

Charity is the ultimate prudence. Prudence is that virtue which keeps the other virtues in line, in sound proportion to one another. Prudence is that virtue which enables the Faithful to deal with their own neurotic tendencies in a rational manner. Prudence is also that virtue which enables a recovering sinner to repent.

With the neurotic tendencies mentioned above in mind, Basil the Great (c. 330-379), Confessor, one of the Four Great Doctors of the East, Archbishop of Cappadocia, Asia Minor, offers a good description of mental illness. "The insane see no reality, only the vision that torments them."<sup>1</sup> Prudence is incompatible with such mental illness. Prudence relies on reason and Faith. Luke 16:8 mentions prudence in the Gospel of the unjust, squandering steward.

Origen (185-253) offers the following insight:

Although the Gentiles say that prudence is a virtue, and define it as, *the practical understanding of what is good, bad, or indifferent, the discernment of what we ought to do and not do*, we should consider whether this description has one meaning or many. For we are told that the Lord *established the heavens by prudence* (Prov. iii. 19). And it is evident that because the Lord established the heavens by it that prudence is good. But we are also told in Genesis (iii. 1), according to the Septuagint, that the serpent was *the most subtle of all the beasts of the earth (serpens prudentissimus erat)*, where prudence is not spoken of as a virtue but as craftiness, inclining its possessor towards evil. And so He [Jesus] perhaps used the word *commended*, not in the true sense of commendation, but used it in a lower sense; as when we say someone is to be commended in trivial and indifferent matters, or as a clash of wits or sharpness of understanding meets with approval because of the mental vigor displayed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Basil, Bishop and Doctor, *I Will Pull Down My Barns*, PG 31, Hom. 6 on Luke xii. 18 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) 329.

<sup>2</sup> Origen (*or Geometer, in Catena GP*) 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) 322-323. I changed the spelling of vigour to vigor.

Personal Notes  
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Raymond J. Jirran

Moving on to the Second Reading, bishops, as explained in 1 Timothy 16:1 being trustworthy, are, thereby, to be prudent. The problem with the current sex scandal is that the hierarchy mistook prudence concerning things of this life for prudence concerning things of the next life. The hierarchy was rightly concerned about scandal to the Faithful, but mistook the Faithful for “children of this world.” The Faithful are properly understood as “the children of light” (Luke 16:8). Prudence is an issue not only for the sex scandal, but also for the liturgy as found in various translations of the Sacred Scripture. These translations offer the Faithful their light.

In Luke 16:8, “*For the children of this world are more prudent ...*” the Greek has *sons* meaning *children*. This type of difference between the Greek and the English is a source useful for finding unexplored meanings in Sacred Scripture. Prudently understanding differences, helps understand meanings. These Notes seek the meaning of prudence in the different translations.

Those reading these Notes over any length of time have observed my frustration and confusion with the translations from the ancient Greek to the medieval Latin into the various renditions of English from the Seventeenth Century to the present. Trying to see if I am using the most reliable translations insofar as the liturgy is concerned, I spoke with The Liturgical Press to see if they had anything more up-to-date to sell. The Liturgical Press did not. On August 23, the Monday before I prepared these Notes. I had an additional telephonic interview from my home with Mary Sperry at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Mary Sperry seemed defensive as she grappled with my concerns over 1 Corinthians 15:21, used in the Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup> feast of the Assumption. The Lectionary has “For since death came through man” whereas the New American Bible Revised (NAB) has “a human being.” My concern arose from the observation that the NAB is usually less inclusive than the Lectionary. My purpose was not and is not to debate the translation, but simply to identify the correct text, no matter what it may be and to enjoy the insights available from the effort.

Expressly, without discussing the merits of the Vatican-approved Lectionary translation, Mary Sperry began by explaining differences in general. She directed me to <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/index.htm> where *Documentation* appears, under which is *Documents of the Holy See*, under which is *Liturgiam authenticam: Fifth Instruction on Liturgical Translations*. One reason for placing these details here in the text, rather than the footnotes, is to examine the prudence of the Magisterium.

Before Mary Sperry resorted to the Holy See, she directed me to <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/lectionary.htm> where one finds “Committee On the Liturgy: Text of June/July 1997 *Newsletter* Re: Lectionary Revision.” This source has a Particular Questions section with comments on base texts, such as the NAB,

used in the Lectionary. The explanations found there have special sections on translating *adelphoi* or the Romanized Greek for *brothers*, *uios* or the Romanized Greek for *sons*, *anthropoi* or the Romanized Greek for men, *anthropos* or the Romanized Greek for *man*, masculine pronouns, and editorial changes, none of which satisfied me with 1 Cor 15:21.

Mary Sperry then directed me to [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_d oc\\_20...](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_d oc_20...) [the open spaces hide “\_”s] to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: Fifth Instruction “For the Right Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council” (Sacrosanctum Concilium. Art. 36) *Liturgiam authenticam* on the Use of Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy. My reason for this high level of specificity is the directions of Mary Sperry. Mary Sperry was on the phone as I worked my way under her direction finding the appropriate documents. Sometimes her directions inadvertently left out a step, an inadvertence I do not want to repeat here, an inadvertence we were able to correct at the time, because Mary Sperry was in direct telephone contact with me as I followed her directions. That is another reason for these details.

Mary Sperry tried her best to avoid giving me a bureaucratic run-around. She did not succeed because, while the documents to which she directed me did describe the processes used in translation, the documents held no one responsible for the difference in translating 1 Cor 15:21. The Faithful have one authentic translation in the NAB, which the Lectionary generally uses, and another authentic translation in the Lectionary, with no one in particular accountable for the differences. Evidently, such lack of accountability is some sort of prudence.

Mary Sperry told me that such lack of accountability is traditional practice. I responded that medieval artists would not sign their paintings out of humility. She was correct; such lack of accountability is traditional. Such an approach, however, is of little help to my inquiries. Just as translating 1 Cor 15:21 raises questions, so does translating Luke 16:8.

The Greek in Luke 16:8 has *sons* meaning *children*. My inquiries in this instance are about *children of this world*, *children* being a translation of the Greek υιους or *uios* to use the same Roman alphabet used by the hierarchy. In the Greek, υιους refers to “a certain intimate relation to a person or thing [that] is expressed in a manner not indeed exclusively Semitic, but in our literature certainly prevalently so, by “son,” υιους, followed by a genitive.”<sup>3</sup> *Children* is a legitimate translation.

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<sup>3</sup> Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 15.

The point of it all is that just as Origin writes that God established the heavens by prudence, so prudence is an appropriate measure for whatever else humans may establish. Prudence is appropriate for translating the Holy Word of God. Beyond translation, the following readings distinguish between prudence about things of this life and prudence about things of the next life.

Prudence is not the traditional focus of these readings. The traditional way of interpreting these readings was spelled out by Saint Gaudentius (+410), Bishop of Brescia in northern Italy, the venerated friend of Saint Ambrose (339-397), in his "The Unjust Steward" sermon. Charity is the ultimate prudence and the traditional focus of interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

### **Amos 8:4-7**

This reading is about mistaking prudence concerning things of this life for prudence concerning things of the next life. Verse 8, "The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Never will I forget a thing [meaning rob the poor] they have done!" Since 1990, Liberation Theology extended the Book of Amos to include African-American and "Two-Thirds World" perspectives.<sup>5</sup> Amos relates to the fifth beatitude, Matthew 5:3, concerning the *poor in spirit*. The meaning is a prudential "reversal of unfortunate conditions rather than a reward."<sup>6</sup> Prudence is about justice and love. Charity is the ultimate prudence.

### **Psalm 113: 1-2, 4-6, 7-8 (cf. 1a, 7b)**

The problem is that prudence for things of this life neglects and abuses the poor. God, on the other hand, "raises up the lowly from the dust ... to seat them with the princes of his own people" (verse 8). The term, *princes of the Church*, generally refers to the Cardinals. The poor, then, are destined to sit with the ermine cloaked Cardinals. This is the only place the Lectionary affords this psalm.

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<sup>4</sup> St. Gaudentius, Bishop of Brescia, *The Unjust Steward*, PL 20, col. 971, Sermo 18 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) 332-340.

<sup>5</sup> Barry A. Jones, review of M. Daniel Carroll R. [sic], Amos—the Prophet and His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3 (July 2003) 429-431.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Allan Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 58, No. 3 (July 1996) 463.

Psalm 113 sings of a reversal of status that Richard Bauckham relates to women. Luke is interested in “the inter-subjective public world as the domain of the profession of faith,” particularly pertinent in this election period. The Hebrew Bible First Testament “recognizes the public significance of women’s apparently private activity.”<sup>7</sup> Prudence has a feminist side. Prudence also has a very prayerful side.

Since no one was present at the prayer of Jesus in the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:26), the early Church used this Psalm 113 to develop that prayer. The Church knew that the Psalms of the Hallel, 113-118, were sung at Passover.<sup>8</sup> Three of these six psalms, 113, 116, and 118, are alleluia psalms.<sup>9</sup> The Lectionary invites the Faithful to join with the Christ in his alleluia prayer before the anticipated reversal of status takes place. In this way, Christianity can become what Karl Marx called *the opiate of the masses*, against which prudence struggles.

## **1 Timothy 2:1-8**

This reading mentions *proper time* (verse 6) as the prudential circumstance for Jesus and the subsequent appointment of Paul as *teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth* (verse 7). By using verse 8, *ransom for all*, the Lectionary intimates that human sacrifice, hearkening back to the Akedah or binding of Isaac,<sup>10</sup> can be prudent. The prudence of God is not the prudence of humans.

## **Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9**

This reading brings the anomaly of a rich Jesus becoming poor for the sake of the Faithful.

## **Luke 16:1-13**

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<sup>7</sup> The first quotation is from an unpublished paper by A. C. Thiselton cited by Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) footnote 41, page 63. The second quotation is by Bauckham in the same footnote.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Kiley, “‘Lord, Save my Life’ (Psalm 116:4) as Generative Text for Jesus’ Gethsemane Prayer (Mark 14:36a),” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 4 (October 1986) 655.

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd M. Barré, “*Halelu yah*: A Broken Inclusion,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 195, 196, 197.

<sup>10</sup> Robert J. Daly, S.J., “The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 1977) 67.

This reading is about the prudent steward looking out for his life. This parable is directed at “the money-loving Pharisees who sneered at him” (Luke 16:14-15).<sup>11</sup> Luke fits the scenario into his journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51—18:14). Jerusalem is not only a place, but is also a symbol for the development of the soul of Jesus and his Faithful followers.<sup>12</sup> Mary and Joseph must have struggled to teach Jesus prudence so that he lived as long as he did. The Faithful profit from a similar hidden life until the time is right to proclaim their Faith. The prudent profitability of a hidden life is especially evident when some of the Faithful scream while others are trying to sing at various liturgies.

Verse four, *welcome me into their homes, homes*, can “include both a family and the building in which the family lives.”<sup>13</sup> From the options for translating verse 4, the Faithful can understand that interchanging the translation of Luke 16:8 between *children* and *sons* is legitimate. Evidently, the Magisterium regards the difference and inconsistency as prudent as well.

In the Greek for verse 6, *one hundred measures of olive oil, measure* is about ten United Kingdom gallons or 45 liters. That is a lot of olive oil. The Greek for *kor* in verse 7, *One hundred kors of wheat*, is ten times one *measure*.

Bede (672-735)<sup>14</sup> and the modern contemporary Greek scholar Max W. Zerwick, S.J.,<sup>15</sup> agree that the parable includes both liquid and dry measures. In First Century Galilee, money was not used as a measure except in towns to pay for

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara E. Reid, O.P., “Violent Endings in Matthew’s Parables and Christian Nonviolence,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 240.

<sup>12</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) 221-222.

<sup>13</sup> Robert H. Gundry, “Mark 10:29: Order in the List,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 468.

<sup>14</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) 322.

<sup>15</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) 246.

human labor and food in bulk.<sup>16</sup> Bede regarded a measure as a barrel equaling two gallons. As noted in the previous paragraph, Zerwick regards a measure as ten United Kingdom gallons or forty-five liters. Zerwick relates the measure to the kor as one to ten. Bede does not offer such a comparison. Trying to understand the amounts correctly is an aspect of the *practical understanding* used by Bede, above. In prudence, charity requires a specificity that translates into actual amounts of goods offered.

These Notes focus on prudence, rather than the traditional charity, as related to the reversal of fortunes described in Sacred Scripture. Amos prophecies that God will avenge the abused poor. Psalm 113 praises the Lord, *who lifts up the poor*. Timothy 2:3 proclaims "God our savior ... wills that everyone ... be saved." *Everyone* prudently requires a reversal of fortunes for some. Finally, Jesus commends prudence in the unjust steward. In line with the traditional interpretation, charity is the ultimate prudence.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

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<sup>16</sup> F. Gerald Downing, "In Quest of First-Century C.E. Galilee," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 94.