

The Father of the Prodigal Son loves both of his sons; he punishes neither, but takes the elder son to task for not being welcoming and retaining his relationship with his brother. Luke is about joy.¹ This parable, therefore, causes problems for self-righteous Christians, who see things in either/or fashion, rather than as full of complexities and ambiguities. The First Testament has many such complexities and ambiguities. One such pattern is First Testament preference for younger over older sons. The Prodigal Son, however, is not preferred over the older son. The Father loves both; he punishes neither and is forgiving and happy for the reunion.

Contemporary scholars are unraveling the editing done by the Deuteronomic redactors or editors of the First Testament. The result is increasing confusion over what really happened. Scholars think about the golden calf of Exodus as a representation of the political split of Judaism into Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Jesus belonged to the Southern Kingdom. Biblical scholarship increases the complexity of the relationship between God and people.

The Incarnation and Resurrection, as well as the atonement of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)², serve to help explain salvation. While Christians definitively know that the death of Jesus is the cause of their salvation, how that happens is open to many theologies. The atonement theology of Anselm grows increasingly unsatisfactory. Rather than regarding God as an abusive Father, modern theologians prefer to regard God as a compassionate Mother, loving her children, whether they love and respect her in return or not.

By welcoming him back into the family, the parable of the Prodigal Son suits the apostolate of JustFaith and the marginalized. Karl Marx (1818-1883)³ called religion, the opiate of the masses. This opiate approach traces back to Saint Anselm of Canterbury as developed by the Protestants, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564). The theology that Christ suffered as a substitute for humanity to satisfy God the Father lasted into the mid-Twentieth-Century, when some gave up on the ability of Christianity to promote social progress. As a mid-Twentieth Century Christian, I, for one, have never given up on finding a place for all of God's children at the banquet of good things available in the human family.

Annotated Bibliography

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some of the fun stuff scholars are digging up.

¹ Michael F. Patella, O.S.B., Volume 3: New Testament: The New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Luke (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005) 107.

² <http://www.answers.com/Anselm%20of%20Canterbury> 070805.

³ <http://www.answers.com/Karl+Marx?cat=biz-fin> 070805.

First Reading: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Exodus 25—40

Janet S. Everhart, "Serving Women and Their Mirrors: A Feminist Reading of Exodus 38:8b"⁴

Exodus 38:8b refers to serving women and their mirrors at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Everhart divides her article into six parts. She titles part 4, "A Redactor's Hand? The Odd Placement of Exodus 38:8." *Redactor*, which means *editor*, and rewriting Sacred Scripture. That also means that God is gentle with his revelation, permitting humans to develop the meaning of revelation over centuries.

Exod 32

Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Let My People Go! Threads of Exodus in African American Narratives"⁵

Kirk-Duggan demonstrates how *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) paralleled what is in Exodus 32.

Exod 32:1-26

Gerhard Langer, review of Christoph Dohmen, Exodus 19—40⁶

The review uses the word *complex* three times on one page. Re-editing through the centuries causes the complexity.

Exod 32:1-8

Scott W. Hahn, "Covenant, Oath, and the Aqedah: Διαθηκη in Galatians 3:15-18"⁷

Brings out First Testament violence in Exodus. Hahn concludes, "In sum, the laws and curses of the Mosaic covenant will not cause—or prevent—the promises and sworn blessings of the Abrahamic covenant from reaching Israel and the nations."

⁴ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 50.

⁵ in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 133, 137.

⁶ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 3 (July 2006) 509.

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 1 (January 2005) 98, 99.

Exod 32:4, 8

R. Scott Chalmers, "Who Is the Real El? A Reconstruction of the Prophet's Polemic in Hosea 12:5a"⁸

Chalmers pointed out that the Hebrew uses the plural form for *gods*, a form that can be either "singular or [sic] plural in meaning."

Exod 32:8

Joel S. Burnett, "The Question of Divine Absence in Israelite and West Semitic Religion"⁹

Makes the case that the bull-calf is associated with the Northern Kingdom and that editors have redrafted what happened. Gives a plural translation for *gods*.

Exodus 32:8

<u>Lectionary</u> (1998):	... `This is your God, O Israel ...
<u>The Vulgate</u> (circa 410):	... "Isti sunt dii tui, Israel ...
<u>Douay-Rheims</u> (1582-1610):	... These are thy gods, O Israel ...
<u>King James</u> (1611):	... These be thy gods, O Israel ...
<u>Catholic RSV</u> (1966):	... These are your gods, O Israel ...
<u>New American</u> (1970):	... `This is your God, O Israel ...
<u>New Jerusalem</u> (1985):	... "Israel, here is your god ...

This is a rare instance where the Lectionary, New American and New Jerusalem all agree, with the singular *god* against the other plural *gods* translation. *God* looks like a *functional equivalent*, rather than a literal equivalent translation.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 51:3-4, 13-13, 17, 19

Psalm 51 is available for funerals.¹⁰

Reading 35B, the Fifth Sunday in Lent, develops Psalm 51.

⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 68, No. 4 (October 2006) 616.

⁹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 67, No. 2 (April 2005) 231, 233.

¹⁰ N.a., International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998) 271, 304.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

1 Timothy 1:12

The Greek for *strengthened* in “I am grateful to him who has strengthened me,” carries the sense of *invigorated* with implication of JustFaith political and social involvement.

1 Tim 1:15

Patrick Gray, “The Liar Paradox and the Letter to Titus”¹¹

That there must be an element of truth with the liar causes the paradox. Gray comments, that when someone asked Saint Augustine what God was doing before the creation, Augustine supposedly replied, “Preparing hell for people who ask such questions.” Such is the risk of thinking.

At 1 Timothy 1:15, Gray refers to the formula, *This saying is trustworthy*. I note that, earlier, the author of 1 Timothy praises God, because *he considered me trustworthy*. 1 Timothy is still about the gentle Jesus, finding even sinners trustworthy.

Alleluia: 2 Corinthians 5:19

Gospel: Luke 15:1-32

Luke 15:1, 27

Robert Doran, “The Pharisee and the Tax Collector: An Agonistic Story”¹²

In Luke, tax collectors flocked to hear John the Baptist and Jesus. The gentle Jesus called a tax collector to follow him. There is no violence. There is no retribution.

Luke 15:4-7

Agneta Schreurs, Psychotherapy and Spirituality: Integrating the spiritual dimension into therapeutic practice¹³

Schreurs writes of an incest victim,

... she loved the story of the lost lamb: [sic] how dirty and lost you may be, Jesus still loves you. Various therapists of the regional mental health institute tried to help her with the usual approach for incest victims. It was all in vain. In the end, she found a religious therapist who used the story of the lost lamb as a crucial turning point in her healing process.

¹¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2007) 308, 312.

¹² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2007) 269.

¹³ London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002 228.

Luke 15:11-32

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults¹⁴

The Bishops write, "Christ's parable of the prodigal son illustrates the sublime meaning of his earthly ministry, which is to forgive sins, reconcile people to God, and lead us to true happiness (cf. Lk 15:11-32)." The Bishops write nothing here about atonement. Elsewhere, the Bishops define "Atonement: By his suffering and death on the Cross, Jesus freed us from our sins and brought about our reconciliation with God the Father."

The Bishops write about atonement in Chapter 8, "The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ." The Bishops write, "Jesus freely gave his life as a sacrifice." The Bishops do not write, but do imply, that Jesus gave his life *for us*, as a sacrifice. *Anselm* is not indexed. Neither is Mel Gibson. Lisa Sowle Cahill, mentioned below, writes, "Anselm of Canterbury is no Mel Gibson."¹⁵

Violence, however, is indexed for seven pages, including *wrong using religion to justify*. The problem, however, is that the Bishops concern themselves with Islam, rather than Christianity. Cahill develops Judeo-Christian violence in the article cited below.

Luke 15:11-13

Abraham Smith, "A Prodigal Sings the Blues: The Characterization of Harriett Williams in Langston Hughes's *Not without Laughter*"¹⁶

Reinforces what Lisa Sowle Cahill writes about the Black experience, referenced below. The Black experience understands violence, but not as emanating from an abusive Father.

Luke 15:20

Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Quaestio Disputata: The Atonement Paradigm: Does it Still Have Explanatory Value?"¹⁷

Cahill uses the Prodigal Son parable to help make her points objecting to *sacralizing violence* that "A model of salvation through sacrificial love, embodied on the cross, can still have transformative moral and political value, if linked with a

¹⁴ Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006 92, 235. 505.

¹⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Quaestio Disputata: The Atonement Paradigm: Does it Still Have Explanatory Value?" Theological Studies, Vol. 68, No. 2 (June 2007) 429.

¹⁶ in Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Randall C. Bailey, ed., (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 154.

¹⁷ Theological Studies, Vol. 68, No. 2 (June 2007) 429.

vibrant belief in the Incarnation and Resurrection.” In other words, Christianity need not be the opiate of the masses. While Cahill does not place truth and politics side-by-side, that relationship is the problem.

An endeavor, like JustFaith, can improve society by accepting the political consequences of expressing the love of God for all humanity. The political consequence for Jesus was crucifixion. Crucifixion, however, did not dissuade Jesus from his own sense of self-worth. In the final analysis, crucifixion increased the value of Jesus through his resurrection in the lives of the Faithful and in his own bodily everlasting life.

The topics listed for 2007 at www.justfaith.org/JM125.html 7/17/2007 : Immigration, Climate change, The UN Millennium Development Goals, Federal Budget Priorities, Prison Reform. Other topics under consideration are Economic Development for the Poor, Rural Life, Militarism, Racism, Forming Small Justice Communities, and Community Organizing and Aging and the Elderly are helpful. My intention is to relegate the above statement to the Appendix for future reference.

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