

Discernment is the most interesting aspect of these readings.

## 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Verses 9b and 13b ~What are you doing here, Elijah?"<sup>1</sup>

That question is the same for both verse 9b and 13b. The problem is that the scholars say that the difficult verses are where one is most likely to find God, but the liturgy says that the liturgy avoids such verses. A scholar writes:

... As for the unity of chap. 19, there are several distinct accounts of the chapter's component parts, more often dividing the chapter into vv. 1-3, 4-8, **9-13**, 14-18, and 19-21—although as Long observes, there is no consensus on how these parts are divided or which might be primary or secondary. The problem of unity emerges in chap. 19 from the repetitions between vv. 4 and 5 and vv. 5 and 7, and especially the repeated question in **vv. 9 and 13**, a doublet which some see as a resumption repetition (*Wiederaufnahme*) indicating multiple sources, while others treat it as a thematically significant repetition. While the history of the text remains an object of critical debate, there is a growing preference to consider the meaning of the chapter (and even chaps. 17-19) as a literary unity. My analysis shares this approach.<sup>2</sup>

Verse 12           After the fire there was **a tiny whispering sound**.

The *New Jerusalem Bible* (NJB) uses **a light murmuring sound**. *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB) uses **sound of a gentle breeze** Douay-Rheims (3 Kings 19:12) **a whistling of a gentle air**; the King James Version (KJV) **a still small voice** and the *Nova Vulgata* **sibilus aurae tenuis** that I would gingerly translate **subtle hissing, whistling, rustling but not silence) to the ears**.

The second issue is the theophany itself; and without venturing yet another creative reading of this episode, let me point out how central that element is in the text. It is framed by the repeated question-and-answer dialogue (**vv. 9b-10** and **13b-14**, introduced by scenes of crisis and flight, and followed by a set of instructions to the prophet (vv. 15-18). Quite clearly, the theophany is the centerpiece of the episode: "Now there was

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scint," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 48.

a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before Yhwh, but Yhwh was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but Yhwh was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but Yhwh was not in the fire; and after the fire **a sound of sheer silence**” (1 Kgs 19:11b-12). The appearance of God—perhaps part of an anti-Bal polemic, as Cross and Jeremias have suggested—is distinctive and impressive for what it is and what it is not. Presence and absence, affirmation and negation go hand in hand in the scene, forming a poetic reflection on revelation.<sup>3</sup>

Verse 13          Elijah hid his face in his **cloak**

As for Elijah’s **cloak**, it covers the prophet during the theophany, but it also represents his prophetic office: it becomes a token of Elisha’s commission immediately afterward (cf. Exodus 4) and in the miraculous ascent of Elijah in 2 Kings, where the mantle parts the waters; hence, the garment serves to conceal and to reveal. The theophany creates a dynamic of presence and absence through the “**voice of sheer silence**” and through the use of the **cloak**. Despite the theophany, Elijah concludes by repeating his complaint, whereupon Yhwh directs him to anoint new kings over Aram and Israel as well as his own successor, Elisha, who will replace him.

How do the elements of the type scene operate here? The crisis facing Elijah is that he fears for his life; his journey to Sinai leads to a theophany similar to those of Exodus; Elijah is recommissioned and given the divine plan to choose a successor and to anoint kings in Israel and Syria. The repeated question-and-answer sequence of vv. 9-10 and vv. 13-14 frames the astonishing theophany scene, which itself is comprised of repetitions (where Yhwh was not) and concealment. Whatever our moral interpretation of the passage may be, there can be little doubt that divine-human speech and theophany are the featured elements of this version of the type scene. The other elements of the type scene, such as the food miracle and rival prophets, all build to this breathtaking encounter.<sup>4</sup>

## **Psalm 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14**

---

<sup>3</sup> Brian Britt, “Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Britt, “Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 49.

The relationship between truth and politics, which determines which, is in verses 11 and 12.

verses 11-12 Kindness and **truth** shall meet;  
justice and peace shall kiss.  
**Truth** shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven.

## Romans 9:1-5

Before becoming detailed, a scholarly comment:

His [Paul's] task in Romans is to project a vision of identity in which the community formed by the gospel is one that is truly inclusive (therefore, justification by faith: 1:18—4:25), that has a νόμος [law] setting it on the path to life (the νόμος of the Spirit of life; 5:1—8:39), and that has not replaced Israel but looks to eventually incorporating within itself the Israel that still stumbles at the gospel of the Crucified (9:1—11:36).

Verse unnamed **Brothers** and sisters:

Verse 3 ... for the sake of **my own people**.

NV uses *pro fratribus meis*; KJV, **my kinsman**; as does Douay-Rheims, JB uses **brothers** as does the NJB.

Some interesting comments on the use of **brothers** by Paul:

What Nanos [a scholar] claims as possible for Paul never in fact occurs in Paul's extant writings. Paul does indeed speak of unbelieving Jews as "my **brothers**, my kin according to the flesh" (9:3) but not as "*your brothers*" (of you the Gentile "strong"), and not even as his own **brothers** without the qualification "according to the flesh" (making the **brotherhood** ethnic, not spiritual.) Without exception, the 108 unqualified references to "**brothers**" in Pauline literature and the twenty in deutero-Pauline literature are references to *Christian brotherhood*. The very casual way in which Paul restricts "**brothers**" to fellow Christians is powerful evidence that when he uses the word αδελφος he does not mean to include non-Christian Jews. When Paul says "if any **brother** has an unbelieving wife" (1 Cor 7:12-14), the **brother** is clearly a believer. When he says, "(Christ) appeared to more than five hundred **brothers** at one time" (1 Cor 15:6), he obviously does not include unbelieving Jews among the **brothers**. The readers would clearly understand "All the **brothers** greet you" (1 Cor 16:20) to mean all their fellow believers, not all their fellow believers plus unbelieving Jews. Thus, not only Paul but also his readers in all his churches would obviously take "**brother**" as a

Personal Notes  
020811 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 115A  
© 2017  
Raymond J. Jirran

synonym for “fellow believer in Christ” unless it were qualified further. There is a theological reason for Paul’s not calling unbelieving Jews **brothers**: in his mind, Israel (the Israel which is not a remnant) *at present* lies outside the sphere of salvation and inside the sphere of destruction (**Rom 9:1-3**, 22; 10:1; 11:17-24; cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor 4:3; Gal 4:21-31). **Brotherhood** for Paul is intimately tied to possession of the Spirit of Christ which unbelieving Israel cannot yet claim.<sup>5</sup>

Verse 1 I speak the **truth** in Christ, I do not lie;

Followers of Christ have inherited:

Verse 4 ... the adoption, the glory, the **covenants**, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promise;

The Nova Vulgata (NV) uses **testamenta** or *witness* for **covenant**.<sup>6</sup>

The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) uses **covenants** as does the Jerusalem Bible (JB), Douay-Rheims<sup>7</sup> and the King James (KJV)<sup>8</sup> version. Cassell’s Latin Dictionary translates *testamentum* as *a last will, testament* without reference to *covenant*. From

---

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon, Why the "Weak" at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000), page 67-68.

<sup>6</sup> Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4.

<sup>7</sup> The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate with Annotations, References, and an Historical and Chronological Table: The Douay Version of The Old Testament, First published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609: The Confraternity Edition of The New Testament: A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1950).

<sup>8</sup> General Editor, The Reverend Cain Hope Felder, Ph.D., The Original African Heritage Study Bible: King James Version (Nashville: The James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1993).

English, *covenant* is translated as *pactio, pactum, conventum*.<sup>9</sup> The Lexicon<sup>10</sup> elaborates, without changing, Cassell's.

## cf. Psalm 130:5

This is one of the seven penitential psalms. Carroll Stuhlmueller writes:

In monasteries, monks and nuns often recite these seven psalms every Friday in honor of Jesus's death on the cross for sinners.

...

**Psalm 130** provides one with the material for the *De Profundis*. Especially in the tradition and practices of the Order of Preachers, founded by Dominic de Guzman (1215 C.E.), members of the Order recited **Psalm 130** while walking from one observance to another. For this reason that part of the cloister which led from the chapter room to the refectory or dining room was given the name of *De Profundis*. **Psalm 130** has become a part of many people's daily prayer. The opening words of both Psalms 51 and **130** in the ancient Latin version—*Miserere* and *De Profundis*—have become part of almost every language of the world. It is very possible that they predate Jerome (+420 C.E.) and belonged to the earliest, very popular Latin text of Western Christianity called *Vetus Latina*.

First it is necessary to recognize the way in which the penitential psalms, especially Psalms 32, 28, 51, and **130** blend individual piety with the justice concerns of prophecy and with the public ritual of the Temple. This interaction assures a strong, healthy spirituality, so that personal sincerity keeps a heart and soul within external activity, while the latter prevents individual piety from degeneration into navel gazing and selfish or even morbid subjectivism. Then Psalm 51 can lead listeners and readers through the steps for forgiveness and reconciliation.

---

<sup>9</sup> Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952), pages 573 and 667.

<sup>10</sup> F. P. Leverett, ed., Enlarged and Improved Edition. A new and Copious Lexicon of the Latin Language: compiled chiefly from the Magnum Totius Latinitatis Lexicon of Facciolati and Forcellini, and the German World of Scheller and Luenemann: A New Edition, embracing the Classical Distinctions of Words, and the Etymological Index of Freund's Lexicon (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1850).

### Interaction of Priests and Public Speakers

The initial reading of Psalms 32, 38, 51, and **130** leads one along a distinctively individual pathway. Not only do the psalms resonate, like Psalms 42-43, with a strong nostalgic memory of temple ritual, but they end up at the Temple. This point calls to mind Psalms 15 and 24 and how they provide the ultimate ritual at the temple gate for receiving the once guilty person back into full communion with all Israel (see Chapter 4 of this book).<sup>11</sup>

...

Before turning to Psalm 51 for the stages of forgiveness and reconciliation, two points made in Psalms 32; 38; and **130** need consideration: (1) the necessity to wait upon YHWH, and (2) the hopelessness, left to oneself, of getting out of the depths of sin. Sinful people cast themselves into a pit, too deep to climb out by themselves.  
...<sup>12</sup>

### Matthew 14:22-33

These verses are a direct continuation from last Sunday.

Verse 24            Meanwhile the boat, already a few **miles** off shore.

The Lectionary uses **miles**; the NV *stadiis* (a Greek measure of length, being 625 feet = 606 English feet, and rather less than a furlong).<sup>13</sup> The NJB uses **furlongs**; the JB uses **far out**; the Douay-Rheims, uses **midst of the sea**; as does the KJV. The grammarian

---

<sup>11</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, pages 156-157.

<sup>12</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 166.

<sup>13</sup> Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952), page 538)

Personal Notes  
020811 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 115A  
© 2017  
Raymond J. Jirran

writes, "... *stade*, c. 607 feet; 185 metres."<sup>14</sup> The New American Bible (NAB)<sup>15</sup> uses **miles** as might be expected. Since one mile has more than 5,000 feet, I wonder why **miles** is used. Why not use *far from shore*?

The most interesting part of the liturgy is found in

Verse 33            Those who were in the boat did him **homage**, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

**Homage** is something humans can pay to one another. The NV uses **adoraverunt**, they adored; the KJV uses **worshipped**, as does the Douay-Rheims; the JB uses **bowed down** as does the NJB.

Scholars make some interesting comments on this verse:

Matthew, whose gospel is the most Jewish gospel, makes no attempt to oppose this this practice [of the early Christian worship of Jesus]. Indeed, there is more support for worship of Jesus here than in Mark or Luke. Although the verb *proskyneo* can mean simply "pay **homage** to" and is so used in several Matthean passages (e.g., 8:2), there are three instances in which it seems to have the meaning "**worship**," with Jesus as object (**14:33**; 28:9, 17). Luke uses the verb only once with reference to **worship** of Jesus (24:52), and Mark not at all. It is striking that both Matthew (in 4:10) and Luke (in 4:8) make the tension with traditional Jewish monotheism explicit by citing Deut 6:13, "You shall

---

<sup>14</sup> Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 47.

<sup>15</sup> Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible: Translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources: Including The Revised New Testament and the Revised Psalms Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and Approved by the Administrative Committee/Board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference: with many helps for Bible reading: Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation, How to Read the Bible, Historical Survey of the Lands of the Bible, Bible Dictionary, Liturgical Index of Sunday Readings, Doctrinal Bible Index, and over 50 Photographs and Maps of the Holy Land (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992).

Personal Notes  
020811 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 115A  
© 2017  
Raymond J. Jirran

worship (*proskyneseis*) the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."<sup>16</sup>

Since we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration Tuesday, August 6, a comment relating Matthew:

Descriptions of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah are frequent in the passion narrative, for it tells of Israel's murder of its Messiah ([Matt.] 26:63; 27:11, 17, 22, 25, 27, 37, 42). At the same time a more adequate confession rooted in apocalyptic color that reflects its conceptual background comes at the climax, Jesus' death: "Truly this was the Son of God" (27:54; cf. 27: 51-53).

A similar transcending of traditional messianic categories occurs after 14:1—16:12, in which issues of response to the messianic Son of David come to the fore. Peter's confession includes "the Christ," as the Marcan account (Mark 8:29), but Matthew makes him add "the Son of the living God" (16:16). In the account of the exchanges which follow and of the transfiguration he moves the focus, as in chap. 3, onto Jesus the Son of God, the universal judge (16:16—17:8).<sup>17</sup>

Discernment remains the most interesting aspect of these readings, from Elijah's sheer silence and "What are you doing here?" to the psalmist's linking kindness and truth, to Paul's unscrambling the relationship between the promise and the promised people; to the need to wait upon YHWH in the inability to help ourselves otherwise, to Peter's walking on water and subsequent worship..

---

<sup>16</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000), page 274.

<sup>17</sup> W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October, 1982), pages 583-584.