

These readings are about the tension in human nature between sharing and competing. Both may emanate from either hatred or love. The Christian tension resides in finding a way to make them both emanate from love. Human females are socialized to emphasize sharing; males competing. Both males and females, however, must both compete and share. Christianity heightens the tension in the human life.

The recent sexual scandals on the part of the Church hierarchy illustrate the difficulty. Their competitive nature for promotions, power, and pride lead the hierarchy to cover up what their priests were doing. Sharing their compassion for the Faithful suffering because of their priests would be the more loving reaction.

First Reading: Acts 15:1-2, 22-29

In this reading, Christians at Antioch compete over whether to circumcise or not. Christian Jews, probably highly competitive in the sense of high achievers, fought for circumcision. Paul, however, thought otherwise. The Antiocheans took the matter to Jerusalem, for the First Ecumenical Council, to settle the matter. There were winners and losers. The Council sent Silas and Judas to confirm the written decision against requiring circumcision.

Acts 15

John Paul Heil, review of Yvan Mathieu, La Figure de Pierre Dans Lectionary L'Oeuvre de Luc (Évangile et Actes des Apotres): Une Apporoche Synchronique¹

Acts 15 is a demonstration of the role of Church leaders “to guide the discerning process in which the entire Church has a part.” Like Jesus, Church leaders are to propose, rather than impose.

Acts 15:1-35

William O. Walker, Jr., “Galatians 2:7b-8 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation”²

This section of Acts is about a protocol of the division of labor between what Paul was doing elsewhere and what the pillars of the Church were doing in Jerusalem.

¹ Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 665.

² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 569.

Acts 15:1-11

Tony Chartrand-Burke, review of Thomas L. Brodie, The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings³

Brodie regards Revelation as a rewrite of previous books of the Bible. Brodie sometimes stretches credibility. Chartrand-Burke remarks, “unfortunately, the scholars most willing to give Brodie’s literary theory a fair hearing likely would prefer to ignore it.”

Acts 15:1-5

Vincent M. Smiles, “The Concept of ‘Zeal’ in Second-Temple Judaism and Paul’s Critique of It in Romans 10:2”⁴

Paul is separating the Law from the covenant, making the point that separatism was for the sake of obedience, that obedience grounds the covenant. In meditating on these readings, Acts is about competing or merit-mongering, even competing keeping the Law. More important than competing, however, is loving.

Acts 15:1

Charles H. Talbert, “Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists”⁵

Some who had come down from Judea are identified in Acts 1:5 (not used in the Lectionary) as messianist Jews. These were some of the Faithful demanding circumcision.

Acts 15:2, 22

Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., “The Structured Ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Epistles”⁶

The issue is *elders* in Acts 15:2 and 22. Elders can also be taken as *presbyters*, which is the preference of Fitzmyer, thereby causing the “notorious problem” of whether presbyters were a separate office, like the modern priest.

³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 4 (October 2006) 757.

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 2002) 290-296.

⁵ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 10.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2004) 589-590.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Psalm 67

William P. Brown, review of Theodore Mascarenhas, The Missionary Function of Israel in Psalms 67, 96, and 117⁷

While Mascarenhas regards Psalm 67 as including a missionary function, Brown thinks that Mascarenhas is undermining the mystery of election. I can see where, for example, Psalm 67:5, *you [God] rule the peoples in equity*, might be taken as a missionary event. In the final analysis, however, I tend to agree with Brown that the Jews are the Chosen People, distinct from others.

Psalm 67:2

Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene"⁸

Whereas the Lectionary translation requests that God "let his face shine upon us," Britt understands the verse to mean that divine favor idiomatically causes the face to shine. A smile within the tensions of living is a sign of Christian life.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

Revelation 19-22

Kevin E. Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19-22"⁹

Though not spelled out as a tension between competing and sharing, the Church does engage in that battle, relying on God for ultimate victory.

Revelation 12:1—22:17

John J. Pilch, review of Stephen S. Smalley, The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse¹⁰

Revelation is presented as a cosmic drama. How to account for evil in the cosmos has driven philosophers to atheism. Ultimately, Revelation works to account for that problem with "Salvation through Judgment, and New Creation."

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 518.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 50.

⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 1998) 301-318.

¹⁰ Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 4 (December 2006) 924.

Revelation 21:1—22:5

David L. Barr, review of David Mathewson, A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21:1—22:5¹¹

Revelation 21:9-14

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹²

Leave it to Barker to find an Oedipal arrangement in this passage. She writes, “Your sons shall marry you’ had been Isaiah’s promise to Jerusalem (Isa. 62:5) and the mother of the Messiah in Revelation 12 was also the Bride of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7; 21:9-14). This Oedipal arrangement was known to Philo, who described Wisdom as the wife of each of the patriarchs in turn.” Wisdom “is a female figure who is both consort and city, which is how she appears in the book of Revelation (Rev. 21.9-27).” And a hoot!

Revelation 21:10

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults¹³

The bishops refer to the holy city, Jerusalem, descending from heaven to earth as part of human destiny. This is in Part I. “The Creed: The Faith Professed,” Chapter 13, “Our Eternal Destiny.”

Revelation 21:10

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹⁴

For Barker, here, the Bride of the Lamb “is clearly the sanctuary, the holy of holies.”

¹¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 2004) 483.484.

¹² London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 232, 237.

¹³ Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006 157.

¹⁴ London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 231.

Revelation 21:10

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹⁵

The *high mountain*, to which the angel took John, was like the visionary experience of others taken to a high place, such as Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Enoch, Abraham, and Jesus, when he was tempted.

Revelation 21:23

Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy¹⁶

Barker reminds her readers that Jesus said: "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12). Jesus has become the light of the new Jerusalem.

Alleluia: John 14:23

John 14:23

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults¹⁷

The Catechism uses this verse in the chapter on prayer to show that "If we treat doctrine simply as an academic study, we will have a tendency to miss its connection with our union with God." In the context of the fight over circumcision, the contrary position of no need to think or study can also miss the connection with our union with God.

Gospel: John 14:23-29

John 13:1—20:31

Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., "Raymond Brown's New *Introduction to the Gospel of John* A Presentation—And Some Questions"¹⁸

Regards John 13:1—20:31 as the Book of Glory.

¹⁵ London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 31.

¹⁶ London: T & T Clark International: *A Continuum imprint*, 2003 186.

¹⁷ Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006 492.

¹⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2003) 11, 12.

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John 18—20

Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John"¹⁹

This verse is part of the Book of Glory, a Eucharistic sign which brings about the freedom signified in the other signs. Barker takes the Book of Glory as John 13—20 [21]. The scholarly difference with Brown, above, is beyond me. The point is the lack of certitude in Biblical studies.

John 14:24

Frank J. Matera, "Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John: A Study in the Diverse Unity of New Testament Theology"²⁰

That the Father sent Jesus is John's way of saying "the Father sent the Son into the world: not to condemn but to save the world by revealing the Father to the world." For John, the cross is in the background and the Father is in the foreground. Paul has a greater emphasis on the cross.

John 14:26

Kelli S. O'Brien, "Written That You May Believe: John 20 and Narrative Rhetoric"²¹

O'Brien observes, "Faith comes progressively, not whole but in stages. The Fourth Gospel understands this sort of receptivity as a gift from the Father (6:65), carried on after Jesus' departure by the Paraclete 14:26; 15:26; 16:13) and experiences in the Father and Son dwelling in the believer (14:3, 20; 16:16-22; 17:21)."

¹⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 205 ff.

²⁰ Theological Studies, Vol. 67, No. 2 (June 2006) 250.

²¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 2 (April 2005) 291.

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John 14:26

Bogdan G. Bucur, "Exegesis of Biblical Theophanies in Byzantine Hymnography: Rewritten Bible?"²²

Bucur takes the teaching of the Holy Spirit as a charismatic act in the development of hymns that express the Christian life. Bucur is concerned with the Byzantine hymns portraying Jesus as appearing to First Testament figures, to the point where he writes, "According to the hymns, the Christian revelation is superior, paradoxically, not because it is *newer*, an 'upgrade' of sorts, but rather because it is *more ancient* [italics in the original] since Jesus Christ is said to be 'before Abraham' (see John 8:58), and certainly 'before Moses,' since he gave Moses the Law on Sinai." In other words, since Jesus, unlike other humans, existed from the beginning of time, he could appear in Byzantine hymns appearing to First Testament figures.

John 14:28

Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "Feminist Mariologies: Heteronomy/Subordination and the Scandal of Christology"²³

When Jesus notes that "The Father is greater than I," he is indicating that "submission of some kind seem[s] to belong to the interior life of God," and, therefore, to the interior lives of the Faithful.

This is the first time I have worked my way through these readings. The Feast of the Ascension has taken precedence in the past. I have done nothing with the Greek, instead concentrating on the Vulgate for identifying the verses in the Lectionary, which does not mark the individual verses, one by one.

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

²² Theological Studies, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2007) 111.

²³ Theological Studies, Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2005) 535.