

Personal Notes  
050508 The Ascension of the Lord 58A  
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Understanding racism links with the Sunday Lectionary readings. Scholars struggle with both links, me among them. Confusion between Luke 24:51 and Acts 2:1 confounds scholars to the point where they look to the original texts to try to figure out why Acts claims to begin where Luke ends, although Luke already contains the Ascension. Mikeal C. Parsons unscrambles the matter by getting behind the third century scribes who put together the present text.<sup>1</sup>

The original Western texts in Luke and the Alexandrian texts in Acts differ with the former eight and a half percent longer than the latter. Some say scribes added the material in Luke after the original Acts. Scholars do not like this idea for lack of manuscript evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Parsons likes the idea that scribes added a more specific recognition of the Ascension, in order to harmonize Luke-Acts. These scribes missed the point that the issue is theological, rather than chronological. Parsons offers the following translation of Acts 1:1-2

In the first volume, O Theophilus, I dealt with everything which Jesus began both to do and to teach until which time he was exalted, after he had given instructions to the apostles whom he had chosen through the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Some say that Luke 24:51, “when the days for Jesus’ being taken up were fulfilled,” refers to his death, which is how I have taken it, until now. Both versions refer to the entire journey, back to God, burial, resurrection, departure. Luke is trying to include the cross with the resurrection, as a corrective to an over-emphasis on the resurrection. Only then, in Acts, is the Ascension separated.

Parsons looks at the original Biblical manuscripts, some of which include the Ascension others of which do not. The passages are the conclusion of Luke, 24:51 and the beginning of Acts 1:2. The Ascension either is or is not mentioned in each text, making four possible options. Parsons unscrambles what happened as follows.

Originally, Luke omitted the Ascension in 24:51 because Luke was trying to make the point that the exaltation of the Lord included both the death and resurrection,

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<sup>1</sup> Mikeal C. Parsons, “The Text of Acts 1:2 Reconsidered,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No 1 (January 1988) 58-71.

<sup>2</sup> Mikeal C. Parsons, “The Text of Acts 1:2 Reconsidered,”” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No 1 (January 1988) 58-66.

<sup>3</sup> Mikeal C. Parsons, “The Text of Acts 1:2 Reconsidered,”” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, No 1 (January 1988) 71.

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intertwined. This intertwining pervades the Gospel. Luke was writing from a corrective point of view for those overly focused on the resurrection. The Ascension is included in Acts 1:2 thereby enabling Luke subtly to make his prior point about keeping the passion and death intertwined with the Resurrection and Ascension.

What this personally means to me is that Jesus finds his glory not only in the resurrection and Ascension but also in his passion and death. As much as I love religious people, all too often they use religion as a defense mechanism against facing hard realities. Racial prejudice is the hard reality for Josephites, but that is only a type of what I mean.

To avoid the consequences of recognizing racism and the like, too many too readily turn the other way in a defensive reaction. In his passion and death, Jesus did not turn the other way; not only refusing the gall and refusing to engage in fantasies of revenge, but looking at sin very directly, accepting its consequences as much as he could. In this is the glory of Jesus, as well as his resurrection and Ascension. Jesus not only got over the trials of life, he also engaged those very trials. His glory resides in both. I intend to develop this thought for the Personal Notes.

The readings for the Ascension in Cycle A begin with Jesus enjoining the apostles “not to depart from Jerusalem” (Acts 1:4) and end with the eleven disciples going “to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them” (Matthew 28:16). Were the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem or Galilee? Matthew and Luke are making different theological points, with Luke probably doing more to give the narrative a smooth flow.<sup>4</sup> The appeal of these readings is to those who do not know which way to go or where to turn. The Magisterium offers little to no guidance, so the Faithful are left to manage for themselves, as best they are able.

Verse 8 is about extending salvation to the politically marginalized<sup>5</sup> Samaritans. Acts mentions the Samaritans seven times.<sup>6</sup> The readings are about expanding the Chosen People to include everyone. This is cause for everyone to clap their hands and shout for joy (Psalm 47:2).

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<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Dillon, “Previewing Luke’s Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1981) 222.

<sup>5</sup> I borrow the term from Sven Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War,” The American Historical Review, Vol. 109, No. 5 (December 2004), 1424

<sup>6</sup> Dennis Hamm, S.J., “What the Samaritan Leper Sees: The Narrative Christology of Luke 17:11-19,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 2 (April 1994) 281.

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Ephesians is a warm Epistle stressing the commonality of humanity. Ephesians regards the Church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23). The pastoral epistles, concerned with Church administration, lack this warmth and sense of fellowship.<sup>7</sup>

While Western Civilization in the Twenty-first Century has a distinct sense of past, present, and future, most civilizations do not. At the time of Jesus, the future did not have a sense of two thousand years away. All time was present-time, something to be both seen and felt, now. The past and the future, the way known in Twenty-first Century Western Civilization, was imaginary time, something "it is not for you to know" (Acts 1:7), "not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:21), for Jesus would be with them "until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).<sup>8</sup>

When, within a racial context, people ask, "What do you people want?" the answer is, "All of our rights, here, and now." Those politically marginalized have a sense of the present unsuited either to past glory or to future promises. When Jesus says, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19), he includes all peoples, both those politically mainstreamed and politically marginalized. With regard to this command, the Englishman, Bede (672-735), comments, "And let the Donatists blush for shame who, wishing to limit Christ to one locality, assert that he is only in Africa, and not in any other places."<sup>9</sup>

Matthew on the one hand endorses religious leaders for working the will of God, while on the other hand portraying the leaders as eliminating Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Eliminating Jesus is essential to marginalizing any race or class of people. Jesus is destined for Universal rule, as he proclaims, "all power in heaven and on earth has been given to

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "The Structured Ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Epistles," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2004) 584.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce J. Malina, "Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 1989) 6-7, 15, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Bede in "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume Three: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 60.

<sup>10</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, "The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 1995) 696.

me” (Matthew 28:18).<sup>11</sup> His resurrection and proclamation demonstrate that the religious leaders who eliminated him, only succeeded in exalting his legacy.<sup>12</sup>

In these readings, the Acts of the Apostles link the Cross with the Glory. Psalm 47 emphasizes Glory. Ephesians proclaims that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of Glory, in communion with the Faithful.

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Scriptural references to the Lectionary follow. Since the main purpose of these Notes is annotating the scriptural references in the index at [www.western-civilization.com](http://www.western-civilization.com), references pertinent, but not fitting the flow imposed above, are included below. I do not assume that the reader is following the readings cited either in the Lectionary or in the Bible. Like the footnotes, the citations are for reference purposes for anyone interested. The large, bold letters facilitate locating exactly what the Lectionary presents for these Notes.

### **Acts 1:1-11**

Because I translated Matthew 28:16-20 from the Greek at E:\Microsoft Office\Word\Letters\OLMC\Bible Study2 2003\Bible Study030615Trinity\_Sunday.doc , I translate Acts 1-11 for insights this Sunday.

These readings are also treated in E:\Microsoft Office\Word\Letters\OLMC\Bible Study2 2003\Bible Study030601Ascension\_Sunday.doc

and

E:\Microsoft Office\Word\Letters\OLMC\Bible Study1 2004\Bible Study040523\_The Ascension\_58C.doc

### **Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9 (6)**

These readings are also treated in E:\Microsoft Office\Word\Letters\OLMC\Bible Study2 2003\Bible Study030601Ascension\_Sunday.doc

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<sup>11</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, “The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew’s Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 71.

<sup>12</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, “The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew’s Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 73; Terence L. Donaldson, “The Law That Hangs (Matthew 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 1995) 705.

and

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### **Ephesians 1:17-23**

These readings are also treated in E:\Microsoft Office\Word\Letters\OLMC\Bible Study1 2004\Bible Study040523\_The Ascension\_58C.doc

### **Matthew 28:19a, 20b**

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### **Matthew 28:16-20**

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For more on sources see the Appendix file.