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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDY

THE ELECT AND THE HOLY: AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION OF 1 PETER 2:4-10 AND THE PHRASE βασιλειον ιεράτευμα. By John Hall Elliott. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966. xvi and 258 pages.

This study was published as Volume XII in the series of supplements to *Novum Testamentum* and is Graduate Study No. VII of the School for Graduate Studies, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

The author of this monograph is not interested in advancing a new thesis, which may in time assume the stature of an exegetical relic. Rather, he has brought under two covers the principal discussions and viewpoints relating especially to 1 Peter 2:1-10 and out of the mass of hermeneutical disagreement has selected particular items which hitherto have not been debated with sufficient methodological clarity to merit the status of conclusive position. With rigorous attention to formal patterns and with fine philological tact, Elliott cements into what appears to me an unassailable position, the meaning of *ιεράτευμα* as a "body of priests," which is not to be interpreted along the lines of democratic liturgical function, as a protest against historically conditioned views of the office of the ministry. The church as the elect people of God is a body of priests, whose witness in holiness of life is oriented to the world. The rights and privileges of individuals are not the consideration of the text.

In the development of his thesis Elliott rejects the view that 1 Peter engages in anti-Levitical or anti-Judaic polemic. This approach will appear to some readers to depreciate the force of his presentation. It is true that Is. 61 and 66 cannot be used as sources for an anticlitic or anti-Judaic polemic in 1 Peter. But the case is different with an explicit source used by 1 Peter, namely, Is. 28. In this chapter Isaiah is critical of the priests

and prophets and promises that God will lay a "stone" in Zion (v. 16; cited in 1 Peter 2:6). God will destroy the refuge of lies. It is remarkable also that Elliott takes no account of Is. 28:9, which suggests that those who are "weaned from the breast" will learn knowledge; 1 Peter 2:2 is the answer to Isaiah's rhetorical question. Moreover, except for a reference in a footnote to Mal. 3:17 (p. 40), Elliott ignores Malachi's excoriation of the cult in Israel (see 1:6—2:9), in words reminiscent of Is. 28. Especially scored is the absence of truth (Mal. 2:6; cf. 1 Peter 1:22 and see 2:1). The importance 1 Peter attaches to Malachi is apparent from the allusion to purification in 1 Peter 1:7 (cf. Mal. 3:3); the association of paternity and fear in 1 Peter 1:17 (cf. Mal. 1:6); the accent on acceptable sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5; *per contra* Mal. 1:10, *θυσίαν οὐ προσδέξομαι*); the association of blessing and inheritance (1 Peter 3:9; cf. 1:4; Mal. 2:1-5; and note the transition via *gezarah shawa* to Ps. 33:13-17 LXX, cited in 1 Peter 3:10-12, which echoes the themes of life and peace in Mal. 2:5; see also Mal. 3:10); and finally the stress on the community's slave role (1 Peter 2:16; cf. Mal. 3:17-18, 24). In contrast with the failure of Israel's priests and, by association, the community of Israel, the community of the new covenant, according to 1 Peter, will produce acceptable sacrifice. The distinctive element in 1 Peter is the use made of this anticlitic polemic. Instead of proposing a new minority Levitical cult element inside the new community, the expectation of Is. 61:6 concerning a new community in which all will be priests is adopted. Thus the polemic is not against an institution as such, but against the failure of Israel to be what Is. 43:21 (cf. Ex. 19:6) defined her to be. The community of the new covenant is not to repeat the mistakes of old. Hence a charge of anti-Semitism, of which Elliott rightly attempts

to steer clear, cannot be laid at the door of 1 Peter, which merely echoes the prophetic concern.

On the other hand, while Elliott is correct in refuting critics who made an illegitimate appraisal of an alleged polemic in 1 Peter in terms of narrow priestly function, his own intramural polemic detracts him from the more precise nature of the polemic in 1 Peter and leads him to rule out a polemical contrast in 1 Peter 2:7-9 between disobedient Israel and the believing community. Ex. 19:6, which is viewed as the prime mover of the citation in 1 Peter 2:9, is more probably prompted by the complex of ideas in Is. 43. The Exodus motif plays a large role in Is. 43 (vv. 2, 3, 16-17). Israel is ἔντιμος (v. 4), a word which clearly echoes the corresponding description of the λίθος in 1 Peter 2:4 and 6, and according to Elliott the community and Jesus, as the elect stone, are brought in reciprocal relation. This is true also of the term ἐκλεκτός, which is emphasized in Is. 43:20 and applied to Israel as τὸ γένος, and a part of the citation in 1 Peter 2:9 is clearly from Is. 43:21: λαὸν μου, ὃν περιεποιήσαμην τὰς ἀρετὰς μου διηγεῖσθαι. In contrast with Israel's failure to glorify God in their θυσίαι (Is. 43:23), the new community is to offer θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους (1 Peter 2:5).

Significantly, the οἶκος-image in 1 Peter 2:5 is closely related to Is. 44:26-28, a passage cited by Elliott only for its grammatical contribution (p. 163, n. 1). Jerusalem is told in this passage: οἰκοδομηθήσῃ, καὶ τὸν οἶκον τὸν ἁγίον μου θεμελιώσω. 1 Peter 2:5 uses the present tense οἰκοδομεῖσθε (οἶκος πνευματικός), since the prophecy has now come to fulfillment. Thus the problem whether an imperative or indicative is to be read in 1 Peter 2:5 is most easily resolved in the light of the source employed here in 1 Peter. The fact that Is. 44:3 promises the endowment of the Spirit (ἐπαθήσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τὸ σπέρμα σου) accounts for the epithets

πνευματικός (οἶκος) and πνευματικός (θυσίας) in 1 Peter 2:5. In brief, Is. 43 and 44 are strongly in the writer's mind as he pens 2:5 and 9, and it is highly probable, also in view of the dominance of other Isaianic passages (Is. 40:6-8 in 1 Peter 1:24-25; Is. 28:16 in 1 Peter 2:4, 6; and Is. 8:14-15 in 1 Peter 2:8) that the citation of Ex. 19:6 in 1 Peter 2:9 has been introduced by attraction of ideas in Is. 43 and 44. If this is the case, then βασιλείον in Ex. 19:6 cannot be viewed as the controlling factor in the use of οἶκος in 1 Peter 2:5. Rather, in both 2:5 and 2:9, Is. 43 and 44 have stimulated language from Ex. 19:6, including the introduction in 1 Peter 2:5 of the singular phrase ἱερᾶτέμμα ἅγιον, an evident echo of Ex. 19:6.¹

Further confirmation of this conclusion is at hand in the citation from Hos. 1:6, 9 in 1 Peter 2:10. Here the stress is on belonging or not belonging to God. This is precisely the question that is taken up also in Is. 43 and 44, with stress on God's election and prior claim to Israel. In Is. 44:5 the phrase τοῦ θεοῦ εἰμι occurs two times. Evidently the Isaianic passage has prompted the citation of the passage from Hosea. But even more cru-

¹ In similar fashion 1 Peter 1:1-2 appears to link, under the stimulus of Is. 63-66, the addresses with Israel's experience at Sinai (Ex. 24:3-8). That the Isaianic chapters are primarily in the mind of the writer seems clear from the accent on election (cf. Is. 65:9-10) and obedience (cf. Is. 65:12; 66:4 and 65:2; 66:14; cf. 1 Peter 2:8). In contrast to those who provoked God's Holy Spirit (Is. 63:10; cf. v. 11) the new community experiences the sanctification of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). Furthermore, the amplification in 1 Peter 1:3 ff. is not drawn from Ex. 24 but echoes the thoughts expressed in the concluding chapters of Isaiah. *Klēronomia* (1 Peter 1:4) parallels the expectation in Is. 65:9; the contrast between suffering and joy in expectation of deliverance (1 Peter 1:3-9) is explicit in Is. 65:13-19 (note especially the repetition of *agalliomai*). Finally, the writer himself indicates that he is drawing from the prophetic writings (1 Peter 1:11) for contrast between suffering and glory.

cial is the emphasis in Is. 44:6 on God as ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ. There is no other God but this One, and His γένος . . . ἐλεκτόν (Is. 43:20) is λαὸν μου (cf. Hos. 1:9), ὃν περιποιησάμην τὰς ἀρετὰς μου διηγείσθαι (Is. 43:21). Since God is Israel's king, Israel is to belong to Him, as a λεράτευμα that is properly the King's possession. Thus βασιλειον is best understood as an adjective rather than as a substantive, aside from the fact that a cosubstantival phrasing βασιλειον, λεράτευμα is intolerable in a context in which the adjectives ἐλεκτόν and ἄγιον modify their respective nouns.

In the rejection of arguments based on stylistic considerations (p. 151), par. 270 of the Blass-Debrunner *Greek Grammar* is cited in support of the proposition that "an adjective follows its referent unless preceded by a definite article, in which case it may then stand before its referent (e.g., τὸ βασιλειον λεράτευμα)." But Blass-Debrunner says nothing here about the normal position of adjectives attached to substantives without articles. Rather, in classical Greek, the original position of the adjective attribute was before the substantive (see B. L. Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek*, Part II, New York, 1911, p. 209). Qualitative adjectives especially are reserved for this position, also in the New Testament (Matt. 12:43; 13:27, 28, 45). An excellent example appears in 1 Peter 1:19, and in a chiasmic arrangement: τιμῆ αἵματι ὡς ἀνοῦ ἀνόμου.

The stylistic pattern in 1 Peter 2:9 in fact confirms the interpretation of βασιλειον as an adjective. γένος ἐλεκτόν and βασιλειον λεράτευμα form a pair of descriptive epithets balanced by ἔθνος ἄγιον and λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν. (The argument that stylistic considerations would have required λαὸς περιούσιος [p. 151], is irrelevant, since the writer's dependence on Is. 43:20 f. necessitates a change in the wording of Ex. 19:6, which is secondary to the Isaianic passage). ἔθνος ἄγιον repeats the thought in γένος

ἐλεκτόν. This leaves λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν to balance βασιλειον λεράτευμα. If βασιλειον is interpreted as an adjective, and if its position is recognized as giving special force to its qualitative accent, the meaning of 1 Peter 2:9 is clear. "A royal body of priests," or "a body of priests *belonging to the King*," echoes the thought "a people for His own possession."

The words ὑμεῖς δέ in 2:9, however, might appear to contradict this conclusion (cf. p. 142), since the phrase also introduces epithets cited from Ex. 19:6. If, however, the writer has meant to express a contrast between v. 7 (ὑμῖν) and v. 9 (ὑμεῖς) the words ὑμεῖς δέ are precisely the words that would suggest themselves (cf. 1:12), and their correspondence with phrasing in Ex. 19:16 is then incidental.

Indeed, if v. 9 is in contrast with the main description in v. 7, the word τιμῆ in v. 7 becomes explicable in the sense of "privilege." What is this privilege? It is to be that which is spelled out in v. 9, and this privilege is reinforced by the citation from Hos. 1:6, 9. Unfortunately, isagogical considerations do not concern Elliott "to any extent" (p. 13), but the question of addressees is integrally attached to the problem of the citation in 2:10 and the larger question of anti-cult or anti-Judaic polemic. 1 Peter 1:14, 18, however, point in the direction of Gentile converts.² Typical of New Testament practice is the transference of Israel's epithets to the people of the new covenant, and what was once said of ancient Israel can now be said of Israel of the new covenant, whether Jews or Gentiles. Once the Gentiles, who are now viewed as Israel, were no-people, but now they are God's people. In the same vein, Gentile women can be called Sarah's daughters (3:9). What characterizes these Gentiles

² See also 1 Peter 2:4, προσερχόμενοι, a word for proselytes, and cf. W. C. Van Unnik, "Christianity according to I Peter," *The Expository Times*, LXVIII, 3 [Dec. 1956], 79-83.

as God's people is specifically their faith. (See the noun in 1:5, 7, 9, 21 and the verb in 1:8.)

But it is precisely their status as God's people that appears to be called in question by their sufferings. Are these sufferings, like Israel's, an indication of God's displeasure, so that, like Israel of old, they should be caused to stumble? No, answers the writer. It is disobedience, the correlative of unbelief, that prompted their disaster. But *you* are *believers*, and to you belongs the privilege, in contrast with defecting Israel, of being God's people. Thus this section of 1 Peter is a consolatory pericope, designed to reassure the Gentile addressees of the security in their position *despite* suffering. In other words, the current sufferings of the addressees are not in the same cause and effect relationship as those of Old Testament Israel, whose disaster was the consequence of national and individual guilt. Israel's troubles came *because* of disobedience, the troubles of the latter-day Israel *in spite of* obedience (see my forthcoming article "1 Pet. 1:24—2:17 — A Consolatory Pericope," to be published in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*). It is to this consolatory end that the anti-Judaic polemic is subordinated. Owing

to his concentration on the refutation of the scholars who find suffering an integral element in election (see p. 190), Elliott fails to connect his accurate observations concerning 2:20 ff. (see p. 191) with the argument in 1:22—2:10, which does not, to be sure, locate suffering in electedness but rather in the emphasis on the privilege of the new community, sounds a strong consolatory note.

These strictures concerning the use of Old Testament material in 1 Peter 2:1-10 do not, however, affect Elliott's main thesis concerning the interpretation of *λεγάμενα*, and holiness and electedness remain the central features in the pericope also on the more probable view that Is. 43 and 44 have drawn Ex. 19:6 into their orbit. His thorough examination of the literature,³ especially that which deals with alleged "Testimony Sources," has helped greatly to restore proper focus for further study of 1 Peter.

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³ A. R. C. Leaney's response to Thornton (whose article, cited on p. 241, is more correctly entitled "1 Peter, A Paschal Liturgy?") should be added, "1 Peter and the Passover: An Interpretation," (*New Testament Studies*, X [1964], 238—51), which was published after Elliott's work had gone to press.