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NOTE ON GORDIAN’S SECOND LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF ANTINOOPOLIS

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Lines 6-9 of the second letter of Gordian to the citizens of Antinoopolis published by F.A.J. Hoogendijk and me a couple of years ago read as follows:

ōn [ὁ θεός Ἀδριανὸς προτέρους] ὑμᾶς ἀφῆκεν τελῶν κτλ.  6

eἰκώ.  8

τος ἂν εἰς[e] καὶ νῦν ἀπῆλλαξαμένοι   9

In Hellenika 40 (1989) 56 G.A. Souris rejects our supplement προτέρους in line 6 as “not convincing” and suggests ἀνείσφορον instead. This, however, produces an impossible text.

The verb ἀφῆμι in combination with a genitive already expresses what the adjective ἀνείσφορος is supposed to convey: exemption from (taxes). If we allow both to stand in line 6 Gordian would have produced a very awkward phrase, in which ἀνείσφορον is redundant: “From the taxes from which the deified Hadrian exempted you tax-exempt.” The adjective ἀνείσφορος is almost always used as a predicate in combination with the verb εἰμι or another copula, as one would expect. See Josephus, Antiq.Jud. XI 338; Plutarch, Cam. 2, 5; Eusebius, Vit. Const. 4, 2; IG II² i 1368, 158 (Attica); SEG XXI 505 b 7-8 (Athens); IG IV² i 66, 72-73 (Epidaurus; εἰμὲν [Doric equivalent of εἶμαι] κτλ. ἀνείσφορον); IG V i 952, 25 (Boeae); IG VII 2413, 5-6 (Thebæ); FD III iv 353, 4-5 and 11-12 (Delphi); IG XIV 951, 12 (Rome). In IG II² i 1043, 64-65 (Rhous: βουλόμενον κτλ. τρησον τοὺς συνεφήβους κτλ. ἀνείσφορον) the verb τρήσεω functions as it sometimes does in the NT. See e.g. I Tim. 5:22: σεαυτον ἀγχὴν τήρει. The adjectives ἀνείσφόρος and ἀγχήν are both predicates. The same observation can be made with regard to the verb ποιέω in Dion.Hal., Antiq.Rom. V xxii 2, 3 (ἀνείσφόρος τῶν κτλ. ἀναλίσκομεν ἐποίησαν), where the adjective ἀνείσφόρος is a predicate. Such a predicate is impossible with the verb ἀφῆμι in combination with the genitive.²

I still think προτέρους in line 6 of Gordian’s letter balances καὶ νῦν in line 9 too neatly to be rejected out of hand. It produces an acceptable phrase: “From the taxes from which the deified Hadrian exempted you previously.”

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2 A petition by two keepers of sacred cats from the middle of the third century B.C., P.Cair.Zen. III 59451, 3-5 seems to contain such a predicate (ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀφείκει τὸ γένος τοῦτο κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἀλειτουργητον), but the syntax would be much improved if λειτουργητον instead of ἀλειτουργητον had been written. As it stands, the phrase should be translated: “The king exempted this category in the chora of Egypt (so that it is) exempt from the corvée.”