

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

IN considering the problem of the Second Epistle of St. John we shall make the word *ἐκλεκτῆ* (verse 1) our starting-point.

Assuming, as we fairly may, that *ἐκλεκτῆς* in the closing verse is used in the same sense as in verse 1, we observe that the occurrence of this word at the beginning and at the end of 2 John finds a close parallel in 1 Peter, in which *ἐκλεκτοῖς* is used at the beginning, *συνεκλεκτῆ* at the end. The parallel is seen to be still closer when it is observed that the word occurs in both Epistles in the *salutations*. That the *συν* in *συνεκλεκτῆ* in 1 Peter is to be taken as referring to *ἐκλεκτοῖς* will appear only natural if we suppose that the closing salutation was composed with conscious reference to that with which the Epistle had opened.<sup>1</sup> When we consider the importance of the communication which the Apostle had to make, and that it was destined to be circulated over a large area, careful attention to *form*, especially at the beginning and at the end, is seen to be natural under the circumstances. Even a certain elaborateness of style and phrase is *a priori* probable.<sup>2</sup> To hold that the closing salutation of 1 Peter was written with reference to the opening greeting involves little more than to suppose that it was written, not, as in a private letter, with unstudied spontaneity, but consciously and with deliberation. If then the *συν* in *συνεκλεκτῆ* refers to *ἐκλεκτοῖς*, the parallel with 2 John is seen to be complete.<sup>3</sup>

It follows that the problem before us is not so much

<sup>1</sup> An upward movement of the eyes to the top of the scroll would suffice.

<sup>2</sup> How far the Apostle would be responsible for this himself we need not inquire.

<sup>3</sup> So Lightfoot, *Clement of Rome*, ii. 491, quoted by Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, p. 77.

what is the meaning of ἐκλεκτῆ in 2 John i. as why did St. Peter and St. John make use of this particular word?

In determining this question we turn to ἐκλεκτοῖς in 1 Peter i. 1.

Now ἐκλεκτοὶ occurs along with ἅγιοι and ἡγαπημένοι in Colossians iii. 12, and is there<sup>1</sup> explained by Bishop Lightfoot to be a term "transferred from the Old Covenant to the New." That this is also the explanation in 1 Peter i. 1 will be apparent when we consider that both παρεπιδήμοις and διασπορᾶς are adapted from the Old Testament. There can be no question that the primary associations of ἐκλεκτοῖς were Jewish. But if ἡ...συνεκλεκτή refers to ἐκλεκτοῖς, as has been shown to be probably the case, then the associations of ἡ...συνεκλεκτή will also be Jewish, much more so those of ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή. For to say that by "Babylon" was signified "Rome" does not alter the fact that the associations of Babylon were primarily Jewish, and that in the case of any one familiar enough with the Jewish Scriptures to understand the opening words of the Epistle, the mention of Babylon could hardly fail to suggest the thought of the Captivity. We conclude that the atmosphere of the closing salutation, as of the opening, is Jewish.

In answering therefore the question who is intended by "the woman" implied in ἡ συνεκλεκτή, we turn naturally to the Old Testament.

Now it is characteristic of the prophets that while they constantly address the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the plural number, they hardly less frequently speak of Jerusalem under the figure of a woman. We find this in Isaiah (liv. lv.), Jeremiah (iv. 30—end, vi. 2, vii. 29, xiv. 17, xxi. 13, xxii. 20, etc.), and Ezekiel (xvi. and xxiii.); also in Hosea

<sup>1</sup> See the note in his *Commentary on the Colossians*, 8th ed. p. 219. Cf. also the note on ἐκλεκτῆ in the letter of Ignatius to the Trallians (Lightfoot, *Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. ii. p. 151).

(ch. ii.), Micah (iv. 8, 10, 13), Zephaniah (iii. 1, 10, 14) and Zechariah (ii. 7, 10, ix. 9). Even Amos,<sup>1</sup> the herdman of Tekoa, uses it (v. 1). The figure was clearly part of what may be described as the common stock of prophetic imagery. Nor is it confined to the Canonical Books. We meet with it in the book of Baruch (see chaps. iv. and v.).

Reserving for the moment a more thorough investigation of the treatment of this figure in the prophetic writings, we must draw attention to the fact that when the term *ἐκλεκτοὶ* was applied by St. Peter to Christians, it was applied to people who were actually members of a number of separate communities. Not that he is to be supposed as thinking of his readers in this way, but that it was none the less the fact that in one important respect the circumstances of the Jewish nation had not been reproduced in the case of Christianity. What is meant is that it was no longer possible to gather up individual Christians into a collective whole and address them as an individual without including *all* Christians in every place. In the case before us St. Peter could not (had he desired to do so) have made use of the figure of a woman in addressing the Christians to whom he was writing. But there was nothing to prevent his transferring the figure to a *particular community* of Christians. This transference would be helped partly by the fact that other communities besides the Jewish were spoken of under the figure of a woman, e.g. Samaria and Sodom (Ezek. xvi. and xxiii.), Egypt (Jer. xlvi. 44); partly too, in the case before us, by the designation of the city from which he wrote as "*Babylon*." To speak of a woman in Babylon was to speak in language which at once recalled such expressions as "the captive daughter of Zion." No Jewish Christian would find difficulty in understanding why St. Peter had chosen such an expression, for was it not true that the relation of the chosen people to Babylon was

<sup>1</sup> We should perhaps not have expected a *herdman* to use the figure.

only too faithfully reproduced in the relation of a Christian Church to a heathen city?

From 1 Peter we pass again to 2 John. And we begin by noting with regard to *ἐκλεκτῇ* (1) that the absence of the article is paralleled by its omission before *ἐκλεκτοῖς* in 1 Peter i. 1, (2) the feminine termination by *συνεκλεκτή* in 1 Peter v. 13. We observe also that *ἐκλεκτῇ* by itself would be perfectly good Greek for "To an elect woman."

Leaving *ἐκλεκτῇ* we ask what is the meaning of *κυρία*? The chief point is that *κυρία* is not a substantive but an *epithet*. The use of *κύριος* as an epithet is common not only in the Old Testament but in profane Greek. Thus we find it applied (with the article) as a title to certain gods and goddesses (e.g. *ὁ κύριος* to ten gods, e.g. once to Kronos, ten times to Hermes, etc.; *ἡ κυρία* to five goddesses, e.g. three times to Artemis, thirty-two to Isis, etc., *C.I.G.* Index iii.). We also find it (without the article) in an inscription: *A(υγοῦστας)<sup>1</sup> κυρίας Αγριπέυας*, *C.I.G.* 7061, and (as was shown by Professor Rendel Harris in the *EXPOSITOR* for March, 1901) in more than one place in the Oxyrhynchus papyri, e.g. *κυρία μου Σερηνία* and *κυρίῳ μου νίῳ* (quoted on page 197). The use of *κύριε* and *κυρία* in the vocative is also obviously adjectival. We reserve for a moment the question as to the precise shade of meaning to be given to *κυρία* and *κυρία* in 2 John. What we wish to emphasize is that *κυρία* can quite well be taken as an epithet. Can *ἐκλεκτῇ κυρία*, taken as<sup>2</sup> two epithets, stand? Unquestionably. The meaning will be "To an elect woman<sup>3</sup> who is *κυρία*." Something like this is found in an inscription (*C.I.G.* 3858) in which one Nicias is described as a priest *Σεβαστῆς Εὐβουσίας*. Here *Εὐβουσίας* (an epithet

<sup>1</sup> The letters within the brackets are conjectural.

<sup>2</sup> Or we may say that *ἐκλεκτῇ* is practically equivalent to a substantive, and is qualified by *κυρία*.

<sup>3</sup> We purposely avoid the rendering "lady."

of Demeter) corresponds to ἐκλεκτῆ, Σεβαστῆς<sup>1</sup> to κυρία. The instances are not quite parallel, inasmuch as Εὐβουσίας is the epithet of a particular individual, ἐκλεκτῆ is a generic epithet. But the collocation is instructive, since in each case we have a distinctive title joined with a general title.

We pass on to consider the words καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς.

Now it has been felt by some that the presence of these words is an indication that the writer of 2 John was addressing a literal individual. The rendering "lady" has helped in the same direction. With a western mind the insertion of "and to her children" does certainly carry weight. It is to be remembered however that for anything we know to the contrary the readers of this Epistle were as familiar with the Jewish Scriptures as we have seen reason to<sup>2</sup> believe the readers of 1 Peter to have been. Assuming that this was the case, we proceed to draw attention to the fact that in the prophets the metaphor of a woman referred to above is treated with considerable elasticity. We may distinguish two groups of passages. In one group the woman is thought of as a *daughter* (LXX., θυγάτηρ as in Zechariah ii. 7, 10, etc.). In the other group the woman appears as a *mother with her children*. The two passages which the present writer has studied are Isaiah liv., lv., and Baruch iv., v.; in both cases the figure underlies the whole passage. Now a close scrutiny of the language in these two passages makes it evident that three varieties of expression are used according to the point of view of the writers. (1) Usually they speak of a mother *and* her children. But (2) they sometimes speak of the *mother only*, as in Isaiah lv. 5. And (3) they sometimes speak of the *children only*. See, for example, Isaiah liv. 13,

<sup>1</sup> σεβαστῆς was also applied to mortals, e.g. the wife of Septimus Severus is styled σεβαστῆ.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. fact that there are quotations in 1 Peter from eight chapters of Isaiah; also from Hosea, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc. (See the list in W. and H., one vol. edition, p. 607).

καὶ πάντας τοὺς υἱοὺς σου διδασκούς Θεοῦ, καὶ ἐν πολλῇ εἰρήνῃ τὰ τέκνα σου. In Baruch iv. 25 we have a verse in which varieties (2) and (3) occur in close proximity. The words are: *Τέκνα μακροθυμήσατε τὴν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπελθούσαν ὑμῖν ὀργήν, κατεδίωξέ σε ὁ ἐχθρὸς, καὶ ὄψει, etc.* Now in regard to these varieties it is clear that while the figure *in its completeness* includes both mother and children, yet that since the mother implies the children and the children the mother *one or other* of the parts of the figure may be used. One more point must be noticed in the two passages before us, viz. that the figure is frequently dropped and then resumed. In Isaiah lv. the figure appears only in the 5th and in the 11th verse (*Ἔθνη ἃ οὐκ οἶδασί σε . . . and εὐδώσω τὰς ὁδοὺς σου*). In the last verse of chapter liv. the figure is dropped at the end of the verse, and we read: *καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μοι δίκαιοι.* Contrast this with the opening words of the verse, *πάν σκευὸς σκευαστὸν ἐπὶ σὲ . . .*<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the Second Epistle of St. John we find (1) that the opening salutation is sent to a woman and her children, and that both the mother and the children are referred to in the 4th verse. (2) That in the 5th and 13th verses the *woman only* is brought before us. (3) That in the 13th verse a greeting is sent from the *children only* of the elect sister.<sup>2</sup> Thus we find in 2 John phenomena which correspond with those which we have observed in Isaiah and in Baruch.

We also observe that from verses 5 (last sentence) -12, i.e. in the main part of the Epistle, the plural is used throughout, *the figure entirely disappearing*. In regard to this it is worth noting that where the writer uses the first person plural in verses 5 and 6 (*ἀγαπῶμεν, περιπατῶμεν*) he is identifying himself with those whom he is addressing. This is clear from the transition to the second person plural which immediately follows in verse 6 (*καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ'*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Baruch iv. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> On τῆς ἀδελφῆς see below.

ἀρχῆς ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε), and finds an exact parallel in the similar use of the *first* person plural in the First Epistle, e.g. iii. 11 (ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους) followed by the *second* person (μὴ θαυμάζετε) in verse 13, and again by the *first* person in verse 14.

Before drawing a conclusion we may linger a moment on the 13th verse of the Epistle. It has been noticed as strange that the closing salutation contains no greeting to the children of verse 1, and no greeting from the sister. The words are, Ἀσπάξεται σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς. With the passages in the prophets before us the difficulty vanishes. The *σε* implies the children, the τέκνα (of the sister) imply their mother. If it be asked why St. John should not have written Ἀσπάξεται τὰ τέκνα σου ἢ ἀδελφή, etc., the answer is that he might have done so, but that since the mother had been addressed in the 4th and 5th verses it was more natural to select the mother for greeting in the 13th also. This being so, Baruch iv. 32 is suggestive, where the words are Δεῖλαιαι αἱ πόλεις αἷς ἐδούλευσαν τὰ τέκνα σου, δεῖλαια ἢ δεξαμένη τοὺς υἱούς σου. Here the one city (i.e. Babylon) is described as a woman who receives the children of the other (Jerusalem). We submit that in 2 John 13 the choice of the expression τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς, rather than ἡ ἀδελφή, is merely a matter of style.

We have already implied that we regard "the sister" also as a woman representing a Church. Nor need there be any difficulty about this view if we remember that the figure, as used by the prophets, was not limited to Jerusalem. The instances quoted above from Ezekiel are specially instructive, viz. chapter xvi., where *Samaria* and *Sodom* are spoken of as sisters (LXX., ἀδελφαί) of *Jerusalem* (v. 46 and 55), and chapter xxiii., where Jerusalem and Samaria appear as sisters (v. 4, where again ἀδελφαί is the word).

From all these correspondences with the prophetic writ-

ings we draw the conclusion (which was suggested by our study of ἡ . . . συνεκλεκτή) that in 2 John as in 1 Peter the prophetic figure of a woman to represent a community has been transferred to a Christian Church.

We may now decide the precise shade of meaning to be given to κυρία and κυρία. In view of the conclusion at which we have just arrived, we do not hesitate to take this word as a title of *dignity*. With regard to the instances adduced from the papyri in the article referred to above, we submit that, however valuable they are as illustrating the adjectival use of the word κύριος in letters, they cannot be regarded as proving that it was impossible for the word to be used formally, i.e. as a title of dignity. We might with equal justice argue that, because "sir" and "my lady" are *sometimes* used with us in an informal and half playful sense, they can therefore *never* be used as formal titles. To take the word as a title expressing *respect* is in harmony (1) with the use of κύριος and κυρία (with the article) applied to gods and goddesses; (2) with the use of κύριε in such passages as John xii. 21, xvi. 30; (3) with the frequent use of κυρία in the Shepherd of Hermas (the γυνή to whom it is used by Hermas is πρεσβύτης); (4) with the inscription quoted above, with which may be compared the later use of Δόμνα as a title, e.g., of the wife of Septimius Severus, who is styled Ἰουλία Δόμνα Σεβαστή (cf. also 1 Pet. iii. 6, κύριον αὐτὸν καλοῦσα, and the passage from Epictetus quoted in Grimm's Lexicon). It is not so easy to fix upon a *translation* of κυρία; neither "respected" nor "esteemed" really represents the meaning adequately, though both renderings come near the sense.

If the conclusion at which we have arrived be the correct one, it would seem that the truest description of 2 John is to call it a *Prophetic Epistle*, i.e. the (deliberately thought out and carefully composed <sup>1</sup>) utterance of one who realized

<sup>1</sup> The Epistles to the Seven Churches also bear obvious marks of care in the composition.

that he was a successor of the prophets of the Old Covenant, and who framed his message after their manner. Nor will this seem improbable when we consider the resemblance which the messages conveyed in the Epistles to the Seven Churches bear to many of the prophetic utterances. Still less improbable will it seem when we consider that the very circumstances of the diffusion of Christianity gave a new importance to the *Epistle* as a means of conveying the truth of God.

In Jeremiah<sup>1</sup> we have a Prophetic Epistle written to the exiles in Babylon. In 1 Peter we have a Prophetic Epistle written to "sojourners of the dispersion." And we submit that the same is true of the Second Epistle of St. John also, and that, as in the Apocalypse so in the Epistle, the voice is the voice of a Prophet.

H. J. GIBBINS.

#### NOTES ON THE TEXT OF THE PSALMS.

69. 11. אַבְכָּה; read אֲדַכָּה (which is a less change than אַעֲנָה). This appears to have been the reading of the Syr. as in 10. 10.

69. 21. וְאֲנֹשׁ וְאֲקֹדָה; read וְאֲנֹשׁ הוּא קִנְיָה. This reading would favour the hypothesis that the Psalm is Jeremiah's [see the *Academy*, vol. i. p. 256].

69. 33. Read the verbs as imperatives.

71. 7. כְּמוֹפֶת; read כְּמוֹ מֵת as in 31. 13, which Psalm is closely connected with 71.

עַן; cf. Leviticus 6. 3, מִדּוֹ בַד, though there we should probably read מִדֵּי; or read עַן as in 18. 18, אֵיבִי עַן, which would remove the difficulty.

71. 20. תְּהוֹמוֹת; read תְּחַתִּיּוֹת [so Olshausen, Wellhausen, Duhm].

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xxix.