

Readings

First Reading:	Isaiah 7:10-14
Responsorial Psalm:	Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c and 10b)
Second Reading:	Romans 1:1-7
Alleluia:	Matthew 1:23
Gospel:	Matthew 1:18-24

Commentary

I am having a problem with these readings. Through Mary, I regard the readings as an instance of honoring human rights. I regard Mary not only as a person, but also as a symbol that the Faithful interpret and understand in different ways throughout history. I realize I may be misunderstood; and even if understood, may be wrong.

The readings for this Fourth Sunday of Advent are about respect for human life. Western Civilization uses that respect for life to take stands against racism. Once the Faithful recognize racism, they can move on to sexism, and after that to concern about all of the little ones in the sight of humans, but great in the sight of God. In that way, respecting life is more about those living outside the body of mothers, than anyone potentially living inside those bodies.

In the present political context, the problem revolves around the advantages and disadvantages of hierocratic versus democratic forms of church governance. The Faithful can rightly ask which form of governance is more likely to protect those rights associated with the right to life. In the readings for this Sunday, the first right to life belongs to Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14). *The Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive ... Emmanuel.*

Tearing away at racism and sexism, Psalm 24: 3-4 answers its own question: Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD? ...one ... who desires not what is vain," namely trampling on the human rights of others. Romans words the matter of human rights as the right to the grace of Jesus Christ, *to all the beloved of God in Rome* [as distinct from Jerusalem], *called to be holy*. The Gospel is about the right and expectation of Mary, the unwed mother, to live with Joseph as his wife in his home. The Faithful are able to understand Mary as bestowing her human rights on the rest of the Faithful, especially when she appears as an Indian girl as Our Lady of Guadalupe.

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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 material.

Isaiah 7:10-14

Isa 7:14

Vincent Skemp, review of Alain Gignac and Anne Fortin (eds.), "Christ est mort pour nous": Études sémiotiques, féministes et sotériologiques en l'honneur d'Olivette Genest¹

One of the articles "surveys the use of the root [for a *virgin* shall conceive] in Northwest Semitic languages, and concludes that it designates the young age of the person in Isa 7:14." There are other scriptural references in this review of a book of collected essays, which I am passing over, because too time-consuming.

Isaiah 7:14

Anders Gerdmar, review of Melody D. Knowles, Esther Menn, John Pawlikowski, O.S.M., and Timothy J. Sandoval (eds.), Contesting Texts: Jews and Christians in Conversation About the Bible²

Gerdmar reports that Contesting Texts is about Jews and Christians endeavoring to understand Sacred Scripture together. The main problem is what to accept as authoritative. Gerdmar elaborates,

Here Jewish and Christian theologians interact on questions of the authoritative interpretations of biblical texts. David Novak points to authority as the hardest nut to crack in formulating the Jewish statement *Dabru Emet*, and he insists on the importance of authority questions for interpretation and for dialogue. Focused on Matthew 1:23's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 ("the virgin shall conceive ..."), Ralph Klein's discussion of promise and fulfillment exemplifies the problem of authority. He finds Matthew's reception obsolete, claiming that Christians today must deal more critically with "allusions to the Old Testament." (But is not Matthew 1:23 more than an allusion simply to Christian tradition?)

The **Dabru Emet** ([Heb. דברו אמת](#) "Speak [the] Truth") is a document concerning the relationship between [Christianity](#) and [Judaism](#). It was signed by over 220 [rabbis](#) and [intellectuals](#) from all branches of [Judaism](#), as individuals and not as representing any organization or stream of Judaism.³

The Dabru Emet was first published in September 2000, in the [New York Times](#), and has since been used in Jewish education programs

¹ [the Catholic Biblical Quarterly](#), Vol. 72, No. 3 (July 2010) 639.

² [Theological Studies](#), Vol. 69, No. 3 (September 2008) 720.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dabru_Emet accessed October 2, 2010.

across the U.S. While affirming that there are theological differences between these two religions, the purpose of Dabru Emet is to point out common ground and a legitimacy of Christianity, for non-Jews, from the Jewish perspective. It is not an official document of any of the Jewish denominations per se, but it is representative of what many [Jews](#) feel.

Isa 11:1-9

Reed Lessing, review of Randall Heskett, Messianism within the Scriptural Scrolls of Isaiah⁴

Lessing reports that Isaiah 7:14 is one of the three Isaian messianic texts, the two others being 9:1-6 and 11:1-9. Lessing is unimpressed because “H. needs to defend his reasons for disjoining Isaianic texts just because they stand in tension [with one another].”

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (7c and 10b)

Psalm 24:3-4

Dino Dozzi, "Thus Says the Lord' The Gospel in the Writings of Saint Francis"⁵
Dozzi argues,

Israel asks itself: “Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? Who can stand in his holy place?” And the answer is: “The clean of hand and pure of heart, who are not devoted to idols, who have not sworn falsely” (Ps 24:3-4). So it is possible to make use of the bridge God has placed between himself and humans, and it will be possible to do so with clean hands and pure heart.

The celebration of the Incarnation at Christmas is about forming that bridge.

Romans 1:1-7

Sacred Scripture contains recurring themes that I intend to highlight. The exclamation point (!) indicates where a principal reference list of passages related by a common theme or expression is found. The parenthetical expressions indicate where the Sunday Lectionary uses a particular Scripture.

Verse 1: 2 Peter 3:16; Acts 19:21, 23:11; 28:14, 16; 2 Timothy 1:17

I checked the Bibles I use regularly for any reference to 2 Peter and, finding none, am regarding Nestle-Aland as my best non-English source to identify recurring themes in Sacred Scripture.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 1 (January 2009) 139-140.

⁵ Greyfriars Review, Vol. 18, Supplement (2004) 115.

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- Verse 2 Philippians 1:1; Galatians 1:10 (87C); James 1:1!; Psalm 105:26; 78, 70, etc.; 1 Kings 1,1; Galatians 1:15! (90C); 1 Thessalonians 2:2!
- Verse 3 Titus 2:1, 16:25 ff.; Luke 1:70
- Verse 4 Matthew 1:1 (13ABC); John 7:42! ; 2 Timothy 2:8 (25A, 144C); Revelation 22:16 (61C); Colossians 1:22!
- Verse 5 Acts 13:33; Philippians 3:10 (36C); 1 Timothy 3:16; Test Lev 18:7
- Verse 6 Romans 15:15! (22A, 94A); Galatians 2:7 ff.; Romans 16:26! (11B); Acts 9:15! (notes the synoptic parallels); Romans 8:28; 9:24; 1 Kings 1:9 etc.
- Verse 7 Acts 28:15; 1 Kings 1:2; 1:3; 2 Kings 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 3; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1 (145A); Titus 1:4.

Rom 1:1-7

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, 2nd ed., Erroll F. Rhodes, tr.⁶

The Semitic Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge has a Fourth Century papyrus with Romans 1:1-7. The Birdwell Library at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas has a papyrus manuscript of Rom 1:1-16 dating from about 600. Codex Claromontanus, at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, a parchment, dating from the Sixth Century, lacks Rom 1:1-7, which was supplied by a later hand.

The Alands explain

A chronological review of the manuscripts edited in the above publications [one of which contains Romans] makes it evident that the Coptic New Testament Tradition was already broadly established by the fourth-fifth century. And yet these represent only a small part of the Coptic manuscript materials scattered throughout the world and only too inadequately catalogued. When the attempt of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research to assemble these materials has been at least somewhat achieved, and after they have been duly studied and evaluated, and coptologues have come to a consensus on the various dialects, then it will be possible to sketch a history of the Coptic versions of the New Testament more completely. Critical editions will then be possible, and the tradition will be able to make its contribution to New Testament textual criticism. For the Coptic New Testament is among the primary resources for the history of the New Testament text. Important as the Latin and Syriac versions may be, it is of far greater importance to know precisely how the text developed in Egypt. The Alexandrian and

⁶ Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. 96, 97, 110, 204.

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Egyptian text types are not only of the greatest importance by far, but the special climatic conditions of Egypt have also preserved for us nearly 100 percent of all the known witnesses to the New Testament text from the period up to the fourth century. A control of these by the tradition in the national language promises significant results.

Rom 1:4

Clint Tibbs, "The Spirit (World) and the (Holy) Spirits among the Earliest Christians: 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 as a Test Case"⁷

Tibbs observes "The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* provide qualifications for spirits that find a direct correspondence with qualifications for spirits in the NT: ... `a spirit of holiness" (...(*T. Levi* 18:11; Rom 1:4)). I found the reference to *T. Levi* in verse 5, rather than verse 4, but the margin is so congested and I am so unused to unpacking what is there, that I am not arguing with Tibbs.

Rom 1:3-4

Walter T. Wilson, review of Matthias Konradt, Israel, Kirche und die Volker im Matthausevangelium⁸

Wilson reports that Konradt argues the church "understands itself not as the new Israel, but as the community to whom Jesus has entrusted the fulfillment of this [his] mission."

Rom 1:3

Susan Smith, review of Adolphus Chinedu Amadi-Azuogu, Gender and Ministry in Early Christianity and the Church Today⁹

Smith reports that "A.-A. emerges as a diatribist and polemicist. His comments on Catholic religious women border on caricature reminiscent of nineteenth-century tracts attacking Catholic nuns."

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 2 (April 2008) 321.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2008) 836.

⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 587-588.

Rom 1:5

Kenneth Schenck, "2 Corinthians and the *Πιστις Χριστου* Debate"¹⁰
Schenck explains ambiguity in the writing of Paul,

... Paul's concept of believer's faith flows similarly from one nuance and content to another. Thus, Paul not only speaks of faith that God will raise the faithful from the dead. Believers also have faith that God will justify the ungodly (Rom 4:5), and Paul can speak of the *υπακοη πιστεως* [obedience of faith] of a believer (Rom 1:5 [used here]). So it is not difficult to see Paul floating somewhat freely between these various nuances as the context of his discussion changes in relation to Jesus as well.

Rom 1:5

James F. Keenan, S.J., "Fundamental Moral Theology: Tradition"¹¹
Keenan quotes William O'Neill to argue,

On church teaching on women's ordination, he [O'Neill] raises basic hermeneutical [principles of interpretation] questions: "If, and to the degree the practice of not ordaining women rested on the prevailing belief in their natural inferiority, to that degree the practice does not cohere with the 'obedience of faith' (Rom 1:5 [used here]; 10:8-10), that is, the 'constant tradition' of the church." He adds: "For to preserve the coherence of the tradition with respect to human rights, we must disavow traditional practices that deny them." He then turns to the person as source of moral truth and asks, must we not "appeal to the graces of discernment, that is, of compassionate respect recognizing the '*individuum ineffabile*, whom God has called by name,' in resolving the question."

Matthew 1:23

Matthew 1:18-24

For recurring themes in Sacred Scripture, see the following.

Verse 18 for verses 18-25 see Luke 2:1-7 (14ABC); Luke 1:27 (11B); for verse 20, see Luke 1:35 (11B).

Verse 20 Matthew 2:13:19 (17A).

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 535.

¹¹ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 1 (March 2009) 143.

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- Verse 21 Matthew 1:18! (10A here); Genesis 17:19; Luke 1:31 (11B); 2:21 (18ABC);
Psalm 130:8 (34A, 89B); Acts 4:12 (50B).
Verse 23 Isaiah 7:14 ? (10A used here),
Verse 24 Isaiah 8:8-10 ? (10A used here); Romans 8:31 (26B).

Matthew 1

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, 2nd ed., Erroll F. Rhodes, tr.¹²

The Alands explain.

Until the beginning of the fourth century the text of the New Testament developed freely. It was a 'living text' in the Greek literary tradition, unlike the text of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was subject to strict controls because (in the oriental tradition) the consonantal text was holy. And the New Testament text continued to be a "living text" as long as it remained a manuscript tradition, even when the Byzantine church molded it to the procrustean bed of the standard and officially prescribed text. Even for later scribes, for example, the parallel passages of the Gospels were so familiar that they would adapt the text of one Gospel to that of another. They also felt themselves free to make corrections in the text, improving it by their own standards of correctness, whether grammatically, stylistically, or more substantively. This was all the more true of the early period, when the text had not yet attained canonical status, especially in the earliest period when Christians considered themselves filled with the Spirit. As a consequence the text of the early period was many-faceted, and each manuscript had its own peculiar character. This can be observed in such papyri as ... and so forth. The fact that this was not the normative practice has been proved by ..., which represents a strict text just as ... of the period around A.D. 125 represents a normal text. It preserves the text of the original exemplar in a relatively faithful form (and is not alone in doing so; cf. p. 59).

¹² Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, 69 (the source of the quote. For the sake of brevity, I pass over the rest of the references), 119, 122, 127, 241, 243, 252, 253, 254, 257.

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Matt 1:18-25

Donald Senior, C.P., review of Dale C. Allison, Jr., Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present¹³

Senior reports that Allison offers “an ingenious argument that *porneia* in the prohibition of divorce in 5:32 and 19:9 refers to adultery in view of the fact that Joseph is declared a “just” man for contemplating divorce from Mary because of her supposed adultery (1:18-25).” *Ingenious*, indeed. It seems to me that that argument is self-contradictory and forces me to wonder whether Senior is sarcastic here.

Matt 1:18

Michael M. Winters, "Theological Alterations in the Syriac Translation of Ben Sira"¹⁴

Winters argues that the Essenes translated and changed Ben Sira to suit their own way of life. Winters focuses his argument on the rare verb “found with child.”

Matt 1:20-21

Leroy Andrew Huizenga, “Obedience unto Death: The Matthean Gethsemane and Arrest Sequence and the Aqedah”¹⁵

Huizenga observes, “In terms of syntax, Matt 1:20-21 contains a significant verbal allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX” that Nestle-Aland recognizes, above.

Matt 1:21, 23

Paul Lawrence, The IVP Atlas of Bible History¹⁶

Lawrence points out that Nazareth was “a small, somewhat insignificant town in the hills of Galilee.”

Matt 1:21

Catherine Sider Hamilton, “His Blood Be upon Us’: Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew”¹⁷

Hamilton argues,

At the last moment of Jesus’ trial, the Matthean passion narrative adds a verse that has variously fueled anti-Judaism and disputed

¹³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 2008) 135.

¹⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 2 (April 2008) 308.

¹⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 3 (July 2009) 516.

¹⁶ Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2006, 137.

¹⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 2008) 83.

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commentators ever since: “and ... all the people said: `His blood be upon us and upon our children” (Matt 27:25). The verse has become something of an interpretive crux. There is, on the one hand, the older and standard reading of the text: by this cry, the people incur judgment, worked out in Matthew’s scheme of things in the destruction of Jerusalem. Daniel Marguerat puts it starkly: “By this cry, Israel has wiped itself out of the history of salvation.” On the other hand, there is the more recent “ironic” reading. Jesus, as the angel tells Joseph, is the one who saves his people from their sins (1:21); his blood is poured out, as he tells his disciples at supper, for the forgiveness of sins (26:28); when the people call down his blood upon their heads they therefore invoke, albeit unwittingly, their own salvations. Judgment here yields to redemption through the blood that saves, in an echo of the story of Passover.

Matthew 1:21

Walter T. Wilson, review of Matthias Konradt, Israel, Kirche und die Volker im Mattheusevangelium¹⁸

Wilson reports that Konradt argues the church “understands itself not as the new Israel, but as the community to whom Jesus has entrusted the fulfillment of this [his] mission.” Konradt situates his gospel “within specific `theological traditions of Israel,” especially traditions relating to Davidic messianism, which function as a lens through which the meaning of other messianic categories is clarified. Jesus is ... sent to save his people from their sins.”

Matt 1:21

Bettye Collier-Thomas, Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979¹⁹

Rosa A. Horn (1880-1976) preached to the question “Is Jesus God the Father or is He the Son of God?” Horn used the text, *And she shall bring forth a Son*. Collier-Thomas reports “Horn declares that only Jesus, God’s son, can transform the carnal mind into a righteous reflection of the divine.”

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

¹⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2008) 836.

¹⁹ San Francisco, CA 94103-1741: A Wiley Imprint: 1998, 173, 176, 178.