

These readings are about fraternal correction. The Magnificat ® readings from Saint Thomas<sup>1</sup> are well done. "... it is enough to be ready when they [the good turns we owe to all in general] seek us out as though by chance, as Augustine puts it. Otherwise we would go round prying into other people's lives and that is forbidden."

## Ezekiel 33:7-9

God orders fraternal correction, when God so orders.

Verse 8 ... but I will hold you responsible for **his** death.

Saint Jerome<sup>2</sup> writes, "I will require his blood from your hand." [My translation.] King James: "but his blood will I require at thine hand."<sup>3</sup> Douay-Rheims: "but I will require his blood at thy hand."<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem: "but I will hold you responsible for **his** death." New Jerusalem: "but I shall hold you responsible for **the** death."

The Lectionary seems to soft pedal the nature of accountability and responsibility.

## Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, From Summa Theologiae, A Concise Translation, Timothy McDermott, Ed., 1989, *Christian Classics, Inc., Westminster, MD., Magnificat* ® Vol. 4, No. 7 (September 2002), 116-117.

<sup>2</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>3</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).

<sup>4</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).

There is too much here from Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. to tire neither your eyes nor my hands, I will develop only two of his seven principles for studying and praying the Psalms. All of Chapter Two is pertinent. I have made notes to treat the following no later than the time signified. The first principle with readings 133A, in two weeks; the Third Principle with readings 69C, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, in about two more years; the fourth principal with readings 2B in the forthcoming First Sunday in Advent; the fifth principal with readings 72C, the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, in about two more years; and the sixth principal with readings 102C, the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, again in about two more years. My intention is not to repeat myself.

## *Chapter Two*

### Methods for Studying and Praying the Psalms

*“O that today you would listen to his voice!” (Psalm 95:7).*

Chapter 1 discussed various aspects of the book of Psalms, mostly external details about the sweep of the 150 psalms in the Bible, such as the different systems for numbering the psalms and their verses, as well as the question of “titles.” Chapter 2 draws closer to the texts of the individual psalms, with particular attention given to **Psalm 95**, in order to clarify some helpful methods for studying each and every psalm. What follows is a series of seven guiding “principles” that can help readers to become fully engaged in the psalms not only as historical and literary documents but more specifically as expressions of prayer.

### **First Principle “Today” Has Its Own Grace<sup>5</sup>**

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Father Peter Tran, an Associate Pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in Newport News Virginia, seems particularly sensitive to what happens “each and every day,” so this principle will be helpful in a couple of weeks.

### **Second Principle Read the Text of the Psalm**

It may seem strange to repeat the obvious: one needs to read the text, the actual words of the psalm that are intended for study and

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<sup>5</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., *The Spirituality of the Psalms* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, 9.

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prayer. Perhaps what this second principle is stressing is the need to read the psalm slowly and reverently. Savor each word. Read with the faith that God is speaking each word as though for the first time.

**Psalm 95** reads according to a new translation, proposed by a subcommittee of the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL):

Come, sing with joy to God,  
shout to our savior, our rock.  
Enter God's presence with praise,  
enter with shouting and song.<sup>6</sup>

The Lectionary<sup>7</sup> translation is as follows:

Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;  
let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

ICEL continues:

A great God is the Lord,  
over the **gods** like a king.

The Lectionary leaves out this third verse, with its mention of **gods**, apparently admitting to more than monotheism.

God cradles the depths of the earth,  
holds fast the mountain peaks,  
God shaped the ocean and owns it,  
formed the earth by hand.

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<sup>6</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, 9.

<sup>7</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 813.

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Come, bow down and worship,  
kneel to the Lord our maker.  
this is our God, our shepherd,  
we are the flock led with care.<sup>8</sup>

The Lectionary has:

Come, let us bow down in worship;  
let us kneel before the Lord who made us.  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

ICEL continues:

Listen today to God's voice:  
"Harden no heart as at Meribah,  
On that day in the desert at Massah.  
There your people tried me,  
though they had seen my work."<sup>9</sup>

The Lectionary:

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:  
"Harden not your **hearts** as at Meribah,  
as in the day of Massah in the desert,  
where your fathers tempted me;  
they tested me though they had seen my works."

This translation has been criticized for using **hearts** overly much.

Stuhlmüller and ICEL continued:

"Forty years with that lot!  
I said: They are perverse,  
they do not accept my ways.  
So I swore in my anger:

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<sup>8</sup> Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, 9.

They shall not enter my rest.”

This translates the Bible according to the principle of dynamic equivalence. [Underlining throughout is my own emphasis.] According to this norm, the Hebrew text is not rendered word for word (formal equivalence) but, rather its words are communicated with the intention of dynamically involving the reader or listener, the one at prayer or at worship, in the message of the Bible.

The second principle also invites readers, ideally at least, to read the psalms according to many, or at least more than one, translation. One needs to read with an eye to difference, and ask “Why?” or “What new insight can be gained?” A person may want to compare the following, somewhat literal translation with the one above, which is a dynamic equivalent to what follows:

*Part One*

-a-

1. Step forward! Ring out (your joy) to the Lord!  
Let us sing aloud (literally: shout) to the Rock, our Savior!
2. Gratefully, let us approach God’s presence (literally: face).  
With music(al instruments) let us sing aloud (literally: shout) to God.

-b-

3. What a great God is the Lord,  
a great king over all gods.
4. In his hand the depths of the earth,  
and the mountain peaks.
5. The sea belongs to its Maker,  
the dry land too, formed by God’s hand.

-c-

6. Come! Let us worship! Let us bow profoundly!  
Let us kneel in the presence (literally: before the face) of the Lord (now) creating us.
- 7a. The Lord, indeed, is our God,  
while we are the people of God’s shepherding,  
the flock in God’s hands.

*Part Two*

-a-

7b. Oh, that today you hear God's voice!

-b-

8. Do not let your heart be hardened as (happened) at Meribah (or place of Dispute),  
as on that wilderness day at Massah (or, at Testing Place),  
9. There your ancestors tested me,  
they tempted me, though they had seen my wonders.

-c-

10. For forty years how I loathed that generation,  
I declared them a people with erring heart,  
wandering off from my way (literally: not experiencing my way).  
11. Angrily I swear:  
(thus) they can never be at rest with me (literally: enter into my  
'rest).

For the sake of brevity, I leave out the beautiful translation of Saint Jerome's Vulgate.

A slow, prayerful, and studious reading of the text, comparing translations if one has access to the Hebrew poetry, should do more than acquaint readers with the text of the Bible. Hopefully it will revive memories of other times at prayer when this psalm had impressed its readers and hearers, and had communicated secret, penetrating messages from God. Perhaps this or another psalm being studied was sung at a wedding or a religious profession of vows or at the funeral of a dear one. Such a remembrance draws listeners and readers into a company of saints, or what the epistle to the Hebrews calls a "great ... cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1).

A careful yet informed and critical reading of the text of the Bible, and specifically, the text of the psalms, can draw someone into a sacred company of saints and memories. Together hearers listen reverently and gratefully, carefully and delicately to God's word handed down to the community of believers by the community's ancient ancestors whose lives and experiences reflected in the psalms can offer people hope and consolation, and a glimmer into the divine ways of God.

**Third Principle: Read the Text with Imagination**

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**Fourth Principle: Read the Psalms According to Its Key Words**

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**Fifth Principle: Read the Psalm with Other Parallel Passages**

...

**Sixth Principle: Read the Psalms according to the Liturgy and Classic Spiritual Writers.**

...

**Seventh Principle: Consult Commentaries**

If a person is studying the psalms primarily for prayer and work among God's people, then the ambiance is first the presence of God. God, such a person believes with conviction, is communicating a personal message. This message has resonated through the centuries; each century added its own accent or coloration to the word, and so does the background of the person of faith today. After one has listened to the words of a psalm, reflected on the psalm in relation to the life of Israel and one's own personal life experience, the next step is to consult recent commentaries on the psalms.

Commentaries add many details; for instance, the meaning of Hebrew words, the original setting in Israel and a hypothesis about the psalm's role in Israel's annual liturgy, or the relation of one psalm with others in the Psalter and with poems elsewhere in the Bible. Commentaries alert readers to aspects of archaeology: the structure of houses and temples, the number of inhabitants, their life-style, diet, and social practices, the kinds of musical instruments and religious symbols. So far as information is available, readers learn from commentaries about the religious and civic leaders in Israel, their function in worship and instruction, the evolution and changes in their roles. Commentaries reconstruct ancient services or rituals in which psalms played a part.

Commentaries contain important information. Were there different ways of translating Hebrew words in other ancient languages? What new insights come from the early Greek translation, called the Septuagint? How have culture, worldviews, and certain religious beliefs influenced the writing of the psalms and their message?

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If the principle norm for interpreting the psalms rested with what the original writer intended to say, then one needs to reverse the process and turn the final principle, the use of commentaries, into the first principle. Pope Pius XII in the famous encyclical, the “magna carta” of modern biblical studies in the Roman Catholic Church, named from the opening Latin words, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (The Divine or Holy Inspiring Spirit), wrote:

“What is the literal sense of a passage is not always as obvious in the speeches and writings of the ancient authors of the East, as it is in the works of our own time. For what they wished to express is not to be determined by the rules of grammar and philology alone, nor solely by the context; the interpreter must, as it were, go back wholly in spirit to those remote centuries of the East and with the aid of history, archaeology, ethnology, and other sciences, accurately determine what modes of writing, so to speak, the authors of that ancient period would be likely to use, and in fact did use (S<sub>s</sub>35).”

Pius XII, however, had to defend the critical, historical method for studying the Bible, under attack from several reactionary sources. He never intended this method to be the final word, nor the advances of his age the definitive expression. He not only insists upon the religious meaning of faith, but he also states that every age has its own contribution to make for plumbing the inexhaustible riches of Scripture. Other abstracts from the encyclical include:

“Wherefore the exegete, just as he must search out and expound the literal meaning of the words, intended and expressed by the sacred writer, so also must he do likewise for the spiritual sense, provided it is clearly intended by God (S<sub>s</sub>26).

“Moreover we may rightly and deservedly hope that our time also can contribute something towards the deeper and more accurate interpretation of Sacred Scripture. For not a few things, especially in matters pertaining to history, were scarcely at all or not fully explained by the commentators of past ages, since they lacked almost all the information which was needed for their clearer exposition (S<sub>s</sub>31).”

Because the historical-critical method is firmly established in various church circles, one can and should have recourse to that method, as well as other and newer methods, in the study of the psalms from commentaries. Only after one has come to understand the Bible as a document that reflects ancient Israel’s experience, and a story conditioned





one's maiden aunt. The Greek uses *αγαπη*,<sup>12</sup> frequently translated with *caritas*. Saint Jerome was probably trying to work a middle way between the intellectual fear one would feel for the Storm God and the genital attraction one would feel for a sexual partner.

## 2 Corinthians 5:19

[no comment here]

## Matthew 18:15-20

Verse 15 ... "If your **brother** sins against you..."

Max Zerwick, S.J. observes, **brother** in the faith.<sup>13</sup> Fraternal correction is described as appropriate only among believers. Matthew **18:15** is silent about non-believers.

Verse 17            If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.  
                          If he refuses to listen even to the church,  
                          then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.

In the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 25, we noted how Matthew uses *church* to mean more than a simple assembly, but to mean the whole Christian church.

Verse 20            For where two or three are gathered together in my name,  
                          there am I in the midst of them"

Fitting the Lord's Prayer into the Gospel according to Matthew, Warren Carter observes:

With the help of Driver's [another scholar's] model of the social impact of ritual, we have identified at least three likely aspects of the

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<sup>12</sup> Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum: Graece et Latine: Textum Graecum post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle communiter ediderunt Barbara et Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger: Textus Latinus Novae Vulgatae Bibliorum Sacrorum Editioni debetur: Utriusque textus apparatus criticum recensuerunt et editionem novis curis elaboraverunt Barbara et Kurt Aland una cum Instituto Studiorum Textus Novi Testamenti Monasterii Westphaliae (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1999) Editio XXVII.

<sup>13</sup> Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), 58.

experience of the Lord's Prayer which members of the authorial audience recall as they encounter the prayer in Matthew's narrative. Through participation in the prayer as part of their community's worship, they have received its "gifts," its perlocution of order, community, and transformation. In hearing the familiar prayer in chap. 6 of Matthew's Gospel, members of the authorial audience recall these gifts from their previous liturgical experiences, so that they become part of the "meaning" of the prayer for the authorial audience.

There is no doubt that the placement of the prayer in Matthew's narrative expands and renews these "gifts" by further defining their contours. The realities experienced in the liturgical setting and recalled by the authorial audience preface the immediate literary context of the Sermon on the Mount and the entire gospel. While no comprehensive sketch is possible here, several brief examples can be noted. The order created by the first chapter of the sermon manifests God's blessing (5:3-12), reign (5:3, 10, 20; cf. 4:17, 23), and will (5:13-48). The gospel's opening chapter sketches this order in God's purposes for Jesus, to manifest God's saving presence (1:22, 23). Repeatedly the sermon and the whole gospel anticipate the future completion of God's purposes (7:24-27; 10:32-42; 13:36-50; and elsewhere). Throughout, the audience is reminded of what threatens this order: sin (1:21), refusal to comply with God's will (the example of Herod in chap. 2), unfruitful presumption (3:8-9), Satan's tempting demand for allegiance (4:1-11), disease and demons (4:23-24), ignorance and disobedience (5:17-48), hypocrisy (6:1-6). It is also reminded of its task to do God's will (4:18-22; 7:24-27; 12:46-50) and of God's sustaining presence (1:23; 8:23-27; **18:20**; 25:31-46; 28:19-20).<sup>14</sup>

Equally pervasive is the narrative's community-forming impact. In calling disciples to follow him Jesus calls them to encounter God's reign (4:17-22) in a new and alternative community (5:3-16). The Sermon on the Mount requires this community to live according to Jesus's reinterpretation of conventional wisdom (5:17-48). It exists over against the synagogue (6:2, 5, 16) and the Gentiles (5:47; 6:7, 32), yet it exists for the world (5:13-16; 10). It is the forgiven, forgiving, merciful community of the "little ones," the children, the servants (9:13; 12:7; **18:1-13**, **15-20**, 21-35; 20:20-28; 24:45-51), where traditional patterns of authority are overturned (23:8-12). Throughout the gospel, personal, social, and cosmic transformation by means of divine presence and human obedience is portrayed.

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<sup>14</sup> Warren Carter, "Recalling the Lord's Prayer: The Authorial Audience and Matthew's Prayer as Familiar Liturgical Experience," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 3 (July 1995), 529-530.

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The compatibility between the prayer's liturgical impact (insofar as we can identify three general aspects of it with the help of Driver's model) and these major themes in the gospel may account for the prayer's inclusion in the gospel. As part of the gospel narrative, the prayer offers another means of communicating with the audience. The prayer contributes to the gospel's "meaning" not only by its content in the context of the narrative but also by its perlocutionary force. By encountering this familiar prayer in the gospel's text, the audience is enabled to recall, and thereby renew, its liturgical experience of the prayer's gifts of order, community, and transformation, realities which are also central to the gospel's narrative.

Another scholar comments;

The tendency on the part of Matthew to place the personal encounter and the dialogue between Jesus and the suppliants at the center of his miracle-stories provides the key to a proper understanding of their paradigmatic function. The Jesus of the miracle-stories is, as has been shown, not the Servant or the Lord per se but the Messiah, the Son of God. For Matthew, the mystery of Jesus' divine sonship is that in him God has drawn near to dwell with his people to the end of the age, thus inaugurating the eschatological time of salvation (1:21, 23; **18:20**; 28:20). For God to draw near in the person of his son, however, is for his Kingdom, or Rule, to draw near (4:17, 23; 9:35). Hence, in the presence of Jesus, whether as the earthly Son of God before Easter (1:23; 11:27) or as the exalted Son of God following Easter (**18:20** [but 18:20 did not happen before Easter, so I am confused]; 28:18-20), the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Rule of God, is a present, though not yet consummated, reality (8:29; 12:28).<sup>15</sup>

Commenting on the Jewishness of Matthew, another scholar observes:

It is only Matthew who reports the command of the risen Christ that new followers be baptized in the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. Whatever the force of the phrase "in the name of" may be, it is significant that Jesus is placed between the Father and the Holy Spirit. Gundry [a scholar] observes that such a high Christology "is almost bound to have fixed a great gulf between Mathew's community and Judaism."

Further evidence that Jesus was the object of worship in the Matthean churches can be seen in the two passages in which his

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<sup>15</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Matthew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978), 571.

continuing presence is promised (**18:20**, “**Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them,**” and (28:20) “I am with you always, to the end of the age”). Echoes can be heard here not only of passages in the Hebrew Scriptures in which God promises to be with Israel or one of its representatives (e.g., Isa 41:10; 43:5) but also of the passage on Emmanuel (cited in Matt 1:23). In these passages Jesus is represented not merely as a human Messiah who now waits in heaven until he returns to reign but rather as a suprahuman being who shares with God the capability of being omnipresent. Exegesis of **18:20** disposed Gunther Bornkamm, who earlier described Matthew’s conflict with the synagogue as a conflict *intra muros*, to publish a different opinion in 1970: “The church, although still very small, knows itself to be cut off from the Jewish community; gathered no longer around the Torah, but in the name of Jesus, in faith in him and in confession of him, and as such to be assured of his presence.”

Hurtado [a scholar] is fully justified in suggesting that early Christian worship of Jesus constituted a significant “mutation” in the monotheistic tradition of Judaism. In our efforts to evaluate the Jewishness of the First Gospel, this factor must not be ignored or underrated.<sup>16</sup>

Another scholar treats the church:

Another passage in Matthew, 16:19 (cf. **18:18**), is derived from a church order formulation that looks toward an eschatological inclusion and exclusion:

I shall give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,  
and whatever you bind upon earth will be bound in  
heaven,  
and whatever you loose upon earth will be loosed in  
heaven.

... [Greek]

Scholarly interpretations of the meaning of binding and loosing differ, but the other examples of precise parallelism in Matthew would push us to the view that, among other things, the reference here is to the inclusion or

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000), 274-275.

exclusion of members in the present community structure *and* in the eschatological judgment.<sup>17</sup>

More, already quoted in the August 25, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, from another scholar on *loosing*:

A comparable understanding of the “unloosing” of Scripture can be found in John 10:35, where Jesus asserts ironically and in strikingly similar terms: ου δυναται λυθηραι η γραφη (“Scripture cannot be loosed”). Obviously, interpretation is not the issue; the point seems rather to be the divine authority behind the fixation of the biblical text, a concept reminiscent of the binding/loosing motif in **Matt 16:19; 18:18**. Divinely revealed (“unloosed”) Scripture cannot be altered (“loosed”) by human initiative.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, this liturgy makes room for fraternal correction as an act of love. Ezekiel has God telling us we better do it, if God commands it. The psalmist warns us, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Saint Paul tells us to “love your neighbor as yourself.” In other words, the liturgy is telling us to use fraternal correction with the same alacrity towards others that we use toward ourselves. In the Gospel, Jesus even sets up due process: “If he does not listen [to you] ... take ... two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then ...” that is all there is to write. The due process is over. The fundamental idea in correction is love.

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<sup>17</sup> Lawrence M. Wills, “Scribal Methods in Matthew and *Mishnah Abot*,” *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 2001), 245.

<sup>18</sup> Rick Van De Water, “*Removing the Boundary*” (*Hosea 5:10*) in *First-Century Palestine*, *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2001), 625.