

Personal Notes

Thirty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 162C, November 21, 2010

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

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Raymond J. Jirran

Readings

First Reading:	2 Samuel 5:1-3
Responsorial Psalm:	Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5 (cf. 1)
Second Reading:	Colossians 1:12-20
Alleluia:	Mark 11:9, 10
Gospel:	Luke 23:35-43

Commentary

The Faithful already believe that human life changes, but does not end, with earthly death. Moving beyond that Faith, scholars are now testing the relationship between the resurrection and evolution, both of Jesus and of the Faithful. Jack Mahoney, S.J. speculates that the cosmos itself may be heading for a new state of evolutionary existence, a state in which the negative suffering aspects associated with the life-to-death-to new-life cycle changes into something entirely positive and pleasurable.¹

The key verse is not in these readings but in Genesis 1:26-27 that God made humans in the image of God. To get beyond the pay-pray-and obey mode of Catholicism, we need to become philosophical. Philosophically, God is pure being. God must be fully self-realized. God must be pure act.

How God can be pure act and still have potential, I leave to better philosophers. But, moving right along: Anything God creates, therefore, must be less than God, and, therefore have some aspect of incomplete. Incomplete includes some sort of evil. I look at the weather channel and wonder how it can be that God is good. Figuring this out is beyond my pay grade. I am not denying, therefore, that God permits evil. I make the Stations of the Cross as a constant effort to inculcate into the recesses of my soul, that God is not only good, but that God also permits evil . . . for a greater good.

Since, as a perfect being, God exudes goodness, so must all of creation, despite the destructive aspects of evolutionary development. Is all of creation hardwired "nasty, brutish and short," as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) thought?² Post-Vatican II biologists conclude that humanity is not so hardwired as to lack an ability to be altruistic, altruistic like God. Altruistic means doing good for another, that is, with no rebounding return, with no strings attached. God is altruistic because God shares the Divine Life with his creation. Similarly, humans have an opportunity to join in that Divine Life as they care for Planet Earth and the rest of creation.

Pre-Vatican II thinking focused on joining God in mastery of the universe. Post Vatican II is open to considering humans as part of the universe. As part of that new openness, the first detailed Catholic statement regarding evolution happened Post

¹ Jack Mahoney, S.J., "Evolution, Altruism, and the Image of God," Theological Studies, Vol. 71., No. 3 (September 2010) 677-701.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hobbes accessed September 5, 2010;
<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/254050.html> accessed September 5, 2010.

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Vatican II.³ Scholars are considering what it means for humans not only to master the cosmos, as Pre-Vatican II understood the Book of Genesis; but also to be part of the cosmos, something newly examined Post Vatican II.

Humans as the Faithful know them, are composed of stardust, at least that is how the astronomers are commenting. Humans are a cosmic part. Such considerations are new.

In contemplating what made humans different, Saint Thomas Aquinas concluded the difference was in the use of reason. That approach unravels a new dimension for the meaning of resurrection from the dead. The historical evidence is in Sacred Scripture. Jesus did rise from the dead. That approach requires the Faithful to think outside of the box.

Thinking derives from philosophical assumptions. Thomistic theology based on Aristotelian philosophy has a counter-weight in Augustinian theology, based on Platonic philosophy. Aristotle said everything is real, both what the mind and the finger reach, both material and immaterial reality. In contrast, Plato thought that material reality (what the finger touches) was only a reflection of immaterial reality (what the mind can reach).

At the time the Faithful received Colossians, followers of Plato, the philosopher, developed a new type of Intermediary Platonism. Intermediary Platonists were defending themselves for inadequately accounting for the gap between Creator and creation. As a result, Platonists postulated an intermediary between the Creator and creation. This philosophic intermediary fits the role of Jesus in the cosmic battle between good and evil.

Turning from secular to theological science, Colossians 1:17 portrays Jesus as creator of the universe. *In him all things hold together.* Though the English does not indicate that Colossians 1:15-20 is a hymn sung by the first Christians, as the original Greek does indicate.

Some of the poetry of the Greek, nonetheless, does come though. The hymn is about God the Father, who is the unnamed subject of some verbs in the hymn. Colossians names the Father in verses 12 and 15, but that is all. The result of omitting explicit mention of the Father any more leaves the hymn focusing on the Son as mediator between the Father and humanity.

The Faithful ought not be confused by the politics of the feast, however. The Magisterium runs the Church in a hierocratic rather than a democratic model. For one example, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216)⁴ began extending his title from the “vicar of

³ Catholic International Theological Commission, “Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God” as cited in Jack Mahoney, S.J., “Evolution, Altruism, and the Image of God,” Theological Studies Vol. 71, No. 3 (September 2010) 681, fn 17 and 683.

⁴ http://www.google.com/search?q=innocent+III&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&client=firefox-a&rlz=1R1GGLL_en (Accessed September 7, 2010).

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Peter” to the “vicar of Christ,”⁵ a title the Magisterium still claims. Pope Pius XI instituted this feast for the universal Church only in 1924.⁶

The readings for this Sunday, the Solemnity of Christ the King, invite the Faithful to contemplate that Christ is King. Christ as King shares his goodness with all creation. The Faithful, participating in the Christ-Life, share their own goodness (apart from their evil) and the goodness of God with one another and all creation. People and God can be good to one another, with no genetic strings of survival attached. The Magisterium finds it difficult to recognize that the survival of the fittest does not suit Christian love. Survival of the fittest is not an effective Christian principle to justify administration of anything, especially after the fact.

Annotated Bibliography

Material above the double line draws from material below the double line. Those uninterested in scholarly and tangential details should stop reading here. If they do, however, they may miss some interesting details.

2 Samuel 5:1-3

2 Sam 5:2

Daniel W. Ulrich, review of Joel Willitts, Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of ‘The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel’⁷

Ulrich reports that Willitts develops the idea of the servant-king as included in the ideal of shepherd-king. The review uses the word sheep and its derivatives at least eighteen times.

⁵ Paul Moses, The Saint and The Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi’s Mission of Peace (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2009) 39.

⁶ http://www.google.com/search?q=Feast+of+Christ+the+King&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&client=firefox-a&rlz=1R1GGLL_en (Accessed September 7, 2010).

⁷ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 2 (April 2009) 428.

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Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5 (cf. 1)

Psalm 122 is one of the Funerals choices, Part III: Texts of Sacred Scripture, 16.11 Antiphons and Psalms.⁸ As for secular and sacred politics, all politicians, like all of the Faithful, are dead in the end. The point of Psalm 122 is placing the love of God above all else. Begin with God, and then do politics.

Colossians 1:12-20

Colossians 1—4:18

Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, 2nd ed., Erroll F. Rhodes, tr.⁹

P. Chester Beatty II in Dublin; University of Michigan in Ann Arbor have papyrus from about 200 with Colossians 1—4:18. The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York has papyrus dating from about 700 with Colossians 1:3-7, 9-13.

Different languages perceive reality differently. The ancient Greeks used pronouns for emphasis. Translating this emphasis from the original Greek into English is an object of the highlighting on the last page of the hard copy, not found on the web site. The purpose of the highlighting is to transfer the Greek emphasis on personal pronouns into the English translation. Emphasized pronouns are highlighted in **blue**; intense pronouns in **red**. Words marked in **orange** are difficult to resolve because of differences in the original manuscripts.

Anyone wanting a copy of the highlighted verses, please contact me at jirran@verizon.net. Thank you.

This time through, I changed the color of orange to a darker hue. If I can make it through three sets of Personal Notes in a row without changing anything, I will relegate the explanation to the Appendix.

Colossians uses the word *all* intensely eight times.

⁸ 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) 289.

⁹ Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, 99, 100.

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Col 1:13

Pheme Perkins, "What is a Gnostic Gospel?"¹⁰

Perkins examines gospels that did not enter the Canon of the Church. Perkins uses Colossians 1:13 to reconnect the first Christians with broader contemporary ancient themes developing the relationship between good and evil.

1 Col 1:15-20

Vincent P. Branick, review of Juan Manual Granados Rojas, S.J., La Reconciliación en la Carta a los Efesios y en la Carta a los Colosenses: Estudio exegetico de Ef 2,14-16 y Col 1,20.21-23¹¹

Branick reports that Granados Rojas focuses on the Colossian 1:15-20 hymn. By not repeating the name of God the Father, the hymn includes the importance of the Father, all the while focusing on the Son, Jesus Christ. Branick writes,

By syntactical analysis, for instance, G. shows God to be the unexpressed subject of many of the verbs in the Christological hymn (Col 1:15-20) and in the following verses (1:21-23 [not used here]). He then points out how the absence of the name has the rhetorical effect of focusing all attention on Christ as the unique mediator in creation and redemption.

Col 1:15-20

Armin Siedlecki, review of Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger (eds.), Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics¹²

Humans have a moral responsibility to maintain the functionality of their portion of the universe. Vicky Balabanski, "Critiquing Anthropocentric Cosmology: Retrieving a Stoic 'Permeation Cosmology' in Colossians 1:15-20" has special interest. Siedlecki writes, "Balabanski 'argues that Col 1:15-20 contains both an anthropocentric christology [sic] and a christology in which the Logos permeates all of creation.'"

¹⁰ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 1 (January 2009) 111.

¹¹ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 1 (January 2009) 172.

¹² the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 4 (October 2009) 922, 923.

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Col 1:15-20

William Adler, review, Ronald Cox, By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity¹³

Adler reports

... the sapiential texts of the Hebrew Bible do not ascribe to Wisdom the “ontologically-based cosmological agency” (p. 11) that NT hymns assign to Christ. ... Cox has successfully put to rest the idea of a direct and linear connection between the biblical wisdom tradition and the NT Christological hymns.

The comments above the double line on Platonic philosophy are taken from this article.

Col 15

Jack Mahoney, S.J., “Evolution, Altruism, and the Image of God”¹⁴

Made in the image of God, the Faithful are also able to share their goodness, i.e. be altruistic, like God. God shares goodness by sharing Divine Life. Similarly, the Faithful are also able to share their own lives.

Col 1:15

Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Globalizing Solidarity: Christian Anthropology and the Challenge of Human Liberation”¹⁵

Here the focus is on Jesus as “the image of the invisible God.” Freedom from sin means freedom for globalizing solidarity and human liberation. Groody quotes Karl Barth to explain,

He Who is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the children of Adam He restores the divine likeness which has been disfigured from the first sin onward ... by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every person. He worked with human hands. He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.

¹³ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 72, No. 1 (January 2010) 140.

¹⁴ Theological Studies, Vol. 71, No. 3 (September 2010) 677-701.

¹⁵ Theological Studies, Vol. 69, No. 2 (June 2008) 251.

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Col 1:18-20

Hyun-Chul Cho, S.J., "Interconnectedness and Intrinsic Value as Ecological Principles: An Appropriation of Karl Rahner's Evolutionary Christology"¹⁶

Karl Rahner saw the importance of the Faithful paying attention to the material aspects of ecology early in his career. Cho explains, "... this vision of the eschatological transformation rooted in the resurrection of Jesus, we can clearly appreciate and unwaveringly defend the principle of interconnectedness in spite of the stark realities of evolution."

Mark 11:9, 10

Luke 23:35-43

Funerals also uses verses 25-30 from this Gospel at Part III: Texts of Sacred Scripture 15.1 Gospel Readings for Funerals for Children Who Died before Baptism.¹⁷ Those must be some children for Funerals to relate them to the Good Thief.

How awful for the parents and other survivors to have their child compared to a thief, rather than for example, to an innocent lamb. This placement looks like sexism run rampant. I have a problem accepting that any female had anything to do with linking this verse about a dying criminal with an innocent child.

The Greek uses reflexive pronouns in verse 35, *save himself* and verses 36 and 37, *save yourself*. The manuscripts are difficult at verse 39, *reviled Jesus, saying "are you not the Christ? ..."*

¹⁶ Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 2009) 637.

¹⁷ 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) 236.

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Luke 23: 42-43

Charles H. Talbert, review of Hans Jorg Sellner, *Das Heil Gottes: Studien zur Soteriologie des lukanischen Doppelwerks*¹⁸

Talbert reports that Sellner brings scholarship together, without adding anything new. Talbert writes, "In chap. 8, "The Future of Salvation," S. concentrates on Acts 3:21; Luke 23:42-43 [used here]; and Acts 26:23 for Lucan evidence about the parousia, life after death, and resurrection (salvation as future)."

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

¹⁸ the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 2008) 622.