

My thoughts here are focused on an article by Adrian M. Leske of Concordia University College of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada, in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly.¹ We treated this, as an aside, probably in Lent. At that time, the material (1) needed a better presentation and (2) this time is the best time in the whole Lectionary cycle. Zechariah 9:9-10 is only used on the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time in the A Cycle. The reasons for not simply passing along the article are: (1) the length of the article and (2) the effort to relate the article to the Lectionary.²

How can a scholarly argument inspire anyone to anything? By raising one's sophistication, so that personal emotional satisfaction does not substitute for objective reality. The material described below on Zechariah prescinds from the fallen nature of humanity to focus on the life of grace made possible through Jesus Christ.

The references to democracy are so unusual that they take **bold** print.

Zechariah 9:9-10

In this section, scholars find the most difficult of the prophecies. We can begin where there is agreement, namely that the identity of the king entering Jerusalem is a future messianic king, a descendant of David. The problem is how to square the allegory of a king with the allegory of a shepherd, even a good shepherd, in Isaiah 53. Zechariah 9:9 may have the answer. Deutero-Isaiah does influence Zechariah. There is some agreement that Zechariah was written between 515 and 445 B.C., after the exile.³

Leske argues that the way to make sense out of Isaiah is to assume that the king in Zechariah is not a person, but rather the faithful themselves. Leske begins by noting that as the exile dragged on, the faithful began to lose hope in a king and gain hope in a royal priesthood. Eventually the faithful began to lose hope in both priesthood and king. Yahweh alone will rule as king. The everlasting covenant made with David will be handed over to the people. Leske writes, "Representative kingship will be completely

¹ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), pages 663-678.

² 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).

³ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), pages 663-664.

democratized, and the people, through their covenant faithfulness and witness to Yahweh's rule, will become a living people-covenant and a light to the nations (Isa 42:6; 49:6-8)."⁴

Just as leadership is a problem with *Humanae Vitae*, so was leadership a problem at the time of the exile and later with Zechariah. Leske notices the Jewish identity as developed by the telling of Jewish history in Chronicles. Leske writes,

Thus, the Chronicler reacts to claims of the Zadokite priests [to shared power with the royal household] by claiming a continuing role for the house of David, but at the same time he [the Chronicler] appears to be reaching out to the prophetic group who saw only God as king, with his faithful people as his designated witnesses who would see that the representative role of David had been completely **democratized**.⁵

...

The Chronicler responds to the claim that kingship has been **democratized** by demonstrating that under David and his descendants the people played a large role in decision-making. However, kingship had not been **democratized** to the extent that the followers of Deutero-Isaiah claimed according to Isa 55:1-5, so in the quotation of Psalm. 132:8-10 in 2 Chr 6:42 the Chronicler changes the wording from "for the sake of your servant David" to "remember your *steadfast love for David* your servant."

The point is that Zechariah deals with tension between the king, the priests, and the prophets about where leadership belonged. Zechariah and the prophets have a role for the people, even the role of rejoicing. The liturgy for the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary time, directs "Thus says the Lord: Rejoice heartily..." This rejoicing is a requirement for the Feast of Booths.

"Thus says the Lord" is a herald announcing the coming of a king, echoing Zephaniah 3:14 and Zechariah 2:14.

From the Lectionary, the whole of verse 9:

⁴ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), page 666.

⁵ Adrian M. Leske, "Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), page 668.

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Thus says the Lord: Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.

“Your king” is the Servant, that is, God’s faithful people. As Leske continues:

The descriptive words, “righteous,” “saved,” and “afflicted” bear this out: according to Isa 45:17 Israel is “saved by Yahweh,” and according to Isa 45:21 God is “a righteous God and Savior” (cf. 43:3, 11; 45:15; 49:26) who, because he is the only God, says in the next verse (45:22), “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth.” Thus, because of Yahweh’s saving activity, Israel is brought into a faithful relationship with God and described as “the righteous one” whose purpose now is “to cause many to be accounted righteous” (Isa 53:11).

“Riding on an ass” is a reminder of Judah in Gen 49:11. This ass is a service animal, not a horse and not even a mule. The ass was not the mount of royalty for the Davidic line which rode on mules. The asses are rides for premonarchic tribal leaders, not kings. Judah came to celebrate the Feast of Booths at Shiloh on such an animal. Judah was there celebrating the presence of God among his people. God alone is king. Leadership is returned to the people.

As Leske words it,

...they, the “house of Judah,” and not their corrupt “shepherds” and “leaders” (which probably included the Zadokite priesthood and Davidic descendants), will become the instruments of God’s reign over the nations (10:3).⁶

Zechariah receives credit for interweaving many aspects of Original Testament literature. Leske spells it out for Zechariah 9:10 of the readings for this Sunday. Leske writes:

Cutting off chariot, warhorses, and battle-bow in (Zech 9:10) is reminiscent of Isa 2:4 and Isa 43:15-17. “He shall proclaim peace to the nations,” recalls Isa 41:1, 6, and Isa 52:7.

From the Lectionary, Zechariah 9:10:

He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior’s bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

⁶ Adrian M. Leske, “Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), page 673.

Leske points out:

Their [the “tents of Judah”] being like David means a thorough **democratizing** of kingship along the lines of Isa 55:3-5, but another phrase in v. 8, “the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them” is quite unusual and perhaps deliberately ambiguous. ... These allusions do not elevate the status of the house of David; they bring it down to a very human level. ... The final result will be that all those who have come through the refining fires of faith will be able to celebrate a truly universal Feast of Booths in which the survivors of all the nations join them in acknowledging the only king, Yahweh of hosts (14:16). There is no room for royal messianism here. The priesthood will no longer be able to exclude foreigners and others, for the nations too will become part of God’s covenantal people (cf. Isa 56:1-8). Nor is “holiness” an exclusive right of the priesthood (cf. Ezek 44:23): all God’s faithful people will be holy, as “priests of Yahweh,” and “ministers of our God” (14:19-21; cf. Isa 61:6; 66:18-21; Exod 19:6). ... This is in line with Deutero-Isaiah’s democratization of kingship. **Democratization**, both of kingship and of priesthood, would have been very appealing to the common people of Judah, particularly when they had been subjected to oppression by those claiming royal or priestly authority. The Feast of Booths emphasized how dependent those leaders in Jerusalem were on God’s blessings for the rural communities of Judah, and the feast recalled premonarchic traditions. With these faithful people as his instruments, God will finally fulfill his purposes and will reign as the universal king. Then, not only the people of Judah but also all the nations will bring their gifts and celebrate the kingship of Yahweh at the Feast of Booths.⁷

What follows touches lightly on the rest of the readings.

Psalm 145: 1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

Verse 8: The Lord is gracious and merciful, *slow to anger* and of great kindness.

⁷ Adrian M. Leske, “Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), pages 676-678.

NV⁸ translates *slow to anger* with *longanimis*, a word I could not find in either of my two Latin dictionaries.⁹

Verse 10 and let your *faithful ones* bless you.

NV translates *faithful ones* with *sancti*. I might have used *holy ones*. KJV¹⁰ uses *thy saints*.

Verse 14 and raises up all who are *bowed down*

NV translates *bowed down* with *depressos*, the root word for the English *depressed*.¹¹

Romans 8:9, 11-13

Saint Paul here directly confronts the fallen nature of humanity to focus on the life of grace made possible through Jesus Christ.

cf. Matthew 11:25

Matthew 11:25-30

verse 25 You have hidden these things from the wise and *the learned*

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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). and 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).

¹⁰ 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).

¹¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate @ Dictionary: Tenth Edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1993), page 310.

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NV translates *the learned with prudentibus* or *the prudent*,¹² KJV uses *prudent*; NJB uses *the learned and the clever*,¹³ whereas Douay-Rheims uses *prudent*.¹⁴

The general sense is *intelligent*, as Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., puts it, "...expresses the qualities wisdom, intelligence."¹⁵

verse 29 for I am *meek*

NV translates *meek* with *mitis*, meaning *mild, gentle*.

Saint Leo the Great (d. 461)¹⁶ may have been the one to twist learning from Jesus because Jesus is humble and will not hurt the learner to learning humility from Jesus because Jesus is God.¹⁷

This is the most important verse for me in all of Sacred Scripture. The idea is to learn from me because I will not hurt you.

Being at peace amidst the political struggle between the kings, priests, and prophets at the time of Zechariah over ruling Israel seems relevant to being at peace amidst the struggle between those with ecclesiastical or civil power enforcing *Humanae Vitae*, those offering

¹² *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 452.

¹³ Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

¹⁴ *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).

¹⁵ 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, pages 58 and 153).

¹⁶ <http://www.answers.com/Leo%20the%20Great> 080518.

¹⁷ See Saint Leo the Great, *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 93, Jane Patricia Freeland, C.S.J.B. and Agnes Josephine Conway, S.S.J., Tr. © 1996, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., as cited in *Magnificat*® Vol. 4, NO. 5 (July 2002), pages 106 and 431.

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sacrifices living *Humanae Vitae*, and those proclaiming the truth today justifying *Humanae Vitae*.