

Personal Notes

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Reading 010A, December 22, 2013

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Jeff Cavins asserts, “Jesus hasn’t chosen a man who is perfect (for no one is perfect!) but one who loves him, who acts on Jesus’ word even when it doesn’t make sense, who is ready to die for him (Luke 22:33).”¹ Acting on the word of Jesus, even when it does not make sense, does not make sense. The First Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, “Lumen Fidei”.

There are two reasons for the lengthy explanatory quotation that follows. First, I like to cite something positive from the Papacy. Second, the excerpt is tightly reasoned and either paraphrasing or cutting parts out would ruin the argument. “Lumen Fidei” begins by comparing the original Hebrew with the Greek translation of Isaiah 7:9. Translation is foundational to the approach of Personal Notes to the illiterate 2011 Missal. “Lumen Fidei” goes on to relate translation to gaining knowledge of a firm foundation in these troubled times for what is translated.

23. Unless you believe, you will not understand [religion or anything else] (cf. Is 7:9). The Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint translation produced in Alexandria, gives the above rendering of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah to King Ahaz. In this way, the issue of the knowledge of truth became central to faith. The Hebrew text, though, reads differently: the prophet says to the king: “If you will not believe, you shall not be established”. [sic] Here there is a play on words, based on two forms of the verb *‘aman*: “you will believe” (*ta’aminu*) and “you shall be established” (*te’amenu*). Terrified by the might of his enemies, the king seeks the security that an alliance with the great Assyrian empire can offer. The prophet tells him instead to trust completely in the solid and steadfast rock [sic] which is the God of Israel. Because God is trustworthy, it is reasonable to have faith in him, to stand fast on his word. He is the same God that Isaiah will later call, twice in one verse, the God who is Amen [sic], “the God of truth” (cf. Is 65:16), the enduring foundation of covenant fidelity. It might seem that the Greek version of the Bible, by translating “be established” as “understand”, profoundly altered the meaning of the text by moving away from the biblical notion of trust in God towards a Greek notion of intellectual understanding. Yet this translation, while certainly reflecting a dialogue with Hellenistic culture, is not alien to the underlying spirit of the Hebrew text. The firm foundation that Isaiah promises to the king is indeed grounded in an understanding of God’s activity and the unity [sic] which he

¹ Jeff Cavins, Tim Gray, and Sarah Christmyer, The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Ascension Press, 2004, 2011) Section 20 Responses, #3a.

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gives to human life and to the history of his people. The prophet challenges the king and us, to understand the Lord's ways, seeing in God's faithfulness the wise plan [sic] which governs the ages. St [sic] Augustine took up this synthesis of the ideas of "understanding" and "being established" in his *Confessions* when he spoke of the truth on which one may rely in order to stand fast: "Then I shall be cast and set firm in the mold of your truth." From the context we know that Augustine was concerned to show that this trustworthy truth of God is, as the Bible makes clear, his own faithful presence throughout history, his ability to hold together times and ages, and to gather into one the scattered strands of our lives.

24. Read in this light, the prophetic text leads to one conclusion: we need knowledge, we need truth, because without these we cannot stand firm, we cannot move forward. Faith without truth does not save, it does not provide a sure footing. It remains a beautiful story, the projection of our deep yearning for happiness, something capable of satisfying us to the extent that we are willing to deceive ourselves. Either that, or it is reduced to a lofty sentiment [sic] which brings consolation and cheer, yet remains prey to the vagaries of our spirit and the changing seasons, incapable of sustaining a steady journey through life. If such were faith, King Ahaz would be right not to stake his life and the security of his kingdom on a feeling. But precisely because of its intrinsic link to truth, faith is instead able to offer a new light, superior to the king's calculations, for it sees further into the distance and takes into account the hand of God, who remains faithful to his covenant and his promises.

25. Today more than ever, we need to be reminded of this bond between faith and truth, given the crisis of truth in our age. In contemporary culture, we often tend to consider the only real truth to be that of technology: truth is what we succeed in building and measuring by our scientific know-how, truth is what works and what makes life easier and more comfortable. Nowadays this appears as the only truth that is certain, the only truth that can be shared, the only truth that can serve as a basis for discussion or for common undertakings. Yet at the other end of the scale we are willing to allow for subjective truths of the individual, which consist in fidelity to his or her deepest convictions, yet these are truths valid only for that individual and not capable of being proposed to others in an effort to serve the common good. But Truth itself, the truth which would comprehensively explain our life as individuals and in society, is regarded with suspicion. Surely this kind of truth—we hear it said—is what was claimed by the great totalitarian movements of the last century, a truth that imposed its own world view in order to crush the actual lives of individuals. In the end, what we are left with is relativism, in which the

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question of universal truth—and ultimately this means the question of God—is no longer relevant. It would be logical, from this point of view, to attempt to sever the bond between religion and truth, because it seems to lie at the root of fanaticism, which proves oppressive for anyone who does not share the same beliefs. In this regard, though, we can speak of a massive amnesia in our contemporary world. The question of truth is really a question of memory, deep memory, for it deals with something prior to ourselves and can succeed in uniting us in a way that transcends our petty and limited individual consciousness. It is a question about the origin of all that is, in whose light we can glimpse the goal and thus the meaning of our common path.

In other words, Cavins needs to clarify, “who acts on Jesus’ word even when it doesn’t make sense.”

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

Annotated Bibliography

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

Isaiah 7:10-14

Isaiah 7:10-17

Jeff Cavins, Tim Gray, and Sarah Christmyer, [The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation](#)²

At Session 14 Talk Notes: Divided Kingdom—Part 2: C. Prophets Sent to Judah 2. Isaiah, c. “Book of Woes” (chapters 1-39), ii, Cavins quotes Isaiah 7:10-17 “Behold, a sign: *alma* “virgin,” “young maiden”. In his video, Cavins asserts that the mother of the king, rather than his wife, served as queen.

The academic journal [History and Theory](#) has an anonymous “Books in Summary” Section. That section refers to Daniel E. Fleming, [The Legacy of Israel in](#)

² West Chester, Pennsylvania: Ascension Press, 2004, 2011, session 14, page 105.

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Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) Pp. xxii, 385.³ The study “divides the core textual traditions along political lines that reveal deeply contrasting assumptions, an approach that places biblical controversies in dialogue with anthropologically informed archaeology.” Cavins seems unaware of any such deeply contrasting assumptions. As of October 20, 2013, Amazon sold the book at \$14.49 kindle; \$80.10 hardcover; and \$29.69 paperback.⁴

Isaiah 7:14-16

H. G. M. Williamson, review of Rodrigo Franklin De Sousa, Eschatology and Messianism in LXX Isaiah 1—12⁵

Williamson reports,

Against some “maximalizers,” d.S. finds no evidence of heightened messianism in 7:14-16. He presents valuable discussions of most of the well-known issues in these verses and indeed in the surrounding passage, and he concludes that they do not reflect any sort of a “conscious systematic messianic reading.” The translator represented what he took to be there in the Hebrew (so that there is no anti-messianic move either), and caution prevents us from speculating further.

Williamson respects the scholarship in this study.

Isaiah 7:14

Vincent A. Pizzuto, “The Structural Elegance of Mathew 1—2: A Chiastic Proposal”⁶

Pizzuto argues, “it is widely observed that Matthew’s use of Isa 7:14 in v. 23a is redacted from both the Hebrew text (she [sic] will call”) and the LXX (“you will call”), precisely to make sense in Matthew’s context: “*They will call.*”

³ History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Vol. 52, No. 3 (October 2013) 474.

⁴ <http://www.amazon.com/The-Legacy-Israel-Judahs-Bible/dp/1107669995> (accessed October 20, 2013).

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2011) 119.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 74, No. 4 (October 2012) 723 (source of the quote), 736.

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Isaiah 7:14

Francis Watson, “Mistranslation and the Death of Christ: Isaiah 53 LXX and Its Pauline Reception”⁷

Watson explains,

A translation both *represents* an original, whose semantic content it strives to convey in a new linguistic medium, and *displaces* that original. Indeed, it is precisely because the translation represents the original that it also displaces it. Henceforth the text will be associated not with the barely accessible language of its original composition but with the vernacular. The original text is marginalized. For Greek-speaking communities, the Isaianic prophecy announces that “the virgin will conceive and will bear a son” (Isa 7:14): that is what the scriptural text says, for the scriptural text is now the text in Greek. Admittedly, the bilingual may propose that “young woman” would be more in keeping with the semantic range of the Hebrew. Yet the monolingual may prove surprisingly resistant to any suggestion that a translation be modified—and not only when doctrinal issues are at stake. In the case of the Septuagint, the legend of its miraculous origin functions precisely to inhibit the possibility of appealing to the Hebrew against the Greek. The legend originally related only to the Pentateuch but was extended by Christians to “the prophets,” i.e., to scripture as a whole. Thus the translators who at Isa 7:14 rendered *almah* as *parthenos* did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Even where there is an awareness of a possible discrepancy between translation and original, the inspired translation retains its own autonomous authority; it is that that the appeal to inspiration is intended to safeguard.

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

Psalm 24:1

Scott D. Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul’s Ethical Methodology in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and 10:23—11:1”⁸

Mackie argues,

A practical concern for the nourishment of the poor, which in Leviticus comes to expression in the command to leave a portion of the harvest for

⁷ in Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology, Stanley E. Porter and Mark J. Boda (eds.) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009) 216.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 2 (April 2013) 332.

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the poor (19:9-10), might be partially responsible for the accommodating allowances made in 1 Cor 10:25-29, which were possibly predicated on socioeconomic circumstances. That the levitical command is authorized by the bare assertion “I am Yhwh your God” (19:10) is fairly analogous to Paul’s justificatory appeal to God’s sovereign reign over the entirety of his good creation (10:26, quoting Ps 24:1 [used here]).

Romans 1:1-7

Romans 1: 7

Philip W. Comfort, New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary on the variant readings of the ancient New Testament manuscripts and how they relate to the major English translations⁹

Comfort notes,

The first variant reading is significant in that it does not include “in Rome.” . . . Romans, though lacking in occasional material (i.e., specific solutions to particular local problems), was clearly written to a church that Paul had not yet been to and one that he was intending to visit . . .

Rom 1:1-17

Ronald D. Witherup, S.S., Chantal Reynier, Pour lire la lettre de Saint Paul aux Romains¹⁰

Witherup reports that Reynier is writing for a general audience. Reynier is scholarly. Romans 1:1-17 is the first of four major divisions of Romans.

Rom 1:3-4

Victor Paul Furnish, review of Arland J. Hultgren, Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary¹¹

Furnish reports that Hultgren is both scholarly and insightful. Hultgren finds Romans 1:3-4 as evidence of traditional theological statements, already present in Romans.

⁹ Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008,

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 2 (April 2013) 373.

¹¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 3 (July 2013) 580.

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Romans 1:1

K. K. Yeo, "An Intertextual Reading of Moral Freedom in the Analects and Galatians"¹²

Yeo explains,

Paul frequently uses the term "slave of Christ" to designate himself and the believer (1 Cor 7:22; Rom 12:11; 14:4, 18). The metaphor has Old Testament roots in the reference to slaves of Yahweh, referring to Jewish leaders such as Moses, David, and Isaiah, thus connoting a position of prestige, privilege, and honor (see Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1; Judg 2:8; 2 Kgs 18:12; Isa 42:19). This meaning is used by Paul (Rom 1:1 [used here]; Phil 1:1) in addition to the meaning of obedience as of a slave to master (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 2:14; 3:6; 4:5). For Paul, since the new existence in Christ and in the Spirit is different from being "in the flesh" or "under the law," he understands "law of love" (6:2) and the new obedience of being a "slave of Christ" as freedom to love and to serve.

Romans 1:1-5

John David Ramsey, A Precarious Faith: The Tri-une Dynamic of the Christian Life¹³

Father John David, my pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Newport News, Virginia describes for whom Romans is written.

As this fugal quality of Paul's letter arises from his participation in the specific community of Rome, so it is possible to delineate the variously layered groups of dialogue partners who also participate in this letter. By locating his relationship with the Roman church within the larger dynamic and [sic] history, Paul has already identified these partners, who are simply the living elements of that dynamic. The most obvious partners are, of course, *Paul* and the *Romans*, the immediate "bookends" for all the other relationships. Paul, as one "called to be an apostle" (1:1), a proclaimer of the gospel, links himself with the *prophets* who made known the gospel "promised beforehand" (1:2), those who initially and in a partially hidden way revealed the plan to which Paul in his ministry now attests from the standpoint of its fulfillment. This prophecy and promise

¹² in Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology, Stanley E. Porter and Mark J. Boda (eds.) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009) 288.

¹³ Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 2002, 197, 198.

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concern *Jesus Christ*, “who was descended from David according to the flesh (1:3); such lineage encompasses the entire history of Israel from Abraham to Moses, leading up to David, and, finally, to Christ himself. Therefore, Paul, with the Romans, is in dialogue with the people of *Israel*, from whom and through whom the Messiah has come. Because Paul’s own identity most deeply is that of a son of Israel, both his own role as apostle descended from the prophets and his proclamation of Christ as the descendant of David is completely interlocked with his own participation in the Word very near, the *Scriptures* which are to be bound to hand and forehead and written on doorposts. Throughout the letter Scripture itself is one of Paul’s primary partners as he seeks to be true to its long-standing witness even has [sic] he strives [sic] reinterpret that witness in light of what has happened in Christ. Finally, Paul shares with the Romans the calling to witness to the gospel such that they may “bring about the obedience of faith among the *Gentiles* for the sake of his name” (1:5). The gospel is not simply for the Jews—though, as he will make clear, quintessentially this, too—but comes through the Jews for the benefit of all people. Paul’s very specific calling is as apostle to the Gentiles, with whom he must engage at every level in order to bring them within the fold of the way of life which the gospel makes possible.

Rom 1:7

Scott D. Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul’s Ethical Methodology in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and 10:23—11:1”¹⁴
Mackie argues,

The command to love God in Deut 6:5 should be understood as advocating, in addition to loyal obedience, an emotional response commensurate with the passionate love God has first shown Israel Such passion and emotions are not foreign to the Jesus tradition . . . and Paul himself also seems to possess a Deuteronomic understanding of reciprocative love, with the believer’s love for God . . . offered in response to God’s prior demonstration of love (Rom 1:7 [used here] . . .). Remarkably, Paul prioritizes love over faith at the conclusion of his “chapter on love” . . . “

Matthew 1:23

¹⁴ [the Catholic Biblical Quarterly](#), Vol. 75, No. 2 (April 2013) 325.

Matthew 1:18-24

Matthew 1:22

Daniel B. Wallace, With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes: Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament¹⁵

Wallace explains,

In this text [[what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet](#) versus the Lectionary [what the Lord had said through the prophet](#)] we see both the ultimate and intermediate agent with the passive verb. The emphasis seems to be that the prophecy is ultimately from God, but the prophet's personality was involved in the shaping of its wording. The evangelist consistently uses $\upsilon\pi\omicron$ for God's agency, $\delta\iota\alpha$ for the prophet's.

Matthew 1:18-25

Thomas M. Finn, "Sex and Marriage in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard"¹⁶
Finn explains,

Errors about the consent prompted Peter [Lombard] to comment again on the marriage of Joseph and Mary, still an important issue in the twelfth century, one that prompted the First Lateran Council (1123) to reaffirm Mary's perpetual virginity. For Peter and some of his colleagues, Mary's commitment to virginity in Matthew 1:18-25 [used here] and Luke (1:26-38), seemed to some an error of status in respect to their marriage, since there was no consent to intercourse. Peter defends their virginal marriage as consensual since both understood that the Holy Spirit wished them to preserve virginity. Then, editing Augustine, he adds that their marriage was perfect, because it fulfilled the benefits of marriage: fidelity, in that there was no adultery; offspring, in that it was the Lord himself; and sacrament, in that their union was spiritual, for "in sinful flesh (union) cannot take place without the shameful concupiscence of flesh that happens from sin, without which he who would be without sin wished to be conceived."

¹⁵ Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 164, 369, 389, **434** (source of the quote), 474, 561, 621.

¹⁶ Theological Studies, Vol. 72, No. 1 (March 2011) 62 (source of the quote), 68, 69.

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How Peter Lombard (c. 1096-1184),¹⁷ Sentences, understood human sexuality became the textbook in the universities of Europe until the Sixteenth Century. The influence remained until Vatican II, when changes began to occur. Finn concludes, “Clearly, the Sentences should be added as a major source of influence on Catholic thought and practice.” The Sentences know nothing about current empirical scientific understanding of human sexuality.

Matt 1:20-23

Andrew R. Angel, “*Crucifixus Vincens*: The “Son of God” as Divine Warrior in Matthew”¹⁸

Angel points out, “Although Matthew introduces the theme of the son of God in his narratives of Jesus’ birth (1:20-23 [used here]), infancy (2:14-15), and baptism (3:17), it is not until the temptation narrative that the title “Son of God” appears (4:3, 6).” Angel argues this use is part of the development of the theme of the divine sonship of Jesus.

Matt 1:21

John D. Dadosky, “Woman without Envy: Toward Reconceiving the Immaculate Conception”¹⁹

Dadosky comes to terms with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Under Aristotle’s influence, Thomas believed that human animation (fusion of body and soul) occurred after conception. In terms of the church’s teaching on redemption, he wanted to ensure that Jesus’ redemption included everyone—Mary was equally in need of redemption. Denis Wiseman explains:

Thomas concludes that Mary could not have been sanctified before animation for two reasons. He declares that “the sanctification, of which we are speaking, is nothing but the cleansing from original sin.” But sin can only be taken away by grace and grace can only exist in a rational creature. Therefore Mary needed a rational soul before she could be sanctified. This argument is dependent on the Aristotelian theory that the human soul is only given after the sensitive and then animal soul has been implanted. Thomas’ stronger reason is that if Mary never had original sin, she would not have needed redemption and the salvation that comes from

¹⁷ <https://www.google.com/search?q=peter+lombard&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a> (accessed October 21, 2013).

¹⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 2 (April 2011) 300.

¹⁹ Theological Studies, Vol. 72, No. 1 (March 2011) 20.

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Christ, of whom Matthew writes “He shall save his people from their sins (Mat 1:21 [used here]). Then Jesus would not be the Savior of all” (1 Tim 4:10).

Thomas asserts: “If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never incurred the stain of original sin, this would be derogatory to the dignity of Christ, by reason of His being the universal Savior of all. Consequently after Christ, who, as the universal Savior of all, needed not to be saved, the purity of the Blessed Virgin holds the highest place. Thomas maintains: “The Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin, but was cleansed from it before her birth from the womb” (*Summa theologiae* . . . III, 27, 2 ad 2).

My concern is for the politics of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) that attacks Catholics Kathleen Sibelius and Joe Biden for extending health care so that women have access to birth control and those seeking abortions do not have to resort to risky surgery. I am not saying that all abortions are always wrong. Nature provides natural abortions in the majority of conceptions, abortions about which women are generally unaware. I am saying that the USCCB is disingenuous to extend its guess about when human rights begin all the way back to the very instant of conception.

For more on sources see the Appendix file. A complete set of Personal Notes, dating from the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 14, 2002 to the present, is on the web site at www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes.

The Responsorial Antiphon for this Sunday is *Let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory*. (Ps 24 7c and 10b).²⁰

In the gobbledygook prayer at Sunday Mass immediately following mention of forgiven sins, the Faithful hearing the 2011 Roman Missal can listen for “Pour forth, we beseech you O Lord, your grace into our hearts.”²¹

²⁰ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and the Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1988) 51. Personal Notes refers to this book as the Lectionary.

²¹ n.a., The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II: English Translation According to the Third Typical

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This is a call for grace that some Black Baptists call to mind with *and she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn* (Luke 2:7).²²

Edition: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (Washington, DC, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011) 159. Personal Notes refers to this book as the Missal.

²² UMI Annual Sunday School Lesson Commentary: Precepts for Living ®: 2013-2014: International Sunday School Lessons: Volume 165: UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.), a. Okechuku Ogonnaya, Ph.D., (ed.) (Chicago, IL 60643: UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.), 2013) 187-188.