareth, where angel Gabriel meets her (Luke 1:26). Her Magnificat (Lk 1:42-55) reflects an awareness of what tradition thinks of her as a woman, and celebrates God's radical reversal of that view. It is perhaps because the only biological parent of Jesus is a Nazarene that the narrative makes Jesus a Nazarene as well (or Nazorean (Mt 2:23)). In the post exile era, to prevent mixed marriages by Jewish men, mothers, not fathers, determined the nationality of Jewish children. Viewed from the mother's side, Jesus' Nazarene origin has rich historical and theological significance.

Racial prejudice fits this profile of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

⁷ Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009, 203.

⁸ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 2009) 404.

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1 Thessalonians 5:17

Daniel B. Wallace, With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes: Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament⁹

Pray without ceasing, is an iterative present, meaning *pray repeatedly without ceasing*. Wallace explains, “The idea of the present imperative is not that believers are to pray every minute of every day, but that we should offer prayers to God repeatedly. We should make it our habit to be in the presence of God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Pope Paul VI, “Sacred Scripture in the Life and Mission of the Church: Chapter VI from the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: *Dei Verbum*: Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965”¹⁰

Pope Paul VI relates 1 Thessalonians 5:21 with the “Word of God and the Service of Charity.”

1 Thessalonians 5:22

Bettye Collier-Thomas, Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1580-1979¹¹

Rosa A. Horn (1880-1976) used 1 Thessalonians 5:22 to preach on “What is Holiness? A Complete Life in Christ.” Collier-Thomas explains,

While Horn emphasizes the importance of conversion and sanctification, just as Foote, Randolph, and other Methodist preaching women did, Horne’s Pentecostal bent is evident in her particular emphasis on the Holy Ghost—an emphasis that distinguished her holiness theology from that of Foote, Randolph, and other black preaching women who remained within Methodist denominations.

The verse in question is *Refrain from every kind of evil*. Interestingly, Collier-Thomas in citing the verse, has opening quotation marks, but not closing quotation marks, as follows: “Abstain from all appearance of evil [sic], and the very God of Peace will sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole Spirit and soul anybody be preserved, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

⁹ Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 521.

¹⁰ Adoremus Bulletin, Vol. XIV, No 7 (October 2008), 5/6.

¹¹ San Francisco, CA 94103-1741: A Wiley Imprint: 1998, 179, 189, 191.

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1 Thess 5:23

George T. Montague, S.M., review of John R. Levison, Filled with the Spirit¹²
Montague reports,

In contrast to the OT, L. says the NT gives no importance to the life-breath; rather, the NT concentrates on the gift of the Holy Spirit tied to Christ's resurrection. Here, too, L.'s claims overstep his evidence. Paul frequently refers to the spirit of the individual: "The Spirit itself bears witness with *our spirit*" (Rom 8:16; see also 1 Cor 2:11; 5:5; 1 Thess 5:23 [used here]).

The reference to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is ... *may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thessalonians approves thinking.

1 Thess 5:23

Margaret Y. MacDonald and Leif E. Vaage, "Unclean but Holy Children: Paul's Everyday Quandary in 1 Corinthians 7:14c"¹³
MacDonald and Vaage explain,

The texts that speak specifically about the condition and practice of holiness are found in just three Pauline letters. These letters are 1 Thessalonians (3:13; 4:3, 7, 8; 5:23 [used here]), 1 Corinthians (1:21; 3:17 (cf. 6:19); 6:11; 7:14, 34), and Romans (6:19-22; 8:27; 11:16). In 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, it is striking how often the language of holiness is found in or around discussions of sexual behavior—as though this issue were, for Paul, the main concern of such a discourse.

The Faithful still consider sexual behavior as an important aspect of holiness and is part of the sexual cover-up tragedy.

¹² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 72, No. 4 (October 2010) 832.

¹³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 3 (July 2011) 542.

1 Thess 5:23

Stanley Stowers, review of George H. Van Kooten, Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity¹⁴

Stowers reports, "Despite some weaknesses, the volume advances scholarship by plausibly placing Paul in relation to a contemporary philosophical movement that came to play a key role in Christian theology." Referring to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Stowers explains, "Paul does write of "*Pneuma*, soul and body" in 1 Thess 5:23. V.K. convincingly argues that Philo conceives of *Pneuma* as the stuff of mind and that Paul is similar." Stowers has so many caveats, however, that the scholarship of Van Kooten is not trustworthy.

Isaiah 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)

Luke 4:18 is not in the Sunday Lectionary. The NABRE has "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor," just like the Lectionary. One of my problems with NT quotations of OT verses is that the quotations are never exact. I describe Isaiah 61:1 above. This snippet belies such inexactitude.

Isaiah 61:1

Missal

"The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring **good news** to the **afflicted**, to **bind up** the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners" (Is 61:1).

Lectionary

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; **he** has sent me to bring **glad tidings** to the **poor**, to **heal** the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives **and** release to the prisoners

NABRE

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring **good news** to the **afflicted**, to **bind up** the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners.

The problem is that I am only guessing at what the Missal has, because publication is being withheld until October. It is now September 19. I intend to obtain a copy of the Missal as soon as possible. It infuriates me that considerable rigmarole is happening to prepare the Faithful for a Missal, to which they are denied access. That said, the new Missal is following the NABRE in tension with the Lectionary. The Roman Catholic

¹⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2011) 164.

episcopate is denying the Faithful the tools required to think about the forthcoming Missal accurately.

John 1:6-8, 19-28

John 1:1-18

William Adler, review, Ronald Cox, By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity¹⁵

Adler reports that By the Same Word is “impressive and provocative.” Adler explains,

The inspiration for this study was Frank Moore Cross’s observation about the way in which the Hebrew Scriptures use mythic motifs from pre-Yahwistic West Semitic religion to explain and provide a transcendent cosmic dimension for historical events such as the exodus. Cox sees a similar fusion of the mystical and the historical in four NT christological passages: John 1:1-18; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-20; and Heb 1:1-4. In C.’s opinion, each drew on a Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine that survived as a ‘mythic form’ in Hellenistic Jewish wisdom literature (the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo), certain Gnostic texts (the *Poimandres* and the *Apocryphon* of John), and in an underlying christology.

What bothers me about this passage also bothered my fellow seminarians over fifty years ago, when the bishop denied our Scripture professor the permission required to study myths. Now, in my old age, I am developing the idea that the administration of Holy Mother the Church, the hierarchy, opposes thinking. The folly of that approach appears to be the folly of denying scholars access to opposing scholarship. The folly of that approach also seems, somehow, associated with the lack of vocations to the institutional Church and the sexual cover-up scandal.

John 1:1-18

Michael Peppard, “Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship”¹⁶

Peppard argues, “Among NT authors, Paul and John represent the closest we have to ideal types of portraying divine sonship, with one [Paul] preferring adoptive imagery and the other [John] begotten imagery.” Then Peppard explains a relationship between Sacred Scripture and what it means to be born again. Peppard teaches at a Catholic University, Fordham.

¹⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 72, No. 1 (January 2010) 140.

¹⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2011) 102, 103.

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For the metaphor of begotten divine sonship, one turns undoubtedly to Johannine literature. There the metaphor of begottenness is used to describe both Christians and Christ himself. Because of the prominence of Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus [the Pharisee, who came at night]¹⁷ in Christian popular consciousness (John 3:1-21, esp. vv. 1-10) [used in Cycle B at the Fourth Sunday of Lent]), the fact that Christians are "begotten" or "born" from above is widely known. Being "born again" has caught on as shorthand for being Christian in a way that being "adopted" never has. But the proclamation of Christ himself as "begotten" or "born" of God is actually *not* found in John's Gospel. Nowhere in the Johannine Prologue (1:1-18 [used here]) is Jesus called God's begotten son, despite the important role the Prologue would later play in the shoring up of Nicene christological orthodoxy. There is someone "sent from God" according to the Prologue, but it is *John*, not Jesus (1:6); and God does do some "begetting," but it is *Christians* who are begotten, not the Christ (1:12-13 [not used]). To find a reference to Jesus Christ as God's begotten son, one has to read to the very end of John's first Epistle—and even there, one finds substantial disagreement among the manuscripts ...

A holy Christian life requires individual thinking.

John 1:7

Lance Byron Richey, review of Mary L. Coloe, [Dwelling in the Household of God: Johannine Ecclesiology and Spirituality](#)¹⁸

Richey likes the way in which Coloe develops her concept of the household of God.

In this suggestive study, Coloe argues that the temple imagery present in Johannine christology ... also serves as the governing metaphor for the self-understanding of the Johannine community as the "household of God" that runs throughout the Gospel. C. adopts a narrative-critical methodology to explore several sections of the Gospel that (she believes) present the post-resurrection community of believers

¹⁷ <http://www.google.com/search?q=dialogue+with+Nicodemus&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a> (accessed September 20, 2011). John 3:1-15, except for 6-8 describing John the Baptist, skipped this Sunday and not used over all in the Sunday Lectionary.

¹⁸ [the Catholic Biblical Quarterly](#), Vol. 72, No. 1 (January 2010) 139.

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as the continuation of the temple, or “household” of God, revealed first in Jesus.

Coloe portrays John the Baptist as a type of marriage broker between Jesus and his beloved, Israel. Coloe depicts John 1:19-35, about John the Baptist, as a “symbolic establishment of a new ‘household of God’ through the actions of Jesus and the Baptist.” The point of it all for the Faithful is to think about the meaning of Jesus in their lives.

For my background and more on sources see the Appendix file. Personal Notes are on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes.