

Readings

First Testament:	Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms:	Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 (cf. 11)
Epistle:	Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Gospel:	Matthew 2:1-12

Commentary

I hope the reader will contemplate these comments with the same enthusiasm they are made. Rereading my past comments, over the last six years, whets my appetite for what will arise from the new scholarship. The exercise is not boring.

While we rejoice in the manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles, that rejoicing is connected to the Cross everyone faces. Belief in Jesus as God requires crossing the boundary between God who cannot die and a human who did die. That is the problem of Faith in the resurrected Jesus, whose ultimate glory comes with the marks of the Cross, intimated by the role of King Herod in the Epiphany.

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.

As noted in previous years, the Epiphany readings are the only ones exactly the same for all three liturgical cycles. This is the seventh time I have reviewed the same Epiphany readings. My pattern now is to check the apparatus for "difficult" words. There are no difficult words for Epiphany. By "difficult," I mean the Greek words in manuscripts that leave scholars in a quandary deciding which Greek words to make available for translations into the languages of the world.

Isaiah 60:1-6

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

Lynch argues that Isaiah 60:1-6 is part of a broad vision in which the warrior LORD fights for and exonerates Israel. Lynch divided the first part of the article, "Salient Features of Israel's Zion Traditions," into four parts: A. Zion is Yhwh's royal victory mountain; B. Zion is a symbol of Yhwh's world-ordering justice; C. The convergence of the nations to Zion in response; D. Finally, Zion is a place of refuge for the disfranchised. This approach is a comfort to those subjected to racial discrimination in the United States. The LORD is our champion.

¹ [the Catholic Biblical Quarterly](#), Vol. 70, No. 2 (April 2008) 244-263.

Isaiah 60:1

J. Gerald Janzen, "Qohelet on Life `Under the Sun'"²

Of interest to the Poor Clare nuns, Janzen writes, "What is arresting in Chap. 60 is the emphasis on God as Israel's `light,' a divine light and glory that will in turn cause Israel to shine with dawning splendor among the nations."

Isa 60:3

Paul Lawrence, The IVP Atlas of Bible History³

Lawrence observes,

The number three is traditionally associated with the number of wise men because they brought three gifts. The appellation `kings' has no New Testament evidence, but rests on a desire to portray the eastern visitors as the fulfillment of three Old Testament prophecies in which kings pay homage to the Lord

Isaiah 60:1

John J. Collins, review of Alex P. Jassen, Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism⁴

Jassen limits his study to Second Temple Judaism, without extending it to Greek-speaking Judaism. As part of "Greek-speaking" academics, I tend to overlook that distinction, between Second Temple and Greek-speaking. Collins observes that Jassen "does not include in his otherwise comprehensive survey such figures as John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth, and the so-called sign prophets reported by Josephus." Collins thinks a lot more research is needed to understand what prophecy meant at the time of Jesus.

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 (cf. 11)

I have finally deciphered the difference between the Codex Sinaiticus and the Lectionary; Psalm 72 in the Lectionary is Psalm 71 Sinaiticus. I still need to decipher the relationship between the printed Greek and the original manuscript. The internet shows both. I intend to develop that relationship as time progresses.

The Notes for Reading 20B, January 8, 2006, pages 3-4, go into detail about whether Psalm 72:10 should be Seba or Sheba or both. The Sinaiticus text only shows one word, which looks like *Seba*.

² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 471-474.

³ Downers Grove, Illinois, *InterVarsity Press*, 2006) 137.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 573.

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Mathew 2:2

Matthew 2:1-12

The Codex Sinaiticus has these verses, which I will compare with the Nestle-Aland apparatus, but in the interests of time, later.

Matt 2:1, 4

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.⁵

The Alands point out that their apparatus shows differences in punctuation. I think the Alands are saying some variant readings close verse 4 with a period, *where the Christ was to be born*. Other manuscripts close that verse with a comma. As best I can tell, the manuscripts themselves are not distinguished, which is which.

I have been using the dagger symbol to find difficult passages. The Alands explain "The apparatus also tells where the new text differs from the earlier Nestle-Aland²⁵ by marking with a dagger [which my computer will not produce] the readings which formerly stood in the text but are now in the apparatus." I like to look to the Church to straighten out where the manuscripts leave the scholars in a quandary as to the better Greek.

Using Matthew 2:1, the Alands explain chapter divisions.

The information in the inner margin [of the Nestle-Aland Greek] is only of historical concern for the student reader [us], but for the specialist it is both interesting and useful. These notes refer to the kephalaia, a chapter division system found in the manuscripts (essentially the pericope system of lectionary units, designated by italic numerals), and in the Gospels [sic] the Eusebian section and canon table references. ... It is not an error, incidentally, that kephalaion 1 in Matthew begins at Matt. 2:1; it is the regular usage in manuscripts not to number the first section.

The technicalities involved getting the original Greek right, lend pause to that self-righteousness required for accepting the Cross of Christ, necessary for the Christian Faith.

⁵ Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989 243, 252.

Matt 2:6

Walter T. Wilson, review of Matthias Konradt, Israel, Kirche und die Volker im Mattheusevangelium⁶

Konradt uses Matthew 2:6, to frame Jesus as “the promised Davidic shepherd,” *from you* [Bethlehem of Judea] *shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel*. Wilson writes, “Konradt concentrates on the problem of mission, which is seen as determinative for the [Matthean] Gospel’s ecclesiology. ...The *ekklesia* [of Matthew], meanwhile, understands itself not as the new Israel, but as the community to whom Jesus has entrusted the fulfillment of this mission.” The Faithful continue as part of that community.

Matt 2:2, 7, 9

Paul Lawrence, The IVP Atlas of Bible History⁷
Lawrence is of the opinion,

Research into such a star [as mentioned in Matthew], which must have appeared before the death of Herod the Great in late March 4 BC, has suggested the following possibilities;

1. A conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces is known to have taken place three times during 7 BC (in May, October and December). But its duration would have been brief and it would not be referred to as a single star.
2. Some have postulated a supernova, a star that ‘explodes’. It has been suggested that a supernova visible near the star Alpha Aquilae is mentioned in Chinese records for 4 BC, but supernovae are very rare astronomical events and do not move through the sky—and the term in question is actually a comet.
3. Chinese records refer to three comets. One in August 12 BC is the famous Halley’s comet [sic]. This is also mentioned in Roman records, but is clearly too early. One in April 4 BC is too late, since Herod died at the end of March that year. This leaves a comet visible for some seventy days in March to April 5 BC. In Chinese this is called a *sui-hsing* (broom star), meaning a comet with a tail. A comet, as it rounded the sun, would have temporarily disappeared from view—and the wise men’s star disappears from view while they travel from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 4 (July 2008) 836.

⁷ Downers Grove, Illinois, *InterVarsity Press*, 2006 137.

That is all Lawrence has. He seems to like the “broom star comet” of 5 BC.

Matt 2:2, 8

David J. Norman, O.F.M., "Doubt and the Resurrection of Jesus"⁸

Norman uses the word “epiphany” one time in his article. “Such is the fear of the women that not even the epiphany of an angel announcing that Jesus had risen could induce them to bring the good news to the disciples” in the Gospel of Mark. In the Gospel of Matthew, Norman points to nine times Matthew uses the word “to worship” including the Lectionary *to do him homage* of the Magi. In transferring that *homage* to the *worship* of the women in Matthew, Norman concludes, “They [the women] have surrendered themselves in trust to Jesus” as have the Faithful down to the present time. Norman regards doubt in the awesome nature of a resurrected crucified body as a prerequisite to Faith, engendered by the presence of that body.

Richard A. McCormick, S.J., stresses the importance of doubt in the modern world, when he quotes Bernard Haring:

“There is no doubt that for her own exercise of her pastoral magisterium, the Church needs an atmosphere of freedom to examine the enduring validity of traditional norms, and the right of a sincere conscience humbly to doubt about norms which, in many or even most of the cases, are not accepted by sincere Christians.”⁹

⁸ Theological Studies, Vol. 69, No. 4 (December 2008) 799, 800.

⁹ Richard A. McCormick, S.J., The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989, 2006) 104.