

Personal Notes
060430 Third Sunday of Easter 47B
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The term *martyr* derives from the Greek for *witness*, meaning that the Christian witness to the Resurrection becomes its own sacrifice and oblation to God. The Christian witness restores harmony to secular and religious chaos. Christian witness explains the success of Western Civilization and is the reason for including these Personal Notes in the www.western-civilization.com web site.

At least according to the Judeo-Christian heritage, a little bit of disorder brings greater order. That is the meaning of sacrifice. That is the meaning of oblation to God. In the Christian dispensation, Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, offers himself to the Father as a sacrifice to bring harmony back into the world. Following Jesus, the faithful do likewise.

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19 is about Peter pulling some order out of the disorder that crucified Jesus. Psalm 4 is about God returning harmony to any distress of the Faithful, “bringing security to my dwelling.” 1 John 2:1-5a recognizes that sin is disorder, a disorder for which Jesus compensates. Luke 24:35-48 is about the fact that what Jesus did for humanity is not self-evident, and needs explanation. Luke likes to spread out the story.¹

In Acts, which Luke also wrote, Peter is preaching to the Jews, advising them to repent of their sins and be converted, so their sins may be wiped away. The Lectionary section of Acts is part of a larger section of Acts 3:1-26 associating miracles with preaching.² In Acts 3:15 Peter proclaims, “The author of life you put to death.” Peter is both proclaiming the disharmony of sin and revealing how to restore the harmony of virtue.

Reinvigorating life with harmony and relating sacrifice and atonement is the theme of Margaret Barker, in The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy. Barker sees what Jesus did as a reenactment of the Temple sacrifice.³ Implicitly, Barker regards the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as an extension of the holy sacrifices of the Second Temple.

¹ Neil J. McEleney, C.S.P., “Peter’s Denials—How Many? To Whom?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No 3 (July 1990) 469.

² Gregory E. Sterling, “Jesus as Exorcist: An Analysis of Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43a,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 1 (January 2005) 487, fn 88.

³ Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003) 32, 54-55, 557, 67-68, 84, 108, 157, 222, 253, 291, 357 fn 118.

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The Fourth Psalm is about bringing harmony out of chaos in the world. As part of such harmony, the phrase “to stand in awe” entered the English language from the King James translation of Psalm 4:4⁴ The Lectionary equivalent is “Know that the LORD does wonders.”

1 John is about continually attempting to hit the mark and to keep the divine commandments in the midst of disheartening chaos. 1 John 2:1-5a mentions sin four times. Wanting to get at the Greek meaning, I found the idea of making a mistake, an error, of missing the mark, to be guilty of wrong, as well as sin.⁵ 1 John 2:1 very plainly admits the Faithful are capable of sinning, although 1 John 3:9 proclaims that he who is born of God cannot continue the sinful life that was his before his regeneration.⁶

In another sense, what happened to Jesus is compounded chaos. Luke 24:35-48 is about the need for explanation.⁷ In one sense, no amount of explaining is convincing.⁸ As Richard J. Dillon puts it, “Easter faith is no conclusion drawn from empirical happenings.”⁹

Luke 24:35 begins Eucharistically, with Jesus making his presence known “in the breaking of the bread.”¹⁰ When Jesus wishes peace to his disciples, he is

⁴ Alister McGrath, In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture (New York: Anchor Books: A Division of Random House, Inc., 2001) 263.

⁵ William D. Mounce, Zondervan Greek Reference Series: The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House: A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 64.

⁶ Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 82.

⁷ Kelli S. O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe: John 20 and Narrative Rhetoric,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No 2 (April 2005) 284.

⁸ Bruce J. Malina, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 1989) 16.

⁹ Richard J. Dillon, “Previewing Luke’s Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1981) 213.

¹⁰ John Clabeaux, “The Story of the Maltese Viper and Luke’s Apology for Paul,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2005) 609.

reestablishing harmony into an otherwise chaotic situation. The disciples are in disbelief. Jesus insists that everything is all right.

Jesus explains that the apparent chaos was part of a design to show the love of God for humanity. Jesus reverts to the Word of God, Sacred Scripture. When Jesus refers to the law of Moses, prophets, and psalms, he is not dividing the books of the bible into thirds. Rather, he is emphasizing the prophetic nature of the psalms.¹¹ Luke 24:46 enjoyed wide early Christian preaching.¹² “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.” Jesus insists, Luke 24:48, “You [the first disciples] are witnesses of these things,” as are the Faithful, celebrating Easter, from age to age.¹³

Witnessing Easter from age to age has many facets. One such facet is discussed by Richard Bauckham who brings out the feminine component to witnessing. Two verses before where the Lectionary begins, women are present and would have been present as witnesses to the resurrected Christ.¹⁴ The disciples have difficulty believing, even in the presence of the resurrected Christ.¹⁵ Bauckham concludes, “Luke never makes clear exactly what the special role of the twelve [Apostles] is, but it surely cannot exclude a role for other witnesses [such as the women].”¹⁶ Unlike

¹¹ Eugene Ulrich, “The non-attestation of a Tripartite Canon in 4QMMT,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 2 (April 2003) 214.

¹² John Kloppenborg, “An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula 1 Cor 15:3b-5 In Light of Some Recent Literature,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July 1978) 363.

¹³ Susan R. Garrett, “Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 1990) 673.

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 188.

¹⁵ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 269.

¹⁶ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 306, 307.

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Paul, Luke does restrict his use of the term *apostle* to the twelve.¹⁷ Witnessing is only part of understanding. The other part is accepting the reality. The reality is that certain biases and prejudices in the United States of America are not Christian.

At this point, I am considering accepting the Chair of the Religious Affairs Committee of the Newport News Branch of the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**. One function of the committee is to “promote an educational program designed to give a moral and ethical interpretation to the civil rights struggle.”¹⁸ Another function is to “provide resource assistance for religious education and social action activities associated with the improvement of race relations.”

The major responsibility of the committee is to foster a cooperative relationship between organized religion and the **NAACP** to the end that **NAACP** will gain support in its effort to increase equal job opportunities for African Americans, to encourage the desegregation of church related institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals; to support the **NAACP** Religious Affairs Department’s special membership and fund-raising projects and to mobilize mass religious support for voter registration and political action campaigns for civil rights legislation e.g., social concerns committee in each church to spearhead letter writing campaigns to congressional representatives encouraging specific legislation.

My approach is that truth should determine politics, not that truth should not engage politics. As a retired Black History and Western Civilization professor, what I do is research. I am now trying to relate my Biblical research to the practical needs of the local **NAACP**.

Writing about the **NAACP** is experimental. I am not happy with my own arrogance. Perhaps readers will help me through it. Chances of anything positive happening, if I never expose my thoughts, are far less. I, therefore, try.

The Lectionary readings for this Third Sunday of Easter are about finding order in the midst of sin and chaos in the world. The Acts of the Apostles is about preaching to the Jews about how to make sense out of the Resurrection. The Fourth Psalm is about finding calm in the midst of distress. 1 John is about continually trying to

¹⁷ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 306.

¹⁸ E-mail from Newport News Branch NAACP, Monday, April 3, 2006.

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improve behavior to suit the divine commands. Finally, the Gospel of Luke proclaims that the Faithful are witnesses to the Resurrection.

Martyr is derived from the Greek for witness. With that as background, the Christian witness sometimes includes martyrdom but always involves an oblation to God. The Christian witness to the Resurrection restores harmony to secular and religious chaos. By prioritizing truth over politics, Christian witness explains the success of Western Civilization and is the reason for including these Personal Notes in the www.western-civilization.com web site.

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