

NOTES

I. 'SPIRITUAL MILK . . . SPIRITUAL HOUSE'

In 1 Peter the transition to 'stone' (2:4) from the figure of 'milk' (2:2) appears to be abrupt. F. W. Beare¹ is tempted to suggest that the passage is meant to be read against the background of Ephesus. The image of Artemis in the great temple there was evidently a meteorite (Acts 19:35, τοῦ διοπετοῦς); but the goddess, whose cult was widespread throughout Asia Minor (Acts 19:27) and so doubtless well known to Peter's readers, was regularly represented as a queenly figure with multiple breasts, capable of nourishing all her devotees with her milk. Instead of a dead stone image, says Peter, Christians come to a living Christ, who feeds them with 'spiritual milk'. Beare admits that he is not convinced, for the Stone in Peter's figure is not an image but a building-stone. In support, however, it could be pointed out that the building-stone is thought of as personal. In Isaiah 8:14, which Peter is citing here, the reference is indeed to Yaweh Himself.

Attractive though it is, Beare's suggestion is not necessary. The right linking of ideas in this passage is not milk: stone, but rather the Hebraic one of babes: house. Genesis 16:2 provides a helpful illustration. Sarai gives her handmaid Hagar to Abram in the hope that 'it may be that I shall obtain children (אֶבְנָהּ, be built) by her'. Sarah's example is later followed by Rachel (Gn. 30:3). Jealous of Leah, she gives her maid Bilhah to Jacob so that 'I may have children (אֶבְנָהּ) through her'. As the lexicons point out, the terms בָּנָה, to build, בֵּן, son, and בֵּית, house, are often associated. To be built is to become a house; to become a house is to obtain children. So Peter's juxtaposition of the themes of birth and building is genuinely Hebraic, and the subsequent reference to 'living stones' (2:5) a perfectly natural one.

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¹ *The First Epistle of Peter*, Blackwell, Oxford (1947) 95.