AN EXPLANATION OF THE TERM PROS_ELUTOS

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I recently completed a research project on the religious use of the Semitic root *qrb* “to come near”. The net result was that this root is a thoroughly technical term applied over an extensive field to express a considerable range of inherently related phenomena. Having covered the Old Testament, the Qumran literature, rabbinic literature, the Qur’an and the Syriac Bible, I established that the religious usage of the root operates mainly (but not exclusively) in three semantic spheres, viz. the cultic, metaphorical and eschatological spheres. We may now discard the latter two as they do not concern us in this paper. As regards the first, a variety of cultic matters is described by the root *qrb*, their common element being the concept of approaching the holy sphere 1). One nuance in the cultic use of *qrb* is the subject of our present consideration. I shall endeavour to show that the well-known Greek technical term *proseılutos* should be explained as part of the complete *qrb*-complex in Jewish religious terminology.

One of the cultic uses of *qrb* in the Old Testament is the expression of approaching the cult 2). This is to be found in Ex. xvi 9, Lev. ix 5, Num. xxv 6, Is. lxv 5, Ezek. ix 1, Ps. lxv 5. The basic concept can clearly be seen here: “To approach the holy sphere”. This is our starting point.

Now we may proceed one step. The Old Testament is well acquainted with the concept of the holy community (Ex. xix 5-6, Lev. xix 2, Deut. vii 6, xxvi 18-19, xxviii 9, Is. lxii 12). As could be expected, we find the same concept in the writings of the desert community of Qumran. The important fact for our present purpose is that Qumran employs the *qrb* terminology in this connexion. We

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1) A complete monograph is necessary to deal with the subject fully. I have prepared a dissertation in Afrikaans which awaits translation and publication in some time.

2) Cf. in the Qur’an Sura iv 46, ix 28.

Novum Testamentum, Vol. XV, fasc. 4
shall have to analyse the interesting passage 1QS 6:13-22 which deals with acceptance into the community ranks.

The successive stadia of the admittance procedure can be summarised as follows:

i) The *pāqūd* (overseer) "brings in" (*yēbîʾēhū*) every aspiring member who is accepted by him. This is followed by a period of instruction (6:14-15).

ii) Then follows a second examination, this time conducted by the full community. They decide whether he may "come near" (*qrūb*) or whether he must be "removed" (*rēq*) (6:16).

iii) After a year the candidate is examined once more and his property is "brought near" (!) (6:17-20).

iv) Yet another year expires, after which at last the final examination is conducted. If the community pleases to admit the candidate (*lēqāḇēbō*), he finally becomes a full member of the sect (6:21-22).

When a person is desirous to join (*yṣp*) the sect, the first step is to be "brought in" *lāšūb lāʾemet welāsūr mīkkol cāwel* ("to turn unto truth and to turn away from all evil"). This is only a preliminary entering (*bwʾ*) in order to be taught the doctrines of the sect (cf. the following *beḥō laemōd līpinē hārābbīm*). Here is no question of any formal admittance to the sect, and only the general idea of association with the sect is alluded to by the use of the verb *bwʾ* 1). The verb *yṣp* is used in the same way 2). Both verbs are employed in a general manner, as distinct from *qrūb*.

This latter verb is used technically in our passage: After a specific decision by the *rabbiym* he may "come near" or he must be "removed". *qrūb* here can only mean "become a member". For, indeed, the alternatives of "coming near" or "removal" concern a candidate who has *already* been "brought in". He may still be "removed" after having been "brought in". Therefore his "coming in" and his "coming near" can by no means be identical—the first is preliminary and the second official.

Such a member is a probational one, but nevertheless a member. The only thing that happens after two years, is that his membership becomes final. Where *qrūb* is here used, it is *terminus technicus* for

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1) Cf. the use of *bwʾ* in 1 QS 1:7,12, 2:25; also in the Damascus Document (CD 13:13-14).
2) Cf. 1 QS 6:14, 8:19, CD 13:11.