

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER

by

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The doctrine of the PH of all believers became important under the Reformers. The main issue of their struggles was justification by faith, and, as a subcategory of that truth, they used the priesthood of all believers as a polemic against the priestly class of the Roman Church. It became a symbol of individual freedom and was employed to promote sweeping changes in ecclesiastical and civil structures. These historical developments and those which followed need to be examined in the light of Scripture.

In Exodus 19:6 Israel is called a "kingdom of priests." The corporate context, conditional sentence, parallelism with "holy nation," and genitive in construct lead to the conclusion that the phrase refers to the sanctity or holiness of the nation. Israel was set apart to God similar to the consecration of a priesthood.

Explicit statements of the believer's PH are found in I Peter 2:5,9; and Revelation 1:6;5:10;20:6. I Peter 2:9 quotes the phrase "royal priesthood" from the LXX of Exodus 19:6. But Peter adds to the idea of holiness the responsibility of proclamation to the world and the offering of spiritual sacrifices to God (vv. 5b,9b). Revelation reveals the eschatological significance of the NT priesthood. It comes to full bloom as the believer-priest is seen reigning with Christ. The sacrificial terminology of the NT supplies implicit support for the PH of every believer and helps to explain the nature of spiritual sacrifices. They are a metaphor expressing service to God and man based upon the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 13:15-16). They depict not just liturgical functions, but the whole character of new life in Christ. Thus, NT priesthood is "the Church's corporate ministry based upon the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, and accomplished through the Christian service of its individual members."

A Biblical view of the doctrine puts limitations on its application. Whether discussing the terminology, organization, ordinances, or authority of the Church, it must always be remembered that the focus of NT priesthood is ministry. Pastor and people are equally a part of the royal priesthood and are to be involved in a mutual ministry of proclamation and praise.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
BAGD	<u>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</u>
BDB	<u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u>
ISBE	<u>International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia</u>
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NICNT	<u>New International Commentary on the New Testament</u>
NIV	New International Version
NovT	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PH	Priesthood
SJT	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
TDNT	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>
TWOT	<u>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</u>

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5, NASB).

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood. . . (I Peter 2:9).

From these two verses has arisen the doctrine known as the priesthood of the believer or the universal priesthood of all believers. The only other NT passages which specifically mention Christian PH are Revelation 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6. The OT is rich in the functions and language of Israel's priesthood, with its associated sacrifice and worship in the Tabernacle and later the Temple. Much of this language has been carried over into the NT in reference to the believer (i.e. the book of Hebrews 13:11-16). Sacrificial language implies the priestly status of the believer for sacrifice was one of his primary duties.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the evidence of the NT and its related OT background in order to determine the nature of the believer's PH and its contribution to theology, church, and personal life.

Behind every investigation is a prior set of assumptions. Not every theological point which influences

interpretation can be argued along the way. My approach to understanding the PH of the believer will be based upon a premillennial, dispensational framework. The individual texts will be treated from a grammatical, contextual, historical methodology. Allowing for these "givens" any constructive criticism is gratefully accepted.

The procedure for the thesis will include a brief historical survey of the doctrine, its OT background, the NT concept, and its theological implications.

A history of the PH of the believer serves to set the stage for an exegetical study of the doctrine. It is not intended to provide complete details or extensive evaluation, but to highlight some of the situations and issues in which the PH of the believer was an important factor. For a more complete treatment, see the works of Cyril Eastwood.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with *Scripture*, his work traces the teaching from Biblical times to the modern era. Little other systematic and interpretive research has been compiled apart from specialized studies dealing mainly with the Reformation. General histories of theology and church have little contribution toward our subject.

We are interested in how our spiritual ancestors understood the PH of the believer, how they arrived at

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<sup>1</sup>Cyril Eastwood, The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962); The Royal Priesthood of the Faithful: An Investigation of the Doctrine from Biblical Times to the Reformation (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963).

their understanding, and how it shaped their church and/or personal life. With these in mind, this section should provide a broad view of the importance and place of the PH of the believer in the total complex of theology and history.

Having a "feel" for the past understanding of the doctrine, chapters two and three will examine the OT and NT texts concerning the PH of the believer. Two goals are in view: (1) to determine the explicit teaching of Scripture, and on the basis of this to (2) establish parameters for any ensuing theological discussions. Our present understanding and application of the doctrine will be brought under the searchlight of Scripture. Therefore, the emphasis of this thesis will be upon the exegetical foundation of these two chapters. Chapter four will briefly introduce guidelines from the study and a standard by which history and practice may be evaluated.

#### Theological Connections

The Reformers' fight against the Catholic Church involved two broad areas of theology, namely soteriology and ecclesiology. In the first their struggles were for justification by faith alone; in the second with the nature of the church and its many implications for the life and ministry of the church. In both these connections, the PH of the believer could be considered a subcategory and it is here that we find it discussed. Eastwood interprets the

PH concept of the believer as the underlying dynamic behind the Reformation, Anglicanism, English Evangelicalism, Puritanism, and Methodism. "Our studies therefore have shown that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers cannot be contained within the limits of a doctrinal formula but must be continually expressed in the dynamic action of the whole church."<sup>1</sup> This evaluation may be valid in a very general sense, but in no case was it the consuming theological issue under consideration. There were more fundamental doctrines at stake, and in the settling of these matters the PH of the believer entered into the discussion.

#### Justification by Faith

If justification by faith and the priesthood of the Roman church could not coexist, then the entire Papal system was shattered. Justification by faith meant that every believer had the privilege of access by coming in faith to his Great High Priest. There was no need for a human intermediary. The believer could be called a priest simply because he no longer needed one. All that the earthly priest would have done for him, he could now do for himself because of his connection to the Great High Priest and his completed sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin saw the semantic dilemma and so had a two-fold statement. On the one hand, there is no longer any

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<sup>1</sup>Eastwood, PH of All Believers, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

real priesthood save that of Christ's. All that was foreshadowed in the old economy has been fully and finally fulfilled in the priesthood of Christ so that there no longer remains any sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:18). However, the believer possesses a royal priesthood and offers up spiritual sacrifices on the basis of Christ's work.<sup>1</sup>

Luther argues for justification by faith alone in the Freedom of a Christian.<sup>2</sup> Here faith is the connecting link to his view of the PH of the believer. Christ as the firstborn had the privilege of kingship and priesthood as did the firstborn of the OT. When the believer is united to Christ through faith, these also become his privileges. As king, "all things are made subject to him and are compelled to serve him in obtaining salvation." As priest, "we may boldly come into the presence of God in the spirit of faith (Heb 10:19, 22), and cry 'Abba, father!' pray for one another, and do all things which we see done and foreshadowed in the outer and visible works of priests."<sup>3</sup>

Two centuries later the doctrinal issue was the same for the English Evangelicals. The strength of that movement came from a re-assertion of justification by faith. This was accomplished mainly through the efforts of Joseph

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-71.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in Luther's Works, vol. 31, The Career of the Reformer I, ed. by Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), pp. 327-377.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 354-355.

and Isaac Milner, who re-studied Luther and brought the theological issues to their day.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrent with Calvin and Luther, other reform movements sprang up in reaction to the same theological and moral abuses of the Roman Church. The various Protestant groups which emerged were similar in what they rejected and what they accepted. It was therefore a common feature in each of these groups to find the PH of all believers as an integral part of their struggle for justification by faith.<sup>2</sup>

#### Nature of the Church

Explicit references relating the PH of the believer and ecclesiology are difficult to find. Instead, one finds that what they believed was applied in the restructuring of church life and ministry. Issues of church polity, authority, leadership, Christian vocation, and relation to the State had to be dealt with. These practical developments will be seen in the following section.

Luther said that a true church was characterized by seven marks. It is Eastwood's evaluation that the "allness" of the universal PH is fundamental to each of these marks. According to Luther, communion and baptism were administered by the church as a whole, though

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<sup>1</sup>Eastwood, PH of All Believers, pp. 116-121.

<sup>2</sup>Roland H. Bainton, The Age of the Reformation (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1956), pp. 38-39.

representatively through its leadership. Or again, baptism marks the entrance of a person into the PH in the same way that the OT priest was anointed to his duties. Thus, the church is no longer seen as hierarchial in nature. It exists only where God's people are found. They comprise Christ's body and possess corporately the authority to carry out the various ministries of the church through the gifts and abilities of its individual members.<sup>1</sup>

### Practical Developments

#### Introduction

The papal system had grown into a tyrannical monster which controlled the lives of its people. "The people were simply the object of rule."<sup>2</sup> The Church and its clergy constituted a wall between the layman and God. They took to themselves power and privileges not given to the common Christian and made them an occasion for disgraceful distortion of the truth of God. Consequently, there arose a double standard. The priesthood of the Church made a physical distinction in the dress and cut of the hair. They were endowed with powers of salvation and damnation in the lives of their parishioners. They were allowed a double standard of ethical conduct.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eastwood, PH of All Believers, pp. 16-63.

<sup>2</sup> John S. Cummins, "Clergy-Lay Issues and Relations: The Roman Catholic Perspective" Foundations 15:2 (April-June 1972):146-155.

<sup>3</sup> Ewald M. Plass, compiler, What Luther Says: An Anthology, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 1141.

The result was a moral mess in the church of Rome. Immorality was common among the clergy. There was a general lack of interest in the spiritual welfare of their people. Notorious were the financial abuses by which clergy and Church alike were becoming wealthy. The most well-known of these was the granting of indulgences, or the remission of earthly penalties and/or forgiveness of sins on the basis of monetary contribution. Even prostitutes in Rome were given positions of honor.<sup>1</sup>

Not only the church was in difficult times. Society was undergoing changes from a feudal, ecclesiastical, and agrarian base to a predominately national, urban, and lay-oriented way of life. All of these worked against the medieval claims of the Church to be universal and absolute. Many changes of the Reformation reflected what was transpiring in its surrounding culture. But in no way is the Reformation to be seen as an accommodation to the tides of society.<sup>2</sup>

The PH of believers is one case in point. Lay and secular culture rose together. While the PH of believers contributed to the rise of the laity, it had nothing to do with the secular. Rather, its emphasis was toward more religion for all. It elevated the layman to priest rather than demoting all into laymen. It sought to bring all members of the church into a realization of their position

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<sup>1</sup>Bainton, Reformation, pp. 13,14,16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

before God.

No wonder the PH of all believers rose to such prominence as a polemic weapon of the Reformers. It served to counteract the monstrous abuses of a system which was so dominated by those who were called priests. Its effect lay both in its doctrinal content and in its verbal association. Though not always as well defined as perhaps it should have been, its practical application brought great changes which have shaped the face of the church to this day.

#### Progress of the Developments

##### Luther

Luther approached the problem of the priesthood from an exegetical study of both the Old and New Testaments concerning the subject. Key to his investigation was I Peter 2:9 and a thorough study of Matthew 16:18-19. He arrived at a doctrine of the universal PH of believers and a full-fledged ministry within the church. Drawing upon the functions of the OT priesthood, he understood the corporate responsibilities of the NT priesthood to be teaching, praying, and sacrifice. The latter responsibility he understood in a spiritual sense, to "sacrifice ourselves for others" in order "that others may live." The bottom line of spiritual sacrifice for Luther, then, was Christian service.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Herman A. Preus, "Luther on the Universal Priesthood and the Office of the Ministry," Concordia Journal 5:2 (March 1979):55-62.

The ministry of the church maintained a coordinate and dependent relationship to the universal PH. "As priest they have the right and also the duty to see that the Word is preached in truth and purity."<sup>1</sup> That means the rejection of the Roman idea that only clergy and councils could judge matters of doctrine and interpretation.

In Luther's view the truth of PH gave certain rights to all members of the congregation in the administration of the church. They were the ones to elect and ordain their ministers.<sup>2</sup> They personally had the right of access to God without the mediation of a human priest. Within the church itself they had responsibilities to one another within the "communion of saints;"<sup>3</sup> namely, forgiving sin in the name of God, holding goods in common, and nourishing one another as Christ is food and drink to the spiritual life.

Others were not so balanced in their approach. Carlstadt, an associate of Luther, felt that the PH of believers eliminated the need for a trained or independent ministry. Leaders in the churches were to have no special education, titles, or honors. They were to support themselves like any other layman. Other extreme views would

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>C.S. Meyer, "Apostolicity and Ministry: A Lutheran View," Concordia Journal 43 (Fall 1972):77-93.

<sup>3</sup>Mark A. Noll, "Believer Priests in the Church: Luther's View," Christianity Today 18 (October 26, 1973): 4-8.

be seen in the Quaker movement which came at a later time.

It was this doctrine also which motivated Luther to translate the German Bible. "Luther, and with him other Protestants, stressed the primacy of the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures and, holding to the priesthood of all believers, insisted not only that all Christians read the Bible but also on their competence, guided by the Holy Spirit, to understand it aright."<sup>1</sup> The doctrine also was the motivation behind his emphasis on education for all people. The result was a public education system for Germany.

In The Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, the PH is used as the basis for breaking the distinction of secular and sacred. The close alliance of church and state meant that civil rulers were also baptized members of the church. As the priest was a minister in the church, so the magistrates should be viewed as bishops and priests in the society at large. In this treatise, Luther appeals to them as servants of God to uphold the will of God in their public office.<sup>2</sup>

While Luther's dissolution of secular and sacred was valid (I Cor 10:31; Col 3:17), his method for drawing that conclusion was based on an erroneous eschatology. As a result the concept of PH was broadened beyond its Biblical

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity: Vol. II: A.D. 1500-A.D. 1975 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 719.

<sup>2</sup>Bainton, Reformation, p. 103.

parameters. The believer-priest may indeed function in society as a leader, but his responsibility is never an extension of the church's rule into society. They are different spheres of authority.

### Calvin

Using the NT as a starting point, Calvin finds a fuller development of the PH of the believer from OT typology. As in the OT the NT priest is chosen by God (I Pet 1:2, 15), sprinkled by sacrificial blood (Heb 12:24), washed with pure water (i.e. baptism, Heb 10:22), dedicated by the laying on of hands (Heb 6:2), and anointed (I John 2:20).<sup>1</sup> Put into practice, it meant selection and evaluation of ecclesiastical leaders, participation in the worship service by the singing of psalms, the mutual care and concern for other church members, the administration of church discipline, and the glorification of God in daily life.<sup>2</sup>

The key problem again was the relation between clergy and laity in the church. In maintaining a consistency between doctrine and practice, Calvin, more than Luther, made the laity an integral part of church polity. They held positions not only in the local congregations but also in the synods and councils of the church. His implementation resulted in a ministry within, not above the church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eastwood, PH of All Believers, pp. 89-90.

<sup>2</sup>J.R. Crawford, "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers," SJT 21 (June 1968):154-155.

<sup>3</sup>Eastwood, PH of All Believers, p. 79; Philip Schaff,

It was at Geneva that a rigorous attempt was made to integrate the religious and civil. Calvin viewed Church and State as an interrelated theocracy "based upon the sovereignty of the Christian people and the general priesthood of believers."<sup>1</sup> The magistrates and clergy were mutually dependent, the Church becoming involved in civil discipline and the civil rulers controlling the salaries of pastors.

But as with Luther, the theological error was not in the PH of believers, but in eschatology and ecclesiology. These early warriors of the faith had not discerned the millennial distinctions of Scripture, nor realized the separate functions of the Church and State. Because of this the PH of believers was applied too broadly to the civil realm.

When the doctrine took hold, it greatly broadened the base of support for the Reformation. Lay people joined in the battle with Luther as they comprehended that as believer-priests they had the Holy Spirit within them as the interpreter of Scripture. The result was a flow of literature on morals and doctrine reflecting a laity of spiritual understanding and intellectual ability, though formally untrained. They studied Scripture for themselves and wrestled with the same theological issues. Though

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History of the Christian Church, 3rd ed. rev., vol. 8, Modern Christianity: The Swiss Reformation (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910), p. 471.

<sup>1</sup>Schaff, The Swiss Reformation, p. 473.

similar to the Reformers', these treatises reflect a personally thought out argument. In an interesting article, Miriam Chrisman describes some of these lay writings and their effects.<sup>1</sup>

### England

Introduced into a new setting across the Channel, Protestantism retained at its center the PH of all believers. The Anglicans began on the doctrinal base of justification by faith and the universal PH. A translation of the English Bible soon followed to remove the distance between priest and people. Under the guidance of Cranmer and the influence of Bucer the Prayer Book was published enabling the laity to participate in worship.<sup>2</sup>

The English Evangelicals brought significant changes in the nature of the church and her social impact. The longstanding emphasis on baptism was dropped so that the church was viewed as a body of believers rather than an institution entered by baptism. The church began to extend herself through missionary outreach. Lay societies and family worship became common and the church became directly involved in the battles against social evils. In 1804 the

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<sup>1</sup>Miriam Usher Chrisman, "Lay Response to the Protestant Reformation in Germany 1520-1528," in Reformation Principle and Practice: Essays in Honor of Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, ed. Peter Newman Brooks (London: Scholar Press, 1980), pp. 33-52.

<sup>2</sup>Eastwood, PH of All Believers, pp. 98-100.

first Bible Society was formed.<sup>1</sup>

Baptists have claimed the PH of all believers as a distinctive from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> This long tradition began under the leadership of John Smyth who founded the English Baptists in 1609. The church ministered through its leadership, though not to the exclusion of other members. Indeed, in the absence of leaders the church had the responsibility to carry on with preaching, communion, baptism, visitation, etc. It was under the Baptists that laymen were used in the distribution of the Lord's Supper in order to visually express the corporate worship of the PH. Significant also, was their strict adherence to the separation of Church and State based upon the same principles by which Luther and Calvin had seen the integral connection between the sacred and civil.<sup>3</sup> This is just to say that no matter how influential the PH of believers was in these practical matters, it was not determinative! Thus, it is necessary for every generation to carefully examine the Biblical teachings afresh and integrate them into the total spectrum of one's theology.

With Methodism came the strongest social interpretation of the believer's PH. Israel was designated as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 123-128.

<sup>2</sup>L.D. McBain, "Clergy-Lay Issues and Relations: The Baptist Perspective," Foundations 15 (April-June 1972): 160.

<sup>3</sup>Eastwood, PH of All Believers, pp. 157-160.

"servants of mankind" according to their interpretation of Exodus 19:6. It was to be a social religion, that is, a religion which lives and converses with other men. As Israel, so also the Church (I Pet 2:9). With this at the heart of Methodism, there has been through the years an emphasis on lay witness and mission.<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary

The core of Protestant convictions centered around salvation by faith. As a corollary doctrine, the PH of all believers became a common denominator of the Reformation and the Protestant movement which followed. It implied that every individual had both the right and the ability to discern spiritual matters for himself. It proved to be both a powerful and constructive doctrine, releasing the energies and abilities of the laity for the ministry of the Church. At the same time it became a dangerous tool in the hands of those who abused it and carried its individualism to the extreme. Its practical outworkings in the life and organization of the church have colored the stream of Protestant Christianity to this day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 205-205.

<sup>2</sup>Latourette, A History of Christianity, pp. 836-839.

### Present Evaluation

The doctrine of the PH of all believers rose to prominence in the conflicts of the Reformation period and the development of Protestantism which followed. It came at a time when the misuse of the title "priest" had become so great that some form of counteraction was necessary. The real issue was justification by faith versus the dispensing of grace through the Roman clergy. In their fight for justification by faith, the Reformers found this theme to be a helpful companion against the hierarchy of the Church. It was used more in the practical than the theological realm, because in practice, the Roman Church had totally perverted the NT doctrine of Priesthood.

Moreover, the doctrine was generalized in its application into a very broad principle of operation which was then applied to a variety of ecclesiastical, civil, and social issues. Clergy-laity relations proved to be the most dominant of these issues as the continuing problem of church leadership was hammered out.

The question which arises, and which this thesis seeks to answer, is the exact nature and limitations of the Scriptural teaching. What is its point of reference? Are there dispensational limits or is it a principle governing both Israel and the Church? Viewed from an exegetical standpoint, what does the Scripture teach?

The need for a reexamination is as great now as it

has ever been. Especially among the liturgical churches of the last 100 years, the issues of ministry and priesthood have been discussed.<sup>1</sup> Since Vatican Two, it has become more important in Catholic circles and has changed the practice of that Church in many ways. The strong pressures of our individualistic society impose upon the Church the necessity to grapple with the role of the leader and the role of the member from a Biblical teaching.

#### Proposition

New Testament Priesthood is a metaphorical expression for the Church's corporate ministry based upon the Priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, and accomplished through the Christian service of its individual members (i.e. spiritual sacrifices).

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<sup>1</sup>T.W. Manson, The Church's Ministry (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948); R.C. Moberly, Ministerial Priesthood, second ed. (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900); T.F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood, Scottish Journal Theology Occasional Papers No. 3 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1955).

## CHAPTER II

### THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

#### The Priest

The idea of a priest and priesthood has been part of human existence from time immemorial. Universally, there appears an innate fear or barrier between a man and his god. There is in man the sense of dread that somehow he has offended the Power to which he is responsible. He needs someone to stand in his place before the god or gods. The priesthood arose as an intermediary to fill this need for substitution.<sup>1</sup>

In the OT,  $\text{קֹהֵן}$  designated: (1) the priest-king, (2) the principal officer, chief ruler, or (3) the religious official in the sanctuary.<sup>2</sup> It is the first and third of the above definitions which carry over into the priestly theme of the NT.

The two-fold idea of the priest-king is the basis for the administrative duties of the priesthood. Melchizedek (Gen 14) is the first OT example. Israel's priesthood was related to the sanctuary (definition 3) until the intertestamental period. The Maccabean period manifests the

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<sup>1</sup>TDNT, s.v. "ἱερεὺς," by G. Schrenk, 3:257,258.

<sup>2</sup>BDB, p. 463; TWOT, 1:431.

dual idea in the rule of its religious kingship. Administration was allied to the PH in the Qumran community and in the NT the Sanhedrin provided political leadership for the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

This same theme traces through to the PH of believers in First Peter and Revelation. While the concepts are closely connected, a distinction can be made between the ruling attached to kingship and the sacrificial functions attached to PH. Thus, the emphasis of the Epistles is on the latter, and that of Revelation on the former.

The major thrust of the Biblical usage pertains to the priest as the "religious official in the sanctuary." He is a "minister for sacred things especially sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> The first priests mentioned were sacrificial in their function (Gen 14:18; Jethro, Exod 18:12). While of a distinct order, the Levitical priests also stood as the mediators between people and God. Without sacrifice there would have been no mediation. "Indeed, efficacious priesthood can exist only when it is established by the Lord. . .for according to Scripture only God or his official representative can accomplish the atonement by which satisfaction is made for sin" (Psa 65:4[3]; Exod 29:36).<sup>3</sup>

Historical criticism approaches the religion of

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Best, "Spiritual Sacrifice: General Priesthood in the New Testament," Interpretation 14:3 (July 1960):274.

<sup>2</sup>TWOT, s.v. "קֹהֵן," by J. Barton Payne, 1:431.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Israel from an evolutionary viewpoint. It sees the primary function of the priest as the prophetic communication of revelation, or the oracular office.<sup>1</sup> But the biblical PH in its ideal form united both the sacrificial and instructional duties. If a choice must be made, the sacrificial functions of the PH would be primary. The OT priest ministered in a theological context of man's sin and God's intention to provide redemption. The PH was no mere human institution, but the Divinely appointed representative whose office it was to meet and satisfy the demands of God.<sup>2</sup>

#### Levitical Priesthood

The nature and functions of the Levitical PH expand upon the basic sacrificial significance of PH in general. It is important to the NT priesthood because the language used for its functions is also used of Christian sacrifice and PH. Often, the NT concept is presented by way of contrast to the Levitical system. Some see a direct connection between the PH of the OT and the New. A brief survey will reveal its outstanding features.

#### Nature of the Levitical Priesthood

##### Hereditary

Before Israel became a nation the priestly functions were carried out by the heads of families, tribes, or cities

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<sup>1</sup>Schrenk, "ἱερεὺς," 3:260.

<sup>2</sup>ISBE, s.v. "Priesthood," by Wm. G. Moorehead, p. 2445.

(Gen 8:20; 14:18; 26:25; 33:20; Job 1:5). When God established the nation, He also established a specified system of worship. The priestly service was to be carried on by the Aaronic line (Exod 28:1-3; 40:12-15; Num 16:17; 17:8).

#### Divinely Instituted

In addition to Exodus 28, the clearest statement of this truth is in the book of Hebrews. The High Priest was "appointed (καθίστημι) on behalf of men in things pertaining to God" (5:1). He was also "called by God, even as Aaron was" (5:4).

#### Representative

The High Priest bore on his garment the twelve tribes of Israel as he ministered before the Lord (Exod 28:12, 21). Hebrews 5:1 states that he was appointed to his office on behalf of men (ὕπερ ἀνθρώπων). This feature would also be true of all the priests as they performed their duties in the Tabernacle or Temple.

#### Atoning

Expiation involves the removal of sin which stands as a barrier between God and man. All expiation came in the sacrifice of Christ. In Him sins were removed in reality. The OT sacrifices were a temporary measure by which sins were covered or atoned for until the true and final Sacrifice would come (cp. Rom 3:25). They were demanded by God and

administered through the office of the PH. Because of his participation in the sacrifices, the priest stood as mediator to God on behalf of his fellow man (see p. 22 and "Offering" below).

#### Function of the Levitical Priesthood

Ernest Best follows the basic approach of Westcott in categorizing the many responsibilities given to the priests of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

#### Instruction

The priests were the teachers of Israel. One of their primary functions was to teach the law of God to the people. They were to be the ones whom the people would seek out concerning the message of God (Lev 10:11; Mal 2:7).

In this responsibility the Israelite PH defaulted and the offices of prophet and scribe arose to fill the gap of instruction and divine communication.<sup>2</sup>

#### Offering

The ceremonial duties of the priests were greatly varied. They were commissioned to prepare the shewbread (Lev 24:5), burn the incense before the Lord (Exod 30:7; Num 16:40), and central to their ministry was the offering of sacrifice. "The priest shall make atonement (יִכַּפֵּר)

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<sup>1</sup>Best, "Spiritual Sacrifice," pp. 273-275; B.F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Best, "Spiritual Sacrifice," p. 273.

for him" (Lev 5:16).

### Blessing

The blessing of the OT was not well-wishing or a general desire for another's welfare and happiness. It surely involved those things, but was much more concrete and definite. It brought actual results into the life of the recipient. "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel'" (Num 6:23). Note that the blessing came from God when the priest invoked His name (6:27).

### Conclusion

How much the nature and function of the Levitical PH bear on the NT concept will be left for the next chapter. One would expect that if it were the basis for Christian PH, there would be direct references, or close parallels between the two.

### National Priesthood

"And now if you will diligently heed my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be my treasured possession from among all peoples, because the whole earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel (Exod 19:5,6).

### Introduction

Both Peter and John draw upon Exodus 19:6 as part of their statements concerning Christian PH (I Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6;

5:10; 20:6). Peter employs an explicit reference from the LXX (23:22), while John uses the terminology in an implicit allusion. But neither Peter nor John use the Hebrew directly. There is reflected in their citations a number of different textual traditions, none of which translate the Hebrew into the expected "kingdom of priests."

Furthermore, the phrase of Exodus 19:6 is unique in the OT. The closest parallel is Isaiah 61:6, "But you shall be called the priests of Yahweh." As Israel is viewed in relations to the nations, it is the privileges of priests rather than the office, which she enjoys.<sup>1</sup> The uncertainty of the Hebrew manifested itself in the versions with a number of renderings reflecting different understandings of the phrase.<sup>2</sup>

1) First Peter 2:9 follows the LXX in its own unusual phrase.

2) First Peter 2:5 compresses the whole phrase "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" into "a holy priesthood" (ἱεράτευμα ἁγίου).

3) The Peshitta reads "kingdom and priests," taking both as substantives. Revelation 5:10 has both the nouns and the conjunction. Revelation 1:6 is without the conjunction, "kingdom, priests."

4) The Targums also translate as substantives,

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<sup>1</sup>R.B.Y. Scott, "A Kingdom of Priests (Exodus xix:6)," Oudtestamentische Studien 8 (1950):214.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

this time rendering מְמַלְכֵה by the personal "kings." The two personal substantives underlie the paraphrase of Revelation 20:6, "priests of God. . .and they shall reign with Him."

Some would conclude from this variation in textual tradition that the NT either misunderstood or altered the OT. But the doctrine of inspiration demands that the witness of the two Testaments be consistent, even if not exactly equal in meaning (i.e. as in the further progress of revelation). The focus of attention must center on the original languages of the Old and New Testaments within the context of the whole Bible. It is not the purpose of this paper to determine if Peter's usage is in accord with Exodus 19:6, but in what sense it is in accord. Therefore, an understanding of Exodus 19:6 in the Hebrew is crucial.

#### Exegesis of Exodus 19:6

Several factors establish the parameters by which the phrase מְמַלְכֵה לְהַנְיִים must be understood. These are context, lexical meanings of the words, and the syntax of the verse.

#### Context

##### Historical

The overall view of this passage establishes the fact that God is here dealing with the nation as a whole. True, it is yet in the formative stages, but it is nonetheless

the nation.

The Israelites have recently come from the land of Egypt. Their journey under the leadership of Moses has brought them to the foot of Mt. Sinai. Here God is going to deal with the nation by solidifying His relationship with them through the covenant. The terms of the covenant actually cover the following chapters up to 24:3. This brief introduction to the covenant (19:3-8), records the private instructions of God to Moses.

"The theme of this section is supremely significant, playing a role of decisive importance in the history of Israel and of humanity as a whole."<sup>1</sup> The passage opens in verse one without the expected וַיְהִי. This abrupt beginning signals the reader to pay close attention.

#### Literary

Source criticism wants to bind the Exodus revelation to fixed ANE treaty forms. It is evident that similarities exist, but opinions vary as to the nature of the likenesses. The investigation of the covenant, and especially its form, is a study in itself, and a major theme of the entire OT.<sup>2</sup> But a detailed analysis of the origin and structure is not

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<sup>1</sup>U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, translated by I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>James Muilenburg, "The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations," Vetus Testamentum 9 (1959):343-365; G.E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," Biblical Archaeologist 17 (1954):50-76; Dennis J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963).

necessary for the understanding of מִמְלִכָּה לַיהוָה. The following observations will suffice.

1) The most common approach is the suzerainty-vassal treaty form. There is the preamble (v. 3), the historical prologue (v. 4), general principles for future conduct (v. 5a), and blessing (vv. 5b-6a).<sup>1</sup> The usual section of curses is omitted.

No one contends for a rigid adherence to the treaty form, but some have rejected its influence altogether.<sup>2</sup> This is not necessary. One would expect to find similarities between the writings of the Hebrews and those who shared a similar culture. Yet, because of its revelatory character, the Biblical record would be entirely unique in its meaning. Thus, the focus of study should not be on the form of the covenant but on the content.<sup>3</sup> Its meaning should not be sought in other human treaties, but

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<sup>1</sup>John J. Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1971), pp. 193-194; William L. Moran, "A Kingdom of Priests," in The Bible in Current Catholic Thought, ed. by John L. McKenzie (New York: Hurder and Hurder, 1962), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>J. Philip Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, in the New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>This is the error of Muilenburg. He is so intent on the form and structure that the normal syntax is ignored. He outlines (1) Oracular opening (v. 3b), (2) Proclamation of the mighty acts (v. 4), and (3) the Covenant condition (vv. 5-6). His divisions neither coordinate or subordinate according to the syntax and flow of thought. For instance, they fail to distinguish between the conditions and the consequences in verses 5a and 5b-6, ("Covenantal Formulations," p. 352).

in its own right as the self-revelation of God to His people. This hits right at the nature of the covenant. It was an extension of the character of God Himself. The terms of the covenant expressed in a very concrete way the essence of a man's relationship to God, namely obedience. The blessings and judgments in God's dealings with Israel were not determined by the stipulations of a contract, but by the expression of the Divine character as revealed in His name.<sup>1</sup>

2) Critical scholarship removes the passage Exodus 19:3b-6 from the historical context of the Exodus. It is dated in the reform period of Josiah and seen as a theological formulation inserted into the text by the reformers.<sup>2</sup> This effectively destroys the historicity and Mosaic authorship of the section, making it pointless to be studied as Divine revelation. It would not reflect a major event in the founding of the nation, but something of the religious ideas current in the later monarchical period.

3) The covenant must be interpreted from a theological viewpoint. It is God dealing with the Israelites. The ANE literature depicts people seeking a god with whom

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<sup>1</sup>R.K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 400-401, 678.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 351; Martin Noth, Exodus, in the Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 154; John Hall Elliott, The Elect and the Holy: An Exegetical Examination of I Peter 2:4-10 and the Phrase βασιλειον ιερατευμα (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 51.

they may covenant, but such is not the relationship between Yahweh and the Hebrews. God called for a response from the nation on the basis of the deliverance He had recently brought about for them (v. 4). To see it from any other viewpoint would make the critical scholars right! It would simply be another human religious document.<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary

The covenant as a whole was a crucial event in the founding of the nation. Interpretations of "kingdom of priests" must conform to its place in the covenant, namely as the results or blessing. The context also indicates that God is dealing with the nation corporately, thereby going against those views which apply the phrase to the internal structure of Israel.

#### Lexical Considerations

A second parameter which directs the interpretation is the meaning of the words themselves. The usage of  $\text{קֹהֵן}$  has been previously discussed (see p. 19). This passage, by the connection of the two words, falls into the "priest-king" category.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George A.G. Knight, Theology as Narration: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>BDB, p. 463.

## מַמְלָכָה

The noun has three uses.<sup>1</sup> (1) "Kingdom," as in the territory ruled, or "realm" pertaining to the general sphere or subjects ruled. For the first compare Genesis 10:10 and for the second see I Kings 18:10. This latter verse parallels מַמְלָכָה with גּוֹי, and uses the terms both in a geographical and spherical sense. It is often paralleled with מַלְכוּת as well (Psa 105:13). (2) It may mean "sovereignty" or "dominion" as in the exercise of authority. This usage also leads to the adjectival sense, when in construct, of "royal" (Josh 10:2). (3) "Reign," referring to the time when a king is in power. A typical phrase of this meaning is, "in the beginning of the reign of," as found in Jeremiah 27:1.

Besides these basic definitions, it may have either an active or passive meaning. In the former the priests would be constituted a kingdom because of their active participation in the ruling. In the latter, they would be a kingdom because of their association with the king.<sup>2</sup>

## Summary

The wide range of usage for both מַמְלָכָה and מְלָכִים set the stage for an understanding of "kingdom of priests," but lexical meanings alone are not definitive enough.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 575.

<sup>2</sup>C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, vol. 2 in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. by James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 97.

The next step is to look at the syntax of the phrase.

### Grammar and Syntax

#### Overview

The general flow of Exodus 19:5-6 may be noted in the three different usages of the ׀. The opening ׀ introduces an informal inference or consequence<sup>1</sup> following the historical reminder to Moses of God's gracious deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians (19:4). Thus, on the basis of His love for them as demonstrated in the Exodus, Yahweh now proposes a covenant which would formally express that love relationship between God and people (cp. Deut 7:7-8).

A simple ׀ connects the parallel lines of the protasis and thus links obedience to God with covenant-keeping. ׀ means more than mere auditory perception. It is a hearing that responds with the will. This idiom is clearly marked out by the object marker ׀ or ׀ (cp. I Sam 8:7; Deut 4:30).<sup>2</sup>

The third use of ׀ introduces the apodosis of the condition. The construction extends into verse 6a, but presents a problem as to the exact relation between verse 5b ("And you shall be to me a treasured possession") and verse 6a ("And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"). Two questions arise: (1) Is verse 6a coordinate with, or subordinate to, verse 5b?

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<sup>1</sup>BDB, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1034.

The coordinate approach would understand Israel's status as God's "treasured possession" to be parallel to their service as a "kingdom of priests." The second approach views verse 5b as a summary statement and verse 6a as a further explication of that status. (2) Another question is the syntax between "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation." Are they two parallel divisions each one describing the whole nation? Or are they two divisions which together comprise the whole? On this second question there is a dearth of syntactical discussion by the commentators.

#### Conditional Sentence

The first point of syntax to notice is the conditional setting of "kingdom of priests."<sup>1</sup> As an element of the apodosis, its meaning can only be realized upon Israel's obedience to God and His covenant (v. 5). It has no independent existence of its own, but rises and falls with the covenant loyalty of the people. It is a blessing of the covenant.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>וְיִשְׂרָאֵל plus the imperfect is the normal construction for a first class condition or real condition, with an expression of future time (Ronald Williams, Hebrew Syntax: An Outline, 2nd edition [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976], p. 85).

<sup>2</sup>There is a question whether the conditionality of this verse applies to the terms or blessings of the covenant. For a discussion of that question, see the works cited previously. Knight is one who holds to the unconditional nature of the Sinaitic Covenant. It was an unconditional promise carried out "within the framework of a covenant" (p. 129). The conditional element must then pertain to the blessings of the covenant and not the terms.

No matter how one views the nature of the covenant,

An understanding of the conditionality of the phrase will prevent the interpreter from establishing permanent offices within the nation. The covenant expresses relationship and their position as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" are relational terms enjoyed only when the requirements of the covenant are being fulfilled. What happens to the nation when in disobedience? Do the political and religious structures cease to exist? When this distinction is blurred, the priestly function can erroneously be seen as a separate entity apart from the covenant.<sup>1</sup> The PH of Israel was not a commission in itself.

#### Parallelism

This section touches on the questions raised in the "Overview." The syntax indicates that "treasured possession," "kingdom of priests," and "holy nation," should not be considered parallel items in the apodosis. Rather, the first clause is a summary statement in which God draws a distinction between Israel and the other nations. The two phrases of verse 6 are parallel to each other and expand on the summary of verse 5b.<sup>2</sup> These differences exist

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"kingdom of priests" is syntactically in a conditional sentence. Furthermore, in either view, it is part of the results which are conditional.

<sup>1</sup>Heinz Kruse, "Exodus 19:5 and the Mission of Israel," N.E. Asia Journal of Theology 24/25 (March-Sept 1980):129-135. Kruse argues for a priestly commission to the nations.

<sup>2</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, p. 97; Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus, in The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 367.

between verses 5 and 6.

1) The parallelism of verse 5b is broken up by the clause, "for the whole earth is mine."<sup>1</sup> The כִּי is taken as either explanatory or concessive. As an explanation the reference is to what precedes. God may dispose of the nations as He desires for He is owner of all. So also He has the right to choose whomever He desires (cp. translation of NASB). Concessively, it forms the background for the material of verse 6. It more sharply outlines the privilege of Israel. Calvin calls it the adversative. "God would more exalt His grace, by comparing this one nation with the whole world."<sup>2</sup> In opting for the concessive use both the NIV and Kruse do not treat the ׀ of verse 6a.

2) The emphasis of verse 5 is Israel's relation to God in contrast to the nations, while in verse 6 it is her sanctity.

3) Verse 6a is pronominal rather than verbal, and the subject is emphatically expressed rather than in the verbal suffix.

A second parallel structure exists between the phrases "kingdom of priests," and "holy nation." While

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<sup>1</sup>For an opposite view see Childs, Exodus, p. 367. "The poetic balance of the sentence has been disturbed by a parenthetical remark--surely all the world is mine--but the three are all to be interpreted in relation to one another."

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony, vol. 1, trans. by Charles Bingham (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 318; Cp. Kruse, "Exodus 19:5," p. 129.

both מְמַלְכָהּ and מְמַלְכֵימָּם may be taken absolutely (cp. Rev 1:6),<sup>1</sup> most take it as the construct state.<sup>2</sup> But the genitive itself is not the answer. For the Hebrew allows for either word in the construct state to be attributive.<sup>3</sup> A comparison to the following גְּלוֹי קְדוֹשׁ identifies the second element as that which defines the first. A further look at the genitive is required to determine its exact nuance.

### The Construct State

Scott lists five possibilities for the genitive use. All are true of the genitive, but some will be eliminated by the factors previously discussed.<sup>4</sup>

1) "A kingdom composed of priests." This is an appositional use which arrives at the same general conclusion as taking the words in an absolute sense. Each individual is a priest and corporately they constitute the kingdom.

2) "A kingdom possessing a legitimate priesthood" (possessive genitive).

3) "A kingdom with a collective priestly responsibility on behalf of all peoples" (attributive--"priestly kingdom").

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<sup>1</sup>Scott, "A Kingdom of Priests," p. 215.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 216; Childs, Exodus, p. 342; Noth, Exodus, p. 157; Moran, "A Kingdom of Priests," p. 8; BDB, p. 575.

<sup>3</sup>See Scott, "A Kingdom of Priests," p. 215.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

4) "A kingdom ruled by priests" (subjective genitive).

5) "A kingdom set apart and possessing collectively, alone among all peoples, the right to approach the altar of Yahweh" (another nuance of the attributive).

### Interpretations

A variety of answers have been proposed for the question, "What is the kingdom of priests?" The following are just a few of the most prominent. The grid by which they will be evaluated has been set up in the preceding discussion of context, the parallel structure and the nature of the genitive in construct.

1) "A kingdom composed of priests." This view means that each individual Israelite was a priest. It is a convenient basis for the later NT doctrine of the universal PH. The concepts would be the same. At least two important documents took it in this way. The Peshitta translated "kingdom and priests and a holy nation." The Targums had a slight variation in "kings (and) priests."<sup>1</sup> In response it may be asked where the Levitical priests fit into this scheme. Both the context and structure argue against this. The context demands that Israel be viewed as a whole and not in its individual membership. The syntax requires some type of attributive use as in the parallel phrase.

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<sup>1</sup>Note p. 25; cp. Moran, "A Kingdom of Priests," p. 7.

2) "A kingdom possessing a legitimate priesthood." This again, is a possibility from the genitive, but no commentators accepted this position. It would again deal with the internal structure of the nation, rather than the nation as a whole. Neither would this have any significant meaning, for it would just be a reference to the Levitical PH.

3) "A kingdom with a collective priestly responsibility on behalf of all peoples." By far, this is the most widely held view. While some define it in the vaguest of terms, others build strong missionary responsibility upon it. "Essentially God's aim and purpose in proposing the Covenant and choosing Israel as his unique 'Holy Nation' can hardly be anything else than the salvation of the world's nations by Israel."<sup>1</sup> A similar emphasis has been suggested by many over the centuries.<sup>2</sup>

In favor of this view is its consistency with the corporate nature of the context. But is her missionary task to be something on top of the covenant itself? Verse 6 presents effects of keeping the covenant. If the responsibility involved with ministering to the world is different or in addition to the covenant, then this is not a proper

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<sup>1</sup>Kruse, "Exodus 19:5," p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Calvin maintained that Israel had an active sacerdotal relation to the nations, Harmony, p. 319; Knight, Exodus, p. 130, "Israel is to be God's corporate priest to all mankind, Isa. 49:6; 61:6;" Cassuto, Book of Exodus, p. 227, "A people that will occupy among humanity the place filled by the priests within each nation."

understanding of this passage. Her PH was not a vocation distinct from keeping the covenant, but one with it.

Furthermore, who are the priests? Instructions concerning functions or duties are nowhere to be found. The emphasis is not on function but on character. It is comparable in tone to Israel as a holy nation.<sup>1</sup>

4) "A kingdom ruled by priests." Cazelles has concluded, with one possible exception, that the noun in the genitive with this construction of מְלִיכָה denotes the ruler, and not those ruled.<sup>2</sup> The PH would be the ruling body of the nation as well as the religious leaders.

But it must be remembered that this combination of words is unique to Exodus 19:6. The context is also a strong argument against this, for it is an interpretation which deals with the internal organization of the nation. The covenant was a matter of relationship between the people as a whole and their God.

5) "A kingdom set apart and possessing collectively alone among all peoples, the right to approach the altar of Yahweh." Whether Exodus 19:6 contains all the active connotations of Scott's classification is debatable (i.e. the approaching of the altar). It may be best to make the phrase refer to the sanctity or set-aparthood of Israel. It is a kingdom which is set apart much the same as a

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Cited by Moran, p. 110.

priesthood is consecrated. Therefore, "kingdom of priests" signifies the status of their relation to God as a nation.

This view conforms to the corporate and relational character of the context. It is also consistent as a blessing or result of the covenant. Their holiness can only be evidenced as they perform their part of the covenant. When failing to do so, they appear no different than their pagan neighbors. This view suits both the parallelism and the usage of the genitive as attributive (i.e. priestly kingdom).

מְלִכּוּתֵי עַמִּים may at times, be used as a synonym for peoples. "And they wandered about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people" (Psa 105:13, NASB, cited by Scott). This usage looks at the subjects ruled rather than the kingdom as a political entity.

The reference to priests has in mind their ritual purity as a characteristic feature of the PH. "And also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves" (Exod 19:22). "Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me" (Exod 29:1; see also v. 33 and Exod 38:3, 4). It is a concrete word which stands for the quality of holiness. As a priest is holy, so also is the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The plural usage of the concrete noun is intensive.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

It expresses an abstract idea.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Elliott, kingdom of priests is an "expression of the people's sanctity."

### Conclusion<sup>2</sup>

This final proposal best fits the entire passage of Exodus 19:6. It was not the original understanding of this present writer, but context, structure, and the genitive all indicated the "kingdom of priests" means the holiness of the nation.

It is a phrase which expressed not what Israel was supposed to do, but what she was supposed to be. The actual "doing" required by the covenant is stated in general terms as "obeying" and "keeping." The more specific terms are not established until the following chapters. In fulfilling the covenant, Israel would manifest the consecrated position which she held with God.

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, Hebrew Syntax, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>For a summary of other views, see Moran's article, "A Kingdom of Priests." He himself takes a position close to Cazelles, but in much more detail. The basic objections, however, are pertinent to both. It plays down the context and depends heavily on other similar syntactical phrases in the OT. Still another twist is presented by Eastwood, who takes an evolutionary approach. Exodus 19:6 expresses the original PH of primitive Israel which was the privilege of the whole. But this democratic PH was replaced by a teaching PH which gradually came to function as a sacrificing PH. The actual fulfillment of Israel's mediation between God and the nations did not come until the NT people of God (The Royal Priesthood, pp. 19-25).

## CHAPTER III

### NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT

#### Explicit Statements

I Peter 2:5, 9

#### Contextual Analysis<sup>1</sup>

##### Historical Background

To get at the terms which Peter uses in relation to the PH of the believer, one must begin with the overall setting of the book. He is writing to encourage and admonish the suffering Christians of Asia (1:1). They seem to be suffering on two levels. The first level was that of personal accusations brought against them in the courts (cp. 1:6; 3:15-16). These seem to be supposed breaches of societal and legal regulations. But the possibility of official, widespread persecution existed or may have already begun (4:12-16). The crime was simply identification as a Christian ("If you are denounced in the name of Christ," 4:14).

These references to persecution may well have their

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<sup>1</sup>Matters of introduction such as authorship and the original materials of I Peter will not be taken up in this thesis. For a fine conservative discussion see A.F. Walls, Introduction to the First Epistle of Peter, by Alan M. Stibbs in TNTC, edited by R.V.G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), pp. 15-68. He dates the book at the time of Nero, A.D. 63 or 64 (p. 67).

background in the Neronian persecutions of A.D. 64.<sup>1</sup> His action initiated a change of policy toward the Christians throughout the empire. It is likely, however, that the effects of that change had not yet reached the Asian provinces by the time of Peter's writing. Nothing in the epistle requires a connection to the Roman persecution. If Peter was writing from Rome, then the context of persecution around him may account for some of the language ("being tested through fire," 1:7; "fiery ordeal," 4:12).<sup>2</sup> But the actual situation of the readers may have been a completely independent persecution in the Asian provinces.

To such a situation Peter writes to encourage (1:6) and to exhort them to avoid conduct that would unnecessarily bring accusation (2:12; 3:17; 4:14-15).<sup>3</sup> Peter does not address suffering directly but puts it in the eternal perspective of the nature of salvation (1:3-2:3), and the corporate privilege of the believer (2:4-10).

#### Literary Structure

The section 2:4-10 divides easily into three parts. The first part (vv. 4-5) contains Peter's own words, setting

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<sup>1</sup>J. Howard B. Masterman, The First Epistle of S. Peter (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1900), pp. 21-24.

<sup>2</sup>F.J.A. Hort, The First Epistle of St. Peter (Minneapolis: James & Klock Publishing Co., 1976, reprinted from London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1898), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Masterman, S. Peter, p. 24.

forth the Church as the spiritual household of God. Believers are "living stones" which are built into the edifice of the Church as they come to the "living Stone." The concept of priesthood is introduced in verse 5 only as it relates to this spiritual household.

The second part (vv. 6-8) consists of three OT quotations to which Peter adds an introduction (v. 6a), transition and commentary (v. 7a, 8a), and a closing comment (v. 8c). Following are the OT citations:<sup>1</sup>

2:6 Isaiah 28:16 (Introductory formula--διότι. . . γραφή)

2:7 Psalm 118:22 (I.F.--none)

2:8 Isaiah 8:14

The third part (vv. 9-10) interlaces the language of several OT passages. The concept of PH is again mentioned in this context (v. 9).

Elliott has concluded that verses 6-8 and 9-10 are parallel to one another and are interpreted in the midrashic commentary of verses 4 and 5 respectively. To state it another way, the main thought of the passage is contained in the first section (vv. 4-5). The quotations of verses 6-8 are interpreted in verse 4 and the titles applied to the Church are explained in verse 5.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 197. He includes καὶ at the beginning of 2:8 as an I.F.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, pp. 48-49.

On the other hand, verses 6-8 may be confirmatory of the first section while verses 9-10 continue the argument of the passage. The διότι which introduces the OT quotations (v. 6) has the strong sense of "because."<sup>1</sup> It looks back to the preceding statement and provides the OT foundation. Even so, the flow of thought is not stagnant in verses 6-8. The OT passages, along with Peter's comments (vv. 7a, 8b), not only demonstrate the source of his imagery for the Church, but also fill out the thought of his teaching. The relationship of the Stone to the unbelieving world (v. 8) is an addition not found in verses 4-5. Then verse 9 opens with a contrast to the preceding discussion of unbelievers (ὁμοίως δέ).<sup>2</sup> Though the themes of the two parts are similar they are not totally parallel for the following reasons:

1. The phrases of verses 9-10 are gathered from a variety of OT texts (Isa 43:20; Exod 19:6; Isa 43:21; Exod 19:5; Hosea 1:6, 8; 2:1).
2. There is no introductory formula.
3. Peter could have used a form of ἐπιμί and adapted μοι to show that he was quoting from Exodus 19:6.<sup>3</sup>
4. Peter used a free citation by keeping the sense of the OT reference, yet not always using the same

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<sup>1</sup>BAGD, p. 199. It is used in place of causal ὅτι which may be translated "for, because, for this reason" (p. 588).

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Best, "I Peter 2:4-10: a reconsideration," NovT 11 (October 1969):277.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

words. Neither is the order of the phrases kept the same as in their OT contexts.

Isa 43:21--λαόν μου ὃν περιεποιησάμην----λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν

Isa 43:21--διηγείσθαι----ἐξαγγείλατε

Exod 19:6--change from the future to the present tense

Exod 19:6; Isa 43:21--removal of the first personal pronoun

The conclusion is that verses 9 and 10 are a much freer use of the OT than verses 6-8. Peter is not quoting in support of his previous argument, but using OT language to express a contrast to verses 7b-8. In relation to the PH of the believer both verses 5 and 9 must be considered for their independent contribution to the doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

#### Citation from the LXX

##### Introduction

A subtle shift away from the NT's vital connection with the OT has taken place in recent NT interpretation. Its background and origins are sought in the historical and cultural traditions of the first century. It's religious heritage is grounded in the rabbinic Judaism to which a strong dose of Hellenistic influence has been added. This

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<sup>1</sup>Cp. Robert Johnstone, The First Epistle of Peter (Minneapolis: The James Family, 1978), pp. 117f. He divides this section at verse 7. Verses 4-6 are a description of the believers as a spiritual temple and holy PH. Verses 7-10 point to the glory of the privilege enjoyed by Christians. This is in vivid contrast to the condition of the unbeliever (v. 8).

situation is very significant for an understanding of Peter's citation from Exodus 19:6 (23:22, LXX). Did he use the phrase βασιλειον ιερατευμα according to its first century Jewish interpretation or its setting in the Hebrew Bible?<sup>1</sup>

#### The Meaning of the LXX

The translators of the LXX did several things with the phrase "kingdom of priests." They retained the word order of the Hebrew but changed the syntax of the phrase. βασιλειον could be substantival or adjectival in form, but it translates a substantive. A collective noun (ιερατευμα) was chosen or coined in place of the simple plural and it was put in the nominative rather than the genitive case. The impact of this change on the versions has been noted (p. 25). Its theological import must now be considered.

Elliott spends a lengthy chapter to show the development of what he calls the Exodus Formula (EF). The translation of the LXX reflects a theological interpretation suitable to the post-exilic setting of the Jewish people. It represents an understanding for a dispersed Israel rather than an Israel in the land. "As the holy People of God, Israel was thought to have a priestly obligation toward

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<sup>1</sup>Patrick Henry, New Directions in New Testament Study (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979). See chapters 4 and 5, "The Jewish Matrix," and the "Gnostic Challenge" (pp. 70-119), for the present state of approaches to the backgrounds of the NT.

her environment; namely, that of remaining holy and faithful to the one true God."<sup>1</sup> In the MT the sanctity of the people was stressed, while in the LXX their mission to the world was in view.<sup>2</sup> The usage of βασίλειον ιεράτευμα conveys a transition in thought from a kingdom set apart like priests to the two separate ideas contained in the substantives, namely, a kingdom, or king's residence and an "active body of priests." These terms will be discussed later.

Now while Peter utilized the language of the LXX, it must also be true that his words were not inconsistent or essentially different from the Hebrew. The NT is not a dependent document. Its essential character did not derive from contemporary human writings. Rather, it is revelationally unique, and, although it sustained relations to the surrounding culture, it must be viewed as one piece with the prior revelation of God in the OT. Several other factors point to the error of severing the NT from its OT moorings.

1) First century Judaism was a distortion of OT religion. Few Jews had maintained a true faith in the coming Messiah. Jesus' own disciples, who would write most of our NT, needed correction in their comprehension of the Messiah and His kingdom (Matt 16:21, 22). What could be more pronounced than Jesus' denunciation of the falsehood of the Pharisees and their teaching (Matt 5:21f;

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 54, 75.

Mark 7:9; Matt 23)?

2) It is explicitly stated that the content of the NT finds its source in the life and teaching of Jesus (Matt 28:19-20; Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1). Jesus' teaching was based upon the OT Scriptures. It was from them that He explained His person and mission (Luke 24:27; John 5:46).

3) The NT teaching must also be seen as revelation. The Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth and bring an understanding of Gospel events to them after the fact (John 14:26, 29; 16:13-15). Divine remembrance and interpretation is what they recorded for succeeding generations (1 John 1:1; 2 Peter 1:16-21).

These all argue against paralleling the NT to other religious writings of its time. Peter must be seen as one who was taught by the Lord and later by the Holy Spirit. That is why the previous chapter has dealt with an interpretation of the Hebrew text. Therein is the source of his usage, no matter what phraseology he might have chosen to express it. As Christ did not interpret the OT as His contemporaries, neither must we require Peter to understand his OT Scriptures according to traditional interpretations.

#### Relation to the Hebrew Text

There are a number of similarities between the MT and the LXX. First, the corporate nature of the OT context is reflected in the translation of the corporate noun "priesthood." Second, "kingdom" and "priests" express

concrete realities, but in Exodus 19:6 both were used to represent an abstract idea. Implied in the sanctity of the people and the context as a whole is the responsibility of Israel to the world. Finally, the word order of the MT is retained in the LXX.

#### Word Study of ἱερότευμα

The basic meaning of the word is "priesthood."<sup>1</sup> But a question remains as to the exact nature of the PH. Examination of the word in a variety of contexts has revealed several nuances.

#### Priestly Dignity

This is the conclusion of Schrenk as he studied the word in 2 Maccabees 2:17.<sup>2</sup> "We hope also, that the God that delivered all his people, and gave them all an heritage, and the kingdom, and the priesthood, and the sanctuary. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

#### Priestly Function

Schrenk finds this to be the usage in I Peter 2:5.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>BAGD, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>TDNT, s.v. "ἱερότευμα," by G. Schrenk, 3:249-250.

<sup>3</sup>The Apocrypha (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup>Schrenk, "ἱερότευμα," 3:250.

Hort uses the label "act or office of priesthood."<sup>1</sup> A later section will show how Peter develops this meaning.

#### Active Body of Priests

This is the conclusion of Elliott from his studies in the Petrine passages.<sup>2</sup> PH for the Church is a corporate idea where a community of persons functions in a priestly ministry. The nature of this ministry is defined by the context. Elliott's definition consists of three parts. The corporate idea latent in the word itself is expressed by his word "body." The idea of activity is derived from the context as is the personal quality which is conveyed by his term "priests."

Hort summarized his study of the word in this way: ἱερότευμα includes the sacredness of the office, the function of the office, the corporate nature of the office, and the concrete activity of the office (as opposed to the abstract ἱερατεία).<sup>3</sup>

#### Priesthood in I Peter 2:9

##### Peter's Use of the OT

This is perhaps the more crucial of the two verses because it has a more direct relation to Exodus 19:6 than does verse 5. Verse 9 gives several titles to the Church

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<sup>1</sup>Hort, St. Peter, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Hort, St. Peter, p. 110.

in the words of the Greek OT. The variety in this construction has already been seen (p. 45), indicating that Peter is not quoting any one passage verbatim, but making use of phrases which adequately express his message, and with which his readers will be familiar. Such methodology is not unusual to the NT. "The NT writers not unfrequently, in passing references, employ LXX language which represents the thought they wish to express, even though it may not happen to answer with perfect precision to the Hebrew in the place where it originally occurs. . . . Yet, as regards general tenor, the translation substantially accords with the original."<sup>1</sup>

#### Context and Usage

Each of the titles in verse 9 points to the separateness of the Church. Believers as a whole stand apart from the rest of the world in a unique relationship to God. This idea of holiness is very much parallel to Israel's position among the nations. But the Church cannot be identified simply as the extension of Israel. While retaining the basic sense of sanctity from the OT text, Peter's usage clearly differentiates between the two. With Israel these terms had national significance. God was dealing with the Hebrew people both as a race and a nation. Neither racial heritage nor a political body constitute the nature of

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<sup>1</sup>Johnstone, Peter, p. 134.

the Church. The statements of I Peter 2:9 are made without condition, but the setting in Exodus 19:6 is that of the covenant relationship. The status of "kingdom of priests" became a reality only as the nation fulfilled its responsibility to the covenant. The terms applied to the Church are to be taken figuratively of a spiritual body.<sup>1</sup> The distinction made by Peter is not between the Church and nations, but between the Church and the unbelieving world.

As an "elect race" the Church holds a singular position and purpose on the basis of God's choosing.<sup>2</sup> As a "holy nation" she is set apart from the world around her. The designation "people for His own possession" communicates the preservation and safekeeping of the Church.<sup>3</sup> βασιλείον ιεράτευμα occurs in parallel with these three other titles, and together they make up a unit of thought. Each one says something about the special relation of the Church to God. The OT sense of "sanctity" fits into this chain of thought beautifully. All of these speak of positional reality or privilege and are true of the entire Church. Implied in this privileged position is the responsibility to the world. This responsibility is set forth in the last half of the verse.

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Hort, St. Peter, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup>Masterman, S. Peter, p. 101.

The second half of verse 9 modifies the whole of the first half. It is introduced by the purpose clause ὅπως.<sup>1</sup> The crucial point to see is that the Church's responsibility to "proclaim the excellencies of the One who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light," is not the exclusive function of the Church as a PH. It is enjoined upon the Church because of her privileged relation to God in all of its aspects.

The concrete activity implicit in the words is utilized by Peter in verse 5 where the concept of the Church as a spiritual house leads to the further picture of the Church as a functioning PH carrying out the worship in the spiritual temple. This verse will be developed at a later point.

#### Problem of βασιλείου

The chief exegetical difficulty of I Peter 2:9 is the usage of βασιλείου. This neuter, singular form could be either adjectival or substantival.<sup>2</sup> As an adjective it translates by the common "royal." As a substantive it means "kingdom" or "royal residence." It makes the sentence awkward and the sense somewhat obscure. But a long tradition of interpretation and translation has taken it so.

Substantival Usage. Elliott spends an entire

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<sup>1</sup>BAGD, p. 576.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

section tracing the textual tradition of Exodus 19:6.<sup>1</sup> His study showed that the LXX, 2 Maccabees 2:17, and Philo interpreted it as a noun. Further evidence comes from Peter's own usage of two nouns together in the phrase βασιλείου ιεράτευμα. When he employs an adjective, it generally follows the noun. Fourth, normal syntax calls for an adjective to follow the noun unless the article is present.<sup>2</sup>

To conclude that βασιλείου is a noun is one matter. To understand its meaning and relationship to the rest of the sentence is another. Hort, and more recently Ernest Best, represent the thinking involved in the dilemma of interpretation. Both came to the same point in their review of the evidence, but chose different conclusions. If taken as a substantive, the most likely translation would be "kings and priests." But the conjunction is missing. Perhaps the nouns are in apposition. Then the sense would be "kingdom, that is, a priesthood." But this is very unsuitable with the other parallel titles. To resolve the problem, Hort reverted to its adjectival usage simply because it made better sense.<sup>3</sup> Best retained its substantival character, but he did not make clear its

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, ch. 2, pp. 31-128.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Hort, St. Peter, p. 125.

relation to "priesthood." His final conclusion was that more work needed to be done on this word.<sup>1</sup>

Following the lead of Selwyn, Elliott equates the οἶκος πνευματικός of verse 5 with βασίλειον in verse 9. The structure of verses 4-5 and 9-10 is so arranged that "spiritual house" is Peter's interpretation of "kingdom" (see Elliott's view discussed under "Literary Structure," pp. 44-46). Both have reference to the people of God as the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. There are therefore, two separate thoughts instead of one in the phrase βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα.

The source of Elliott's equation is Philo's comments on Exodus 19:6 in De Sobriette 66 and De Abrahamo 56. These two texts are important "insofar as they indicate a textual form and an interpretation current in the first Christian century and hence contemporary to the composition of I P."<sup>2</sup>

There are several objections to this view:

1) The perspectives of verses 5 and 9 are different. Verse 5 is concerned with the internal ministry of the Christian community. Verse 9 refers to the Church's elect position among the unbelievers.

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<sup>1</sup>Best, "I Peter 2:4-10," p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, pp. 96-97, 149, 152. This view removes any idea of the kingdom of God or any eschatological significance. In footnote 3, p. 149, he argues against any concept of Christian kingship or co-reigning with Christ.

2) It requires that Peter was familiar with the work of Philo for the meaning and construction of the sentence.

3) It would also require that the readers be familiar with the work of Philo to recognize Peter's usage.

4) It assumes that Peter needed a human source to understand the OT and compose his letter.

5) It requires a parallel between "offering up sacrifices" and "proclaiming God's wonderful works." The first concerns the Church, is offered to God, and is mediated through Christ. The second is an external proclamation to the world.

Adjectival Usage. In marshalling traditional and internal evidence, a simple reading of the phrase in its context has been de-emphasized. In objection to traditional interpretation, see the above arguments. Against the internal evidence it may be said that "Peter would be influenced by the relative position of the words in Ex. 19:6; and certainly the rhythm of the passage would be destroyed if here suddenly, in utter staccato style, two unconnected nouns appeared instead of a noun plus an adjective."<sup>1</sup>

The context argues strongly for the adjective, in spite of the text form cited. It would mean that

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<sup>1</sup>W. Arndt, "A Royal Priesthood, I Pet. 2:9," Concordia Theological Monthly 19 (April 1948):245.

which belongs to a king, hence, "royal."<sup>1</sup> Similar ways of expressing the same thought are a "PH in the service of a king," or "a royal class of priests."<sup>2</sup>

The attributive nature of this interpretation fits the context with its parallels in "chosen," "holy," and "special." It denotes the attachment of a people to their king. But implicit in the phrase is the active meaning of service to the king. Hence, in the book of Revelation, John brings to the forefront the amazing truth of the believer's reigning and ruling with Christ.

#### Priesthood in I Peter 2:5

Peter's meaning of priesthood derives both from the denotation of the word and from his usage. The idea of PH is not the main thought of this passage. Rather, Peter is setting forth the corporate nature and purpose of the Church in OT terms. The imagery of verses 4-5 is the Church as the spiritual house of God, with an emphasis upon the building process and the purpose of the building.

Central Theme: Building the Spiritual House

The preceding portions of Peter's epistle concerned

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<sup>1</sup>TDNT, 3:249. See also J.H.A. Hart, "The First Epistle General of Peter," in Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. 5, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1979), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>See Arndt, "A Royal Priesthood," pp. 244, 246. "A priesthood of royal rank or in royal service," (BAGD, p. 371).

personal development in light of God's salvation. In the midst of their suffering, these Asian Christians were to keep in mind the eternal and future prospects of their salvation. The message of 2:4-10 is that such "personal development is accompanied by a progressive incorporation into the spiritual household of Christ."<sup>1</sup> The progressive nature of the construction comes from the present tense of both the participle and the main verb. Four facts concerning this building process are set forth.

Accomplishment of the Process. The participle (προσερχόμενοι) probably best expresses the means by which the building takes place. The meaning of the verb makes it more significant than a mere attendant circumstance.<sup>2</sup> It means to come in worship and prayer. Thus, it is used in Psalm 34:6 (33:6, LXX), the same Psalm from which Peter has taken the final phrase of verse 3. He picks up the thought as a fitting transition into the new discussion.<sup>3</sup>

Worship and prayer are directed to Christ, the Living Stone (λίθον ζῶντα). The stone image comes from the OT passages quoted in verses 6-8. However, the modifying participle, ζῶντα, is added by Peter. The mixed

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<sup>1</sup>F.W. Beare, ed., The First Epistle of Peter, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>James Hope Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 1: Prolegomena, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980), p. 230.

<sup>3</sup>Hort, St. Peter, p. 104.

imagery sets forth the relationship of men to Christ both structurally and personally. It helps to reconcile the "coming to" Christ with the impersonal figure of a stone.<sup>1</sup>

Ἐκλεκτόν denotes God's choosing and constitutes a unifying theme of all these verses (cp. vv. 6, 9). The Christian stands related to the elect Stone on the basis of his own election by the same God.<sup>2</sup>

Participants in the Process. The participle from πιστεύω (v. 6), is a common designation for believers. The participants are also identified by the second person of the main verb and the second person pronoun of verses 7 and 9. These find their antecedents in the "elect. . . according to the foreknowledge of God" (1:1). Here is the basis for claiming universality of Christian PH. All believers are being built into the spiritual household, which is designed specifically for priestly service.

Structure of the Process. Πνευματικός means "caused by or filled with the (divine) Spirit."<sup>3</sup> The spiritual house (οἶκος πνευματικός) is the body of God's people in whom He lives and whom He controls. It is a figurative expression for the Church as the dwelling place of the Spirit. It also signifies the direction and unity which the Spirit of God brings about in His people.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, pp. 141-145.

<sup>3</sup> BAGD, p. 678.

Purpose of the Process. The relation between the spiritual household and the holy PH is that of structure to function. The two phrases are tightly linked together by the purposive εἰς.<sup>1</sup> Both view the Christian Church from a figurative standpoint. One pictures its form and the other its function. Therefore, in this context, Peter applies the active meaning, "functioning body of priests." It is built upon his primary usage in verse 9.

#### Explanation of Priesthood

The Quality of Priesthood. The thought of ἄγιον here could be two-fold. First, it could mean a priestly service which is set apart to God. The believer is granted such a ministry on the basis of God's election and placement into the spiritual household. Second, it could mean service which is distinctive from that of the pagan's religions. The priesthood of Christians stands alone in relation to other religions and has no intrinsic similarities.

The Ministry of the Priesthood. The ministry of the PH is further explained by the purpose infinitive ἀνευέγκαι. It is the common rendering of several Hebrew words for offering sacrifices in the LXX. The sacrifices are here termed "spiritual." Beare says that spiritual sacrifices have nothing to do with external acts of

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<sup>1</sup>Cp. H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 104.

Christianity. It is the realm of the "inward response of the human spirit to the Spirit of God."<sup>1</sup> But noting the previous meaning for "spiritual" it would better refer to acts of Christian service motivated by the Spirit of God.

This offering up of spiritual sacrifices is accomplished through the mediatorial work of Christ (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).<sup>2</sup> Here is the High Priestly ministry of our Lord. No one comes to God by himself, but on the basis of Christ's work and present session.

#### Summary

I Peter 2:9 is the point of contact with the OT. Peter's citation of Exodus 19:6 remains true to its corporate and attributive sense. It further retains the word order and specific terms as found in the LXX.

"Royal priesthood," along with the other terms, points to the privileged and singular relationship believers have to God. The priests in royal service are cared for and set apart from the people at large in order that they may serve them by standing before God on their behalf. So also there is service which must accompany the privilege of the Church. The service of proclamation is directed toward the unbelieving world (v. 9b). This is a general

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<sup>1</sup>Beare, The First Epistle of Peter, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>A common expression of personal agency, Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, pp. 101-102.

responsibility and not solely attached to the idea of PH. The metaphorical use of priestly duty is expanded in verse 5 where the focus is upon worship rendered to God. Spiritual sacrifices are offered up to God through Christ, but the nature of these is not here spelled out.

Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

And he made us a kingdom, priests to God and His Father (1:6).

And you made them a kingdom and priests to our God (5:10).

But they shall be priests of God and of Christ and they shall reign with Him (the) thousand years (20:6).

These verses are the only other ones which specify believers as priests. Their connection to Exodus 19:6 is much more remote than that of I Peter. In language consistent with the Scriptural idea, John depicts the saints in the future as both priests and kings. In the book of Revelation the connection of these two concepts comes to its completion and what the kingship of believers means, becomes plainly visible. These verses will be treated together in the following general comments.

First, the book of Revelation itself is an eschatological setting. The occurrence of ἀποκαλύψις in 1:1 sets the stage. It refers to a disclosure of a particular kind, as in visions, dreams, or it may mean the disclosure of secrets belonging to the last days and the Second Coming<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>BAGD, p. 92.

(cp. I Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13). The structure of the book also supports its eschatological character (cp. 1:19).<sup>1</sup>

Second, believers are a "kingdom" both because of their connection with the King (the emphasis in I Peter) and by virtue of their own ruling (5:10; 20:6). The active sense of the words now come to the full bloom of their meaning. Attachment to the King ultimately means a participation with Him in His reign.

Third, there is a personal emphasis in the term ἱερεῦς which is present in the Hebrew of Exodus 19:6, but not in I Peter.<sup>2</sup> While not essentially different from the corporate idea, it does identify the individual believer as a priest to God.

Fourth, there is both a present and future aspect to the believer's kingship and priesthood. We have been made a kingdom, priests (1:6). I Peter focuses on the PH and describes the ministry of the Church while it is yet in the world. But the function of the Church changes when she changes location. Instead of representing Christ on earth, she will come back to rule with Christ in His kingdom. Ruling becomes the prominent occupation of the believer (5:10; 20:6).

Fifth, the distinctions between various groups of

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<sup>1</sup>Gary G. Cohen, Understanding Revelation: A Chronology of the Apocalypse (Collingswood, NJ: Christian Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup>Schrenk, "ἱερεῦς," 3:265.

believers become blurred. Church-age believers are not the only saints who receive the honor of king-priests. All participants in the first resurrection ("the one having a part in the first resurrection," 20:6) are included. This would mean OT saints, present-day believers, and tribulation saints ("those who did not worship the beast," 20:4) would have an active role in the administration of the kingdom. This loss of distinctions is seen in the coalescing of the king-priest idea. In the final reference where both ideas are present (20:6), no mention is made of kings. It is the priests who are ruling with Christ.

Finally, the cross work of Christ is the basis of the believer's position as king-priest. "To Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins by His blood--and he made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (1:5b-6a). "For you were slain and have purchased for God by your blood (men) from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to our God" (5:9b-10a).

The book of Revelation reveals the eschatological significance of the PH of the believer. It is inseparably united with the royal dignity of his position in Christ. While the PH seems to be most prominent in the present time, there is yet a future fulfillment as believers reign with Christ as His king-priests.

## Sacrificial Language

### Introduction

Another line of evidence for the PH of the believer is the NT use of sacrificial terminology for his service and worship. The language of various passages is reminiscent of the Levitical system of sacrifice. Among them would be the sacrifice of self (Rom 12:1), the sacrificial walk (Eph 5:2), the sacrifice of faith (Phil 2:17), and the sacrifice of goods (Phil 4:18). Verbs "to offer" (ἀναφέρω) are used in Hebrews 13:5 and James 2:21, while "to be poured out" (σπένδομαι) is found in Philipians 2:17 and 2 Timothy 4:6. The crux of the issue really lies in the book of Hebrews where the theme is the "priesthood of Christ and its mighty effects in sacrifice and intercession on behalf of the people of God."<sup>1</sup> What do these terms imply concerning the PH of the believer and can they be correlated with the specific statements of I Peter and Revelation?

Hebrews 13:15, 16

#### Context

The high priesthood of Christ is first mentioned in 2:17, picked up again in Hebrews 4:15-16, and developed throughout the remainder of the book. The qualifications for PH (5:1-10) are followed by the validity of the new PH

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<sup>1</sup>ISBE, s.v. "Priesthood," by Wm. G. Moorehead, p. 2444.

(7:1-28) which functions within a new covenant (8:1-13) on the basis of a once-for-all sacrifice (9:1-10:18). This brings to a climax the argument of the book.<sup>1</sup> All that any human PH had heretofore accomplished came to an end in the sacrifice of Christ. God has been propitiated and the believer comes to God through Him.

The charge might be brought that there is no longer a sacrifice for the Christian to offer.<sup>2</sup> But the author asserts that there is an altar for the Christian (13:10). Hughes simply calls this the "whole sacrificial action of Christ."<sup>3</sup> Similar to the animal sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:27), Christ suffered outside the city gates (vv. 11-12). The Christian is called to identify with the reproach of Christ (v. 13) and offer up sacrifices to God (vv. 15-16).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>S. Lewis Johnson, The Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>C.F.D. Moule, "Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament," Journal of Theological Studies 1 (April 1950):29. He says, "that sacrificial language was teaching designed to meet the objections of Jews and also pagans who expressed a sense of outrage that Christians should have no sacrificial system."

<sup>3</sup>Philip E. Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 577.

<sup>4</sup>B.F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 441.

### Nature of Spiritual Sacrifices

Notice first that these sacrifices involve worship to God and service toward men. The sacrifice of praise is patterned after the thank offering of Leviticus 7:12. The sacrifice of good works is that of kindly service and sharing of substance.<sup>1</sup> Sacrificial activity is not limited to these for any "such sacrifices" are pleasing to God.

The true nature of spiritual sacrifice is seen in the contrasts with the Levitical system. Believers' sacrifices are offered without Levitical mediation through Christ (δι' αὐτοῦ). Rather than occasional and specified, the sacrifices of the new priesthood are continual (διὰ παντός). They are also non-material rather than physical sacrifices (καρπὸν χειλέων).

Moule argues for the definition of πνευματικός as non-material. He arrives at this definition by a comparison of Romans 12, I Peter 2:2, and I Peter 2:5. The words which link these passages are λογικός (Rom 12:1; I Pet 2:2), θύσια (Rom 12:1; I Pet 2:5), and πνευματικός (I Pet 2:5). He sees a virtual equivalence of λογικός and πνευματικός, both with the meaning "spiritual," "immaterial," or "metaphorical."<sup>2</sup>

But the sacrifice of Romans 12:1 is not called λογικός. The presentation of one's self is λογικὴν λατρείαν

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>2</sup>Moule, "Sanctuary and Sacrifice," pp. 34-35.

in response to the mercies of God. Moule cites for this usage I Corinthians 10:3-4 (spiritual food and drink, Christ the spiritual Rock), Ephesians 6:12 (spiritual forces of wickedness), I Corinthians 15:44 (spiritual body), Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19 (spiritual songs). In each of these instances a meaning more specific than "immaterial" is required to make proper sense of the passage. The non-material aspect is only one part of spiritual sacrifices. The significance of πνευματικός must be the motivation and direction of the Spirit of God.

### Conclusions

The sacrificial language of Hebrews 13:15, 16 seems to be best understood as a figure expressing the believer's service to God and to his fellow believers. "The sacrifices which God wants from Christians are not so much cultic or liturgical offerings, but rather the everyday acts of practical virtue and fraternal charity which make up the Christian Life."<sup>1</sup> These sacrifices are based on the High Priesthood of Christ and have only distant relations to the Levitical functions. Neither the important duties of the sacrificial atonement or the teaching of the Law are mentioned with reference to the believer. These terms depict the whole character of new life in

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<sup>1</sup>Robert J. Daly, "The NT Concept of Christian Sacrificial Activity," Biblical Theology Bulletin 8 (July 1978): 99-107.

Christ. It is a "life lived totally to his praise."<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusions

#### Two Perspectives on PH

The complexity of evidence in the NT has led to a certain amount of confusion. The terminology and functions of believers as priests or a priesthood has no uniform usage. In I Peter the basis of Peter's discussion is the unique relationship of the Church as a whole to God. Because of that privileged position, she has a representative function to the world. Peter does not mention the Levitical system or the High PH of Christ.

On the other hand, Hebrews portrays the OT priestly

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<sup>1</sup>Hughes, Hebrews, p. 584. As to the Catholic view there is by no means a consensus of opinion. Since Vatican Two the issue has caused much debate and thinking. Hans Kung's work is very Biblical at this point, but he is considered a radical theologian by the Catholic Church. Other representative works would be those of Karl Hermann Schelkle, Discipleship and Priesthood, rev. ed., trans. by Joseph Disselhorst (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965); and J.B. Whelan, "The Priesthood of the Laity," Doctrine and Life 15 (October 1965):539-346.

The groundbreaking work on the PH was published in 1957 by the Frenchman Yves M. Congar, Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity, trans. by Donald Attwater (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957). He views the believer's PH in two parts--holiness of life and the sacramental worship of the Church. The first is clearly stated. "The kingly priesthood spoken of in the Bible is the priesthood of the offering of 'spiritual' sacrifices, which are nothing else than a person's own life, especially in its deeds of praise, confession of faith, kindness to others, sharing what one has, in alms and in spiritual generosity in communicating truth" (p. 184). His explanation of sacrifice in liturgical worship, however, is a confusing integration of Biblical truth and Church tradition (pp. 187-218).

system and its relation to that of Christ. The individual believer carries out spiritual sacrifice (service) upon the basis of Christ's completed sacrifice. Revelation speaks also of the believer-priest in individual terms.

How shall these two perspectives be reconciled? There is no reason to sharply divide between the explicit statements of I Peter and the implications of the sacrificial language of the NT. Both contribute to a total doctrine in which there is diversity within unity. The lack of kingly function in Hebrews is consistent with the present emphasis on the PH. Yet, the idea is not totally absent, for the believer's PH is based upon that of Christ, the king-priest (Heb 7).

While Exodus 19:6 speaks of a corporate PH, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 use the same OT passage to speak of PH from the individual point of view.<sup>1</sup>

First Peter and Hebrews are connected by the common use of ἀναφέρω. Furthermore, the spiritual sacrifice of I Peter is left without explanation. It can only be understood in light of Hebrews and related passages. In both contexts the sacrifices are offered through Christ.

#### Nature of Christian Priesthood

What is the basic meaning then of NT Priesthood? The doctrine may be defined as "the Church's corporate

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<sup>1</sup>Best, "I Peter 2:4-10," p. 286.

ministry based upon the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, and accomplished through the Christian service of its individual members." Radmacher defines it, "Every believer is a priest unto God and this entire complex of believer priests constitutes a holy and royal priesthood under the authority of Christ who is the true High Priest, of whom all other high priests were but types."<sup>1</sup>

The best word to describe the priestly language of the NT is "figurative." The believer does not have a literal PH in the same sense as the Levitical priests or Christ. While it is analogous in some ways, there is a distinction in the essential nature of PH since Christ. There is no longer any sacrifice for sins and that was an integral part of any priestly function. In Christ the necessity of the PH is removed. All the benefits of a limited PH are the privilege of all God's people. Sacrifice is a figurative way of expressing the Christian's service rendered to God and the world.<sup>2</sup> Manson recognized the need for caution in describing Christian PH similar to Christ's. In the normal understanding of PH, the believer's function is more "non-priestly" than "all-priestly."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Earl D. Radmacher, The Nature of the Church (Portland, OR: Western Baptist Press, 1972), p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 280. "The idea of service is foremost in this figure."

<sup>3</sup>T.W. Manson, The Church's Ministry (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948), pp. 40-41.

### Privileges and Responsibilities

In a helpful booklet Paige Patterson outlines a conservative Baptist position on the subject. His basic approach to the PH of the believer is by analogy to the Levitical PH.<sup>1</sup> While Levitical terminology is used of the Christian, there are some very radical differences between the two systems. This approach may also lead to a scheme of Christian PH which makes baptism and anointing analogous to the consecration of OT priests. Such literal analogy is not warranted from the NT passages.

The NT indicates three general areas of privilege and responsibility associated with the PH of the believer. Inherent in the meaning and function of "priest" is access to God. A verse like Romans 5:2 appears to give direct personal access, but the believer only comes through the High Priestly mediation of Christ (Heb 4:15-16; 10:19-22). It is true that access is not explicitly stated in connection with the doctrine, yet it remains an inherent element whether corporately or individually. Believers are priests, not because they secure access, but because they have access through Christ, who obtained that privilege for them.

A second area of responsibility is the offering of sacrifice. Specific ones of these are mentioned throughout

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<sup>1</sup>Paige Patterson, "Authority and the Priesthood of the Believer," The Shophar Papers, vol. 2 (Dallas: Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, 1980), p. 13.

the Epistles, but Hebrews 13:16 opens the way for any "such sacrifices" to be pleasing to the Lord. The recent Catholic theologian, Hans Kung, has an excellent section on the universal PH of believers. He has removed the ideas of sacrifice from the formal setting of the Eucharist to "worship in the world, in the middle of everyday life."<sup>1</sup> We would agree with his statement if he is not totally removing spiritual sacrifices from the services of the Church.

A final area of responsibility is proclamation. First Peter 2:9b places this duty on the entire Church. It is not limited to the formal preaching carried on by the pastor or elders, but the gospel witness of each individual member.

#### Summary

These conclusions must be the parameters for any further discussion or application of the doctrine. We must strip away the historical and theological accretions and define it as clearly as possible from the Biblical statements. The following chapter looks at some theological implications based upon the definitions of this thesis. It is an attempt to apply and limit the doctrine in some areas of possible confusion.

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Kung, The Church, trans. by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 374. Kung represents a radical departure from traditional Catholic tradition.

## CHAPTER IV

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction

The "Priesthood of All Believers" has been a doctrine and a slogan applied in many theological and ecclesiological battles over the years. It rose to prominence during the Reformation as a watchword against the hierarchical system of the Roman Church.

More recently, the nature of Christian PH has played an important role in the high Church discussions of merger and union.<sup>1</sup> One wonders how much theological or ecclesiastical loyalties influenced the presentation and use of the doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup>Moberly, Ministerial Priesthood. This book is a defense of the Anglican form of ministry and church order; Kenneth E. Kirk, ed. The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and Doctrine of Episcopacy (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946); Manson, The Church's Ministry, was a response published in 1948 to Kirk's publication. R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the NT (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938). Flew sought to find common ground for ecumenical union of "separated communions of Christendom" (p. 9). Rather than organizational, he looks at the Church as existential communities which share a common life in Christ. Dr. W.F. Lofthouse was the chairman of a committee which wrote up a Methodist statement on the doctrine of the Church. He later published a related article, "The Priesthood of Believers," Congregational Quarterly 36 (January 1958): 6-13.

In our own times, the PH of the believer is being used as a theological umbrella to hide departure from basic doctrines. In the name of individual freedom, traditional interpretations of the wrath of God, the role of the sexes, creation, etc., are being brought into question.<sup>1</sup>

All the issues cannot be discussed here, but several general areas of theological implication will be presented.

#### Terminology of Christian PH

The term "priesthood" has developed a meaning in Christian history which is somewhat broader than the biblical occurrences. It came to designate the ministerial leadership of the Church. However, the NT makes no mention of priests in the lists of Church leaders (I Cor 12:28-30; Eph 4:11-12). Neither were there any priests specified in the apostolic and early Church.<sup>2</sup> But early in the Church's history, the Eucharist came to be identified as a sacrifice and those who administered it as priests.<sup>3</sup> This usage has persisted to the present in the Catholic and Anglican traditions. In retaining the title of "priesthood" for the clergy, Moberly admittedly has left Scriptural

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<sup>1</sup>Patterson, "The Priesthood of the Believer," pp. 9, 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup>Manson, The Church's Ministry, pp. 43-45.

<sup>3</sup>Didache 14:1-3; cited in Kung, The Church, p. 382.

usage. He chooses to take the biblical term and redefine it according to the history and experience of the Church.<sup>1</sup> This departure is essential to his defense of the Anglican system and causes confusion to the biblical doctrine.

Evangelical theologians are not without fault either. Many treat the PH of the believer as a general concept under which many valid privileges are subsumed. But they have no exegetical connection to the NT teaching on PH. Patterson cites John 14:26 and I John 2:20-27 in support of the believer's illumination by the Holy Spirit. This truth is not in a context of PH. Of the nine privileges and responsibilities he lists, only three are supported by Scripture with a priestly context. Chafer uses a typological approach which compares the PH of believers to those of Aaron, Melchizedek, and Christ.<sup>2</sup> The question is not one of truthfulness, but one of accuracy. Clarity is needed in the distinction between the biblical terminology and theological categories.

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<sup>1</sup>Moberly, Ministerial Priesthood, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Patterson, "The Priesthood of the Believer," p. 14; L.S. Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol. 4 (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), pp. 65-68.

Organization of the Church

The idea of Church order and ministry pertain to the "inward ministration by those in a particular office."<sup>1</sup> Such a thought is foreign to I Peter, Hebrews, or Revelation. As the context of Exodus eliminated any idea of the internal structure of the nation, the corporate character of that passage is maintained in the NT usage. The leadership of the Church is spoken of in language other than "priestly" (I Pet 4:4-11; 5:1-5; Eph 4:11).

The confusion in past discussions of Church order comes from the theological rather than exegetical use of "priesthood." The arguments imply that the term is biblical. In reality, the teaching is normally used to justify a sacramental system. Moberly's work has already been mentioned. Another elaborate argument is that of T.F. Torrance. He seeks to build a Scriptural foundation for the order of priests within the Church of England and Scotland from the Reformed perspective. His argument is set up on the basis of an OT analogy and the similarity of language used in the LXX between the institutional organization of Israel and the functions of NT Christianity. He comes up with a correlation between circumcision and baptism, Aaron's PH and the "particular" PH of the Church which ministers through the Word and Sacraments, and Israel's responsibility to the nations and the Church's

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, p. 195.

proclamation to the world. Much Scripture is used but historical-contextual interpretation is weak. It is based mainly on linguistic and analogical similarities.<sup>1</sup>

Such arguments are confusing and misrepresent the teaching of Scripture in its context. None of the biblical writers from Moses to John had in mind the organization of the nation or Church. Even though Peter used the metaphor of a building, it is a mixed metaphor in that the stones used for building are living. He is describing a relationship within the spiritual household of God. As believers come to the Elect Stone, Jesus Christ, they are incorporated into His building. The only structural feature is Christ Himself as the cornerstone. No direction is given for the leadership and authority within the Church.

This also is the conclusion of Kung. He rejects "priest" as a title for Church leaders on the basis of the universal PH. The Church is a fellowship of faith. Any leader or office-holder is primarily a believer serving among fellow believers. PH as an office has been fulfilled in Christ, and every true member of the body of Christ shares the PH under the mediation of the High PH of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 3 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Kung, The Church, pp. 363-371.

PH and the Eucharist

A woodenly literal interpretation of the spiritual sacrifice has resulted in viewing the Lord's Supper as a true sacrifice. It also puts Christian PH on a continuum with either the PH of Aaron or Christ. The sacramental approach understands the Eucharist as a continuation of Christ's work. "The priesthood of believers means that they are permitted and enabled to share in the continuing high-priestly work of Christ by offering themselves in love and obedience to God and in love and service to men. The focus of this high-priestly work, in which Christ and his people share, is the sacrament of the Eucharist."<sup>1</sup> This, in turn, leads to the title "Priest" for the one who administers the sacrament, which is viewed as a sacrifice (Catholic) or the continuing presentation of that sacrifice (Anglican).<sup>2</sup>

The Church must be what Christ is, because she is His body. His priestly ministry in heaven is to be duplicated in the life of His Church on earth. The outward expression of this ministry is the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup> The Church becomes the mediatorial agency of God on earth.

The subtle danger of these literal interpretations is the almost completely opposite understanding of the PH

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<sup>1</sup>Manson, The Church's Ministry, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Moberly, Ministerial Priesthood, pp. 240, 250-51.

of the individual. The Church does have a corporate PH, but the context of I Peter does not base that PH on its connection to any sacrificial system. The Church's position in the world is not mediatorial, as though she is the means by which a man may come to God. If such were the case, then the sacramentalists would be correct. But every unbeliever has direct access to God through Christ for his salvation. The Church's function is to introduce him to the truth by her witness.<sup>1</sup>

Even the background of sacrifice in the Hebrews context does not warrant a sacramental interpretation of the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is not even present in Hebrews 13! As has been shown, the spiritual sacrifices, though related to literal sacrifices, are of an essentially different nature. They express a life of service and worship to God.

#### Authority in the Church

While this writer believes in the congregational form of church government, he has come to the conclusion that the doctrine of the PH of the believer can easily be misapplied in this area. It has been interpreted through the mindset of an individualistic Western democracy. Even in Luther's struggles during the Reformation it was flown as a banner of the Christian's freedom. "In these militant

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<sup>1</sup>Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, p. 186.

propositions there is a germ of individualism, of equalitarianism, which does not sound wholly consonant with the biblical view of the 'royal priesthood' which belongs to the body of Christian believers as a whole."<sup>1</sup> When authority becomes the domain of the individual it turns into license. Biblically, the privilege of the individual is exercised within the authority of the whole. There are no "independent" Christians.

What then, is the basis of authority in the church? Who or what determines what is right or wrong or a proper course of action? Because of the universal PH some would respond that the people of the congregation have that right. There are at least two comments that need to be made:

1) This is true only if they themselves are operating under the authority of the Word of God. They have no absolute authority. The church is not a rule of the majority in the same sense that a democracy is ruled by the vote.

The church meeting is not primarily 'democracy in action,' nor a business meeting. Business has to be transacted; the method of doing so is 'democratic' in that the matter in hand is fully discussed and decided by a majority vote, but the real significance of the church meeting--and we have largely forgotten it--lies deeper. It is the occasion when God speaks to the church as the church.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>Robert C. Walton, The Gathered Community (London: Carey Press, 1946), p. 128.

Their authority is a derived one, and it comes through the ministry of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in the lives of the people.

2) Confusion is caused when the PH of the believer is used to promote rights, privileges, and authority. This investigation has shown that it has little, if anything, to do with these areas. The biblical emphasis is upon ministry, service, and responsibility. The special place which we have as God's people (I Pet 2:9) carries with it clearly defined responsibilities (I Pet 2:5, 9b). Our Royal PH brings us into the service of the King. It is not an open ticket to determine our own way of life. Both the Living and the Written Word are the focus of authority for the Church.<sup>1</sup>

#### PH and Christian Service

The term Christian service is here used of the duties of every believer-priest. It is not Christian service only in the sense of full-time work or participation in the meetings of the church. It refers rather to the life and witness of every Christian. As the individual Christian fulfills his own part both the internal and external aspects of the church's ministry are carried out.

The doctrine of the PH does not specifically state the diverse functions and ministries which make up

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<sup>1</sup>V.C. Pfitzner, "General Priesthood and Ministry," Lutheran Theological Journal 5 (1971):107.

the total ministry of the church. But there are several helpful implications of the doctrine which serve as guidelines for individual involvement.

1) Every Christian is to be a part. If one is a member of the body of Christ, he is a part of the Royal Priesthood and responsible for its service. This means that the official leaders of the church are not delegated by the rest of the congregation as the executive committee of a corporation. "Nothing in the NT encourages the idea that a special clerical class was to be created which would be responsible for worship and witness, while the great majority of members would be spectators."<sup>1</sup> When it comes to spiritual concerns there is no service by proxy. All must take part.

2) In considering the service of each Christian it is necessary to expand the popular idea of Christian service. It is so much deeper than formal teaching, preaching, or holding office in the church. It has to do with the living out of new life in Christ in every circumstance of life.

3) The PH of the believer does not imply or require the equality of all members in the various functions of the church. Not all are spiritually qualified to enter into the various offices and functions of the church.

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<sup>1</sup>Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), p. 92.

Congar rightly objects when "the doctrine of the priesthood of the faithful is interpreted as meaning that each and every Christian is in himself qualified to carry out all the functions of the ministry."<sup>1</sup> The particular place of ministry for each individual is based upon his Divinely-given gifts. The spiritual gifts within the church are to be recognized, developed, and employed as a part of the total building up of the Body. Any selection to office or other ministry should be based on prayerful consideration of a man's character and abilities.

4) Pastors or elders of a church are not the minister(s), but minister(s) among ministers. They have a unique task within the congregation, not of doing "the work," but of encouraging and equipping other Christians in the exercise of their ministries (Eph 4:11-12). Thus, "the work" is accomplished by the mutual ministry of the Royal Priesthood.<sup>2</sup>

#### Epilogue

My research has led me to believe that the PH of all believers has been overworked in the theological debates of the past. It certainly has implications for church order, but that is not its biblical emphasis and must not be pressed into service beyond what it actually

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<sup>1</sup>Congar, Lay People in the Church, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup>Walton, The Gathered Community, p. 145; Pfitzner, "General Priesthood and Ministry," p. 107.

says. The OT language applied to the Church describes, in a figurative way, one facet of the nature of the Church. It views the organic (not organizational) relationship between the Church and her Lord, and the responsibility of the Church to the society around her. Thus, it is both theological and sociological in outlook.

The basis for the PH of the Church is the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. In Him the awful barrier of sin and condemnation has been removed. There remains no more sacrifice for sins. All who come to Him may legitimately be called priests (which, by nature, would be limited to a particular class) because they no longer need one. All have the same privilege before God. Instead of securing access to God for the world, we have the glorious privilege of announcing that entrance has already been opened through Christ. This proclamation is accompanied by a life of obedience expressing praise to God and service to men. All that we do or say to bear witness of the salvation men may have in Christ is a valid expression of the Priesthood of the Believer.

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