

'ROCK-STONE' IMAGERY IN I PETER

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Peter's use of the 'rock-stone' imagery takes up a theme which recurs in different aspects all through Scripture, in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, as well as in the New Testament. There is, for example, the stumbling-stone of Isaiah 8:14, the foundation-stone of Isaiah 28:16, the parental rock of Isaiah 51:1f., the rejected but vindicated building-stone of Psalm 118:22, the supernatural stone of Daniel 2:34, and the burdensome stone of Zechariah 12:3. Although Eduard Meyer¹ despaired of the text of Genesis 49:24 as 'hopelessly corrupt', he considers that the 'stone of Israel' is very likely a reference back to the sacred stone of Bethel ('House of God') in Genesis 28:11, 19. The presence of Jacob in both passages strengthens the possibility.

The term stone or rock could be applied to God and to the gods of the nations. 'Their rock is not as our Rock,' sings Moses; and again: 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge?' (Dt. 32:31, 37). Six centuries later Isaiah still uses the figure as he foretells the fate of Assyria: 'His rock shall pass away in terror' (Is. 31:9).

The qualities symbolized both by the metaphor itself and by its contexts are, of course, those of strength and reliability. In addition, in the case of Yahweh there are the cognate ideas of truth and faith, as brought out for example by the contrasts in Isaiah 28:16, 17.

Rock or Stone as an Old Testament name for Yahweh prepared the way for the Messianic understanding of many OT 'stone' texts.² The LXX often translates צֶרֶךְ not by λίθος but by θεός. Six examples appear in Deuteronomy 32. A Midrash explains the great stone over the mouth of the well in Genesis 29:2 as a reference to the Shekinah³—but one illus-

¹ E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und Ihre Nachbarstämme*, Niemeyer, Halle (1906) 282.

² *ZAW* 10 (1890) 85-96; *TWNT* IV. 272, VI. 97.

³ *Gen. R.* 70.9.

tration of the Rabbis' fascination⁴ for the concept of the foundation-stone of Isaiah 28, to which we shall return later.

The 'rock—stone' imagery is taken up in the New Testament. The main references are Mark 12:10f. (= Mt. 21:42; Lk. 20:17), where the figure appears in a *verbum Christi* as the culmination of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen; Acts 4:11 in Peter's defence before the Council; Romans as Paul explains Israel's lack of faith; and in I Peter 2:4-8.

It is not possible to demonstrate mathematically a link between Old Testament passages on this theme, but the strong impression that a particular stone is in mind makes such a connection highly probable,⁵ though Hooke⁶ considers any link between the passages is only a New Testament interpretation. On the other hand, we find in Justin's *Dialogue* (36) that Trypho the Jew is willing to concede the point, without dispute, that 'Christ is called a Stone', although actual texts have not been mentioned. This clearly implies that 'the Stone' was an accepted Messianic title among Jews and not merely a Christian view. Although Selwyn⁷ thinks that the interpretation may have been suggested to the Jews by the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, at least one example predates the New Testament. This is to be found in the addition of ἐπ' αὐτῷ to Isaiah 28:16 in most MSS of the LXX,⁸ an addition which is included when this verse is cited in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6. The addition, as Jeremias points out, essentially alters the sense of Isaiah 28:16 to the degree that the stone now becomes a ground of assurance or the object of faith, and this at least suggests a personal understanding.⁹

A comparison of 1 Peter with Romans gives this picture of their use of the Old Testament passages: Romans 9:33 reads: 'Behold, I lay in Zion (Is. 28:16a) a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Is. 8:14); and he that believeth on him (or, it) shall not be put to shame' (Is. 28:16c).

⁴ R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple*, OUP (1969) 188-192.

⁵ H. L. Ellison, *The Centrality of the Messianic Idea*, Tyndale Press, London (1953) 20.

⁶ S. H. Hooke, *Siege Perilous*, SPCK, London (1956) 240.

⁷ E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, Macmillan, London (1946) 158f.

⁸ A pre-Christian insertion, according to F. J. A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, Macmillan, London (1898); contra, F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*,³ Blackwell, Oxford (1970) 120. The addition is included in the Targum of Is. 28:16.

⁹ *TWNT* IV. 272.

I Peter 2:6 reads: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him (or, it) shall not be put to shame' (all from Is. 28:16), followed in verse 7 with 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner' (Ps. 118:22) and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence' (Is. 8:14).

The first phrase in both Peter and Romans ('Behold, I lay in Zion'), while a fair rendering of the Hebrew, shows a remarkable departure from the LXX, which reads ἐμβάλλω εἰς τὰ θεμέλια Σιῶν ('I lay for the foundations of Zion'). Peter and Paul both alter ἐμβάλλω to τίθημι, and abbreviate the rest of the LXX phrase to simply 'in Zion'. Again, both writers abandon the LXX in their virtually identical rendering of the citation from Is. 8:4¹⁰ and give a correct version of the Hebrew. Moreover, while the LXX *denies* the 'stumbling-stone' and 'rock' ('Ye shall not come against him as against a stumbling-stone, neither as against the falling of a rock'), Peter and Paul seem to presuppose a text which *affirmed* the actuality of both.¹¹ These agreements taken together are hardly fortuitous, though the hypothesis of literary interdependence between Peter and Paul is unlikely, despite F. W. Beare's view¹² that Dean Selwyn's hymn suggestion is a construction 'mounted on pins' and the literary dependence of I Peter on Romans 'far simpler and more natural'.

The alleged dependence on Romans may be explained just as well by assuming that the writer of 1 Peter is near enough a contemporary of Paul. In the first place, the 'influence' of Romans upon 1 Peter is neither deep nor far-reaching.¹³ And again, of the eight passages usually cited as parallels to passages in Romans, Wand¹⁴ points out that two are Old Testament prophecies (2:6-8; 2:10), two give lists of common Christian duties (2:13-17; 3:8, 9, 11), a fifth is semi-liturgical (2:5), a sixth depends rather on thought than on words (4:7-11), and the remaining two are doubtful (1:14-22). Thus the material could easily have been common to many

¹⁰ In *BZ* (1967) 109-116 J. M. Ford discusses the symbolism behind Is. 8:14-16.

¹¹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, Nisbet, London (1952) 42 note.

¹² *Comm.* 217.

¹³ V. Taylor, *The Atonement in NT Teaching*, Epworth, London (1940) 37.

¹⁴ J. W. C. Wand, *The General Epistles of St. Peter & St. Jude* (Westminster Commentary), Methuen, London (1934) 19.

Christian teachers, and been drawn upon independently by Peter and by Paul.

Certainly so far as the 'rock' motif in 1 Peter 2 is concerned, the idea of stumbling at the Rock of Offence, or Stone of Scandal, is so widely diffused in the Gospels and Epistles, that the teaching is plainly part of the earliest Christian tradition,¹⁵ and goes back to the passages quoted by Peter from Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14.

Even with the earliest date possible for 1 Peter, few would be prepared to maintain that Paul borrowed from Peter. It is in fact even less likely that Peter borrowed from Paul, since in the case of 1 Peter 2:6-8, for example, this would entail the proposition that Peter first disentangled the two passages from Isaiah, then added parts of Isaiah 28:16 which Paul omitted, and yet did not supplement them out of the LXX. The insertion of 'on him' after 'believe', omitted from the MT, is found in the Targum of Isaiah 28:16, and from its appearance in both Peter and Paul may have been a familiar rendering of the day, derived perhaps from the interpretation of the *methurgeman* in the synagogue.¹⁶

Dodd suggests that Peter and Paul each used a twofold testimonium already current in the pre-canonical tradition, and differing somewhat from the LXX. Dodd's conclusions, however, have not gone unchallenged. J. de Waard¹⁷ considers that the similar text of Isaiah 28:16 used in Romans 9:33 and I Peter 2:8 is not to be explained by the common use of a testimony book, for the early Fathers all go back to the LXX version of Isaiah 28:16 and not to Dodd's supposed testimonium-text. Neither is de Waard satisfied with Selwyn's hypothesis of an early Christian hymn or rhythmical prayer. Among other things, it fails to explain Paul's omission of Psalm 118 from the catena. Rather we should think in terms of a Christian midrash concerning the 'stone', based on a *verbum Christi*, since we now have such an excellent example from Qumran

¹⁵ J. R. Harris, *Testimonies*, CUP (1916) I. 29.

¹⁶ According to C. H. Toy, *Quotations in the NT*, Scribner, New York (1884) 146. But *The Targum of Isaiah*, tr. J. F. Stenning, OUP (1953), has a plural: צדיקיא דהימינו באליו 'the righteous who have believed in these things (shall not be dismayed when distress cometh)'.

¹⁷ J. de Waard, *A Comparative Study of the OT Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the NT (STDJ 4)* Brill, Leiden (1965) 58.

(IQS viii.7ff.). But it seems doubtful whether 'Christian mid-rash' is much of an advance on 'testimonium', for the fact remains that no other Christian writer uses the Romans-Peter text of Isaiah.¹⁸

Another criticism of Dodd comes from A. C. Sundberg,¹⁹ who demonstrates with a large number of examples that most citations in the New Testament are atomistic. Few seem to require reference back to the original context to give them their full meaning for Christian readers, as Dodd had argued.²⁰ Although Sundberg's examples from 1 Peter do not include the 'rock' passage, his contention applies here too. A knowledge of the historical background of Isaiah's prophecies, to which we shall return later, is hardly essential to the Christian understanding of Peter's use of the citations.

In Romans 9:33 Paul disregards the other Old Testament text in 1 Peter, a *verbum Christi* from Psalm 118:22. But in Eph. 2:19f. he does allude to this passage in a combination of the 'stone' and 'temple' imagery. With 1 Peter 2:6 (*cf.* Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10f.) Paul refers to Christ as the chief corner-stone (ἀκρογωνιαίος, Eph. 2:20), and both speak of Christians as the house of God. Although Paul does not explicitly call Christians 'living stones' of the building, as Peter does, this is clearly implied. Probably then the 'building of God' is as much part of the *testimonium* as the 'corner-stone'.

It is noticeable in Luke 20:17 that the quotation from Psalm 118 is followed by the words 'every one who falls on that stone', which may well be an allusion to Isaiah 8:14. The Epistle of Barnabas (6)²¹ uses in one passage Isaiah 28:16, Isaiah 50:7, Psalm 118:22 (in that order) and also says that Christ was set as a strong stone for breaking (εἰς συντριβήν), an echo of the other Isaiah passage (8:14). Cyprian's *Testimonia*²² have a section headed 'That Christ is called the Stone', in which two of these Old Testament passages are quoted (Is. 28:16; Ps. 118:22). There is, therefore, a link stretching from the reported words of Christ himself through the Epistles out into the first centuries of the early Church.

¹⁸ The Epistle of Barnabas (ch. 6) may indicate that the writer knew Is. 28:16 in both the LXX version and the Romans/Peter text, according to J. R. Harris, *Testimonies* I. 30f.

¹⁹ *NovTest* 3 (1959) 271. 20 According to the Scriptures 59, 61f.

²¹ R. A. Kraft, *JBL* 79 (1960) 336-350.

²² *Ad Quirinium: Test. adv. Jud.* ii. 16f.

Rendel Harris²³ investigated the problem at some length, and concluded that this unbroken chain might suggest an enlightening exegesis of the difficult clause ending 1 Peter 2:8, 'for they stumble at the word, being disobedient, *whereunto also they were appointed* (εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν)'. Harris argues from the Greek used in Barnabas 6 that the final verb in this verse should be singular, ἐτέθη: 'It is the Stone which is the ordinance of God and not the stumblers.' But his proposed emendation lacks any sort of support in the manuscripts, and later commentators rightly disregard it. Interpretations however are diverse.

Calvin supposed that Peter meant 'unto which rejection and destruction they were designated in the purpose of God'. Bengel²⁴ paraphrased: 'They who do not believe, stumble; they who stumble are also appointed for stumbling.' Bigg²⁵ restricts the predestination to evil to the divine decree that stumbling inevitably follows upon disobedience: 'Their disobedience is not ordained; the penalty of their disobedience is.' Beare²⁶ is close to this: 'It is the stumbling that is fore-ordained, rather than the unbelief which leads to it.'

Hort²⁷ noticed the undoubtedly designed repetition of the Greek verb τίθημι to express the ordinance of God: 'I lay (τίθημι) in Zion a chief corner stone' (2:6); 'whereunto also they were appointed (ἐτέθησαν)' (2:8). Both the redemptive mission and the work of Christ and its rejection and rejectors were within the counsel and purpose of God, though it is not stated that this rejection is final or irretrievable.²⁸ The primary reference is probably to the rejection of Christ by the Jews (Hort), though Peter's particular thought is not made clear. 'They were appointed' may perhaps mean not that individuals are predestined to stumble but that the stumbling of many against the rock is foretold in Scripture.

Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi made him a rock, or part of the Rock: 'Thou art Πέτρος, and upon this πέτρα I will build my church' (Mt. 16:18). The name is given

²³ *Testimonies* I. 26-32.

²⁴ J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh (1858) v. 55.

²⁵ C. Bigg, *The Epistles of St Peter & St Jude* (ICC), T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh (1901) 13.

²⁶ *Comm.* 126.

²⁷ *Comm.* 123.

²⁸ H. Kleinknecht, *Wrath*, A. & C. Black, London (1964) 89.

with explicit reference to a foundation-stone. But the warning is at once added that he is capable of being a stumbling-stone (σκάνδαλον, Mt. 16:23) and of stumbling himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that Peter's Epistle presents the alternatives of receiving or rejecting Christ in terms of the stone imagery,²⁹ incidental evidence which should not be disregarded in any discussion of the problem of authorship.

This double use of the stone—as a foundation for some and as a dangerous obstacle for others—comes out in the context of the two passages from Isaiah quoted in 1 Peter 2.

Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 both reflect the troubled period around 735 BC when Tiglath-Pileser III was threatening Palestine with invasion, and a northern confederation headed by Damascus and Israel was trying to force Ahaz, who was Assyria's vassal, to join them. In chapter 7 Isaiah warns Ahaz against panic. In chapter 8 the prophet speaks similarly to his own disciples, assuring them that Yahweh will become 'a sanctuary', so far as they are concerned, but 'a stone of offence and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel'. The gist of the message is that 'the way of this people' is leading them to disaster (Is. 8:11, 15).

In the companion passage (Is. 28) the 'word of Yahweh' causes the people 'to go', *i.e.* to continue on their course of rebellion, and consequently to 'fall backward and be broken and snared and taken'. In 7:9 Isaiah had told the king and the people, 'If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established'. Conversely, the believer *would* be established, because the living and powerful 'word' of Yahweh imparted to him its own character of rock-like steadfastness. The same thought recurs in 28:16: 'He who believes will not be in haste', *i.e.* (by metonymy) he who believes will not *stumble*, as the consequence of hurry. But while the believer remains firm as rock itself, the unbeliever going against Yahweh's 'word' encounters its rock-like quality. He stumbles, falls, and is shattered.

Isaiah 28 describes the scornful rulers of Jerusalem, with their self-chosen and confident foreign policy, confronted with a stone laid by Yahweh in Zion. A coming storm will sweep away their building, but the stone will abide. In Isaiah 28:16

²⁹ C. F. D. Moule, *NTS* 2 (1955-56) 57.

it is called אֶבֶן בִּיחָן, which is rendered in the English versions as 'a tried stone' or 'a tested stone' (AV, RV, RSV, Moffatt). But Delitzsch has pointed out that בִּיחָן is active not passive: a stone of testing, *i.e.* for the purpose of approving, or the opposite. C. A. Briggs agrees: 'בִּיחָן is a *test* stone, not a *tested* stone.' The BDB lexicon states that בִּיחָן, is active—and then like Whitehouse (Century Bible) promptly gives the word a passive translation: 'a tested, tried stone'. It is in fact *a testing-stone*. Isaiah never speaks of its being built upon.

Hooke,³⁰ however, maintains that in Isaiah 28:16 אֶבֶן בִּיחָן ; is probably to be taken as passive, for the active sense in which the אֶבֶן is doing the testing has already appeared in Is. 8:14. In 28:16 the testing is carried out not by the אֶבֶן but (verse 17) by the measuring line of justice and the plummet of righteousness, both of which may be viewed as expressions of 'the word of Yahweh' (verse 13).

The אֶבֶן symbol also occurs in Zechariah (3:9; 4:7, 10). This prophecy concerns the period after the Exile, a calamity which has been caused by the false building³¹ of the rulers of Isaiah's day. The אֶבֶן in Zechariah is now a headstone or topstone. This is a stone cut beforehand by the architect. As the final stone to be dropped into place, it had two purposes. It bonded the building together, and also demonstrated—by how well it fitted—whether the architect's plans had been faithfully followed. In Christian eyes, the symbol is peculiarly appropriate to Jesus Christ. The various Messianic prophecies knit together into a pattern whose final form may not be clear, but which can yet be inferred. Bring their fulfilment in Christ and drop them into place as the topstone and the house is perfect and complete.³²

For one who will work or expound without thought of God's Messiah, the testing-stone has been laid by God in Zion. It cannot be avoided and 'he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces' (Lk. 20:18). There is, however, a worse fate foretold for the man who in theory accepts the testing-stone, but in practice 'builds' falsely, that is, by his own wisdom and will. When the topstone is hoisted into place on the

³⁰ *Siege Perilous* 242.

³¹ The metaphor was recognized. The scribes, for example, laid claim to the title of 'builders' in the Targum of Ps. 118:22, *et al.* (*cf.* Acts 4:11).

³² Ellison, *Messianic Idea* 20.

summit of the building, it will come crashing down, and 'when it falls on any one, it will crush him'—not an extravagant expression when one bears in mind the massive nature of these stones.³³ Among the ruins of the Phoenician city of Baalbek at the foot of Mount Lebanon were found three such stones, each 12 feet thick and together 175 feet in length.³⁴ Megiddo has provided other examples.³⁵

In the Zechariah passages mentioned above, the returned exiles are being encouraged to resume the rebuilding of the Temple, and Messianic hopes centred on Zerubbabel are rising.³⁶ In a vision (Zc. 3) Joshua the High Priest is symbolically cleansed and restored by Yahweh, who also promises to do the same for Israel. After a reference to 'my Servant the Branch' (Zc. 3:8), already associated in Isaiah I and Jeremiah 23:5 with the restoration of the Davidic kingdom in the person of a Messianic figure, the אֲבִיבִי is then placed before Joshua. His attention is drawn to a certain feature of the Stone. The RV translates: 'Upon one stone are seven eyes.' The Hebrew is obscure. Assuming the same Messianic symbolism of אֲבִיבִי, the 'seven eyes' may well be the 'seven spirits'³⁷ of Yahweh, already connected with the figure of the Messianic king in Isaiah 11. The seven spirits rest upon the stone as a symbol of the Messiah (*cf.* I Pet. 4:14: 'The Spirit of God resteth upon you', where those addressed have been earlier described as 'living stones').

Next, Yahweh declares that to 'remove the iniquity of that land' he will 'engrave the engraving thereof' (מִפְתָּח פְּתָחָהּ). The Piel of פָּתַח often means 'to engrave', and most commentators³⁸ follow the RV, though the translation is hardly edifying. The LXX rendering is ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ὀρύσσω βόθρον, 'I will dig a pit', possibly reading פְּתָח an opening, or פִּתְחָהּ a pit. Jerome and Cyril explain this translation as containing a reference to the

³³ 1 Ki. 5: 1 7.

³⁴ 'These stones are of white granite, with large shining flakes. There is a quarry of this kind of stone under the whole city, and in the adjacent mountains, which is open in several places. As we approached the city, there was still lying there a stone, hewn on three sides, measuring 69 feet x 12 feet x 83 feet.' *Scripture Manners and Customs*, SPCK, London (Anon. c. 1858) 26.

³⁵ W. F. Albright, *Archaeology of Palestine*, Revell, N.Y. (1960) 125f.; R. S. Lamon and G. M. Shipton, *Megiddo* (1939) 1, 11, 41, 52f.

³⁶ Hooke, *Siege Perilous*, 244.

³⁷ E. E. Le Bas, *PEQ* (1950) 114.

³⁸ Goodspeed and RSV have: 'Upon a single stone with seven facets, I will engrave its inscription.'

wounds of Christ.³⁹ The LXX version leads Le Bas⁴⁰ to suggest God intends to 'tunnel a channel to the cache in the heart of Mount Zion in which this corner-stone lies buried'. Hooke⁴¹ goes back to the primary meaning of פָּתַח, 'to open', and refers to Zechariah 13:1: 'On that day there shall be a fountain opened (נִפְתָּח) for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.'

Hooke doubts whether the prophet thought of the stone placed before Joshua in the vision of the heavenly temple in Zechariah 3:9 as the same as the stone mentioned in 4:7. In the latter scene Zerubbabel is envisaged as completing the building of the earthly Temple in Jerusalem. Common to the two situations is the prediction that those who had doubted whether Yahweh was able to carry out His purpose would rejoice when they saw Zerubbabel standing with a stone which the MT (4:10) describes as הַבְּדִיל הָאֶבֶן, and the LXX as λίθον κασσιπέρινον, 'a tin stone'. Most English versions render it as 'plummet'. Perhaps some participial form of בָּדַל, to separate, is intended, meaning 'a stone separated, set apart', since a plumbline is hardly appropriate.⁴²

The text and translation of a further reference to the stone imagery in Psalm 118:22 are straightforward, though the *Sitz im Leben* is obscure—as is the date of the passage (some say 'Maccabaeen';⁴³ others 'as early as Nehemiah 8:14ff.').⁴⁴ Leaving aside the New Testament interpretation, the stone here is a symbol of Israel, chastened and humiliated, but not delivered to death. Now it has been exalted by Yahweh to the key position in his purposes. The architectural reference is clear, and the position indicated by the expression ראש פְּנֵה is almost certainly the same as that of the הַרְאֵשָׁה of Zechariah 4:7, the crown of the building. But nothing suggests the shape of the stone.

In Zechariah 12:3 Yahweh declares he will make Jerusalem a 'burdensome stone' (אֶבֶן מַעֲמָסָה) in the day when he inter-

³⁹ C. H. H. Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies*, Hodder & Stoughton, London (1879) 547.

⁴⁰ *PEQ* (1950) 117.

⁴¹ *Siege Perilous* 245.

⁴² P. R. Ackroyd, in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, Nelson, London (1962) section 566j.

⁴³ *JTS* 17 (1916) 140f.

⁴⁴ F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, Hodder & Stoughton, London (1889) III. 207.

venes on behalf of his people. Here the אֶבֶן־שֹׁפָר has something of the qualities of the 'stone of stumbling' of Isaiah 8:14. This is borne out by a Midrash⁴⁵ (on Ps. 119:1) which renders Zechariah 12:2 as 'Behold, I will make Jerusalem a threshold (אֶבֶן־שֹׁפָר) of staggering unto all the peoples round about', in place of the more usual translation of אֶבֶן־שֹׁפָר as 'cup'. The stone here becomes an instrument of Yahweh's judgment upon the nations. But while the eschatological context is plain enough, there is no explicit Messianic reference.

Daniel 2:34-36 is entirely in the realm of apocalyptic. In the king's dream a stone appears, cut out of the mountain without human hands. It is launched against the proud symbol of earthly empire, utterly destroys it, and in turn becomes a great mountain which fills the whole earth. In this passage אֶבֶן־שֹׁפָר is the kingdom which the God of Heaven is about to set up, and which shall never be destroyed. Christian exegetes transferred the teaching to the Church as the new People of God, leaving the unbelieving Jew to join the pagan nations in their coming destruction.⁴⁶

The shape of the corner-stone and its position—whether in the foundation or base of the building or in the summit—has for long been a matter of debate. Irenaeus⁴⁷ urged that the corner-stone was a quoin, or angle-stone, binding two walls at right angles to each other. So Christ, the Corner-stone, unites in himself both Jew and Gentile. But a building would require four such corner-stones, so a quoin is ruled out.⁴⁸

Tertullian,⁴⁹ on the other hand, suggested the topmost position, and this interpretation has the support of Jeremias.⁵⁰ He has examined the references⁵¹ and concludes that the stone must be the crowning stone of the edifice, *der Abschlussstein*. Jeremias, however, does not investigate its shape.

The Genesis account of Joseph has been increasingly vindicated in recent years as revealing a close acquaintance with

⁴⁵ W. G. Braude, *Midrash on Psalms* (Yale Judaica series), Yale UP, New Haven (1959) II. 247-513.

⁴⁶ B. Lindars, *NT Apologetic*, SCM, London (1861) 184.

⁴⁷ *Adv. Haer.* iv. 25.1.

⁴⁸ A. Barnes, *Notes on the Psalms*, Blackie, London (1868) on Ps. 118:22.

⁴⁹ *Adv. Marc.* iii. 7.

⁵⁰ *ZNW* 29 (1930) 264.

⁵¹ Ps. 118:22 and Is. 28:16 in MT, LXX, Targum, Talmud, Symmachus; 2 Ki. 25:17; *Test. Sol.* 22:7, 23:4; Hippolytus, *Elenchos* v. 7, 35; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* iii. 7; Aphraates, *Hom.* i. 6f.

things Egyptian.⁵² It is not unlikely that Egyptian influence may be seen in Genesis 28 where, for example, Jacob's expression 'gate of Heaven' occurs frequently in the Pyramid Texts.⁵³

Along the same lines, E. E. Le Bas suggests that several factors point to the corner-stone, whose precursor would be Jacob's stone at Bethel, being a pyramidion.⁵⁴ The term ἀκρογωναίοι is not found in Classical Greek, and presumably this means it was unknown to Greek architecture. The term does occur, however, in Egyptian Greek from the date of the LXX.

In the Hebrew of Isaiah 28:16 there is the double אֶבֶן אֶבֶן, which Marti dismissed as meaningless duplication. The MT pointing apparently assumes that the prophet intends some indefinite design of corner-stone by putting the two nouns in apposition. But the Egyptian *bn bn* means a pyramidion. (The present-day term among the fellahin is still *benben*.) That Hebraic scholars regarded the corner-stone as indicative of the highest rank is reflected by the careful reduplication מְלֶךְ מְלֶךְ in the Targum Jonathan paraphrase of Isaiah 28:16 presumably supporting an original אֶבֶן אֶבֶן.

Le Bas recognizes the difficulty of this interpretation in the face of the EV 'I lay in Zion for a foundation'. But he points out that יָסַד, primarily means 'to fix firmly', and only secondarily 'so as to found'. Unlike the New Testament, the LXX emphasizes the latter idea by using ἐμβάλλω . . . εἰς in Isaiah 28:16, instead of the usual θεμελιόω, 'to found or lay constructionally'.⁵⁵

The Targum of Jonathan avoids the architectural association altogether:⁵⁶ 'Behold, I will appoint in Zion a king, a strong king, powerful and terrible. I will make him strong and powerful, saith the prophet.' Against both LXX and New Testament, therefore, the Targum paraphrases the duplicated אֶבֶן אֶבֶן as מְלֶךְ מְלֶךְ with Messianic significance.

Most New Testament commentators follow Jeremias⁵⁷

⁵² J. Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte*, Publications Universitaires, Louvain (1959); and the review article by K. A. Kitchen in *JEA* 47 (1961) 158ff.

⁵³ J. G. Griffiths, *ExpT* 76 (1964-1965) 229.

⁵⁴ *PEQ* (1946) 103-115; (1950) 102-122; (1951) 139--155.

⁵⁵ The Qumran scroll of Isaiah has מִי־סִיד, '(I am) placing, fixing'.

⁵⁶ Stenning, *Targum* 88.

⁵⁷ *ZNW* 29 (1930) 264.

in considering the stone to be a topstone. 'As Christ is the κεφαλή of the σῶμα so He is the ἀκρογωνιαίος of the οἰκοδομή.⁵⁸ Some go further and suggest that ἀκρογωνιαίος is the keystone which, placed in the centre of the archway—assumed to span the entrance—is said to act as a locking-stone for the whole building.⁵⁹ Jeremias excluded the latter possibility.⁶⁰ Such keystones were not common in the Semitic architecture of the time, though we have one interesting reference⁶¹ in *Yalkut* 102 to Genesis 28:22: 'He made it the keystone of the earth, just like a man who sets a keystone in an arch: therefore it is called the foundation-stone, for there is the navel of the earth, and therefrom was all the earth evolved, and upon it the Sanctuary of God stands, as it is said: And this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house.'

But leaving aside Isaiah 28:16, none of the texts in which the term ἀκρογωνιαίος occurs implies that a keystone is intended. 2 Kings 25:17 indicates only that the stone occupies some elevated position. The Testament of Solomon (25:17) is more specific, but at most proves the stone was at some prominent corner of the building.

The context⁶² of Isaiah 28:16 warns the apostate rulers of Jerusalem that their vaunted alliance with the powers of the underworld (verse 15) will be destroyed by the upsurging waters (verse 17), for they have rebelled against Yahweh, the One who in fact controls access to the Deep. In verse 16 the juxtaposition of ἀκρογωνιαίος and θεμέλια together with the duplicated εἰς τὰ θεμέλια shows that what was in mind was the base of the edifice. The construction πιστεύειν ἐπί plus dative suggests moreover that the stone was low enough for a person to rest upon it.

The Covenanters of Qumran, who _quoted Isaiah 28:16 in support of their novel doctrine of the community of the faithful as a spirit, temple, understood the פִּנְיָה אֶבֶן of this text as a *Grundstein*: 'They shall lay a foundation of truth for Israel (1 QS v.6) . . . that is the tested wall, the precious corner-

⁵⁸ S. Hanson, *The Unity of Church in the NT*, Almqvist and Wiksell, Uppsala (5946) 535.

⁵⁹ E. Best, *One Body in Christ*, SPCK, London (1955) 166.

⁶⁰ *Angelos* I (1925) 69.

⁶¹ G. Friedlander, *Pirke R. Eliezer*, Kegan Paul, London (1916) 266.

⁶² R. J. McKelvey, *NTS* 8 (1965-1962) 352-359.

stone. Its foundations⁶³ shall not shake. They shall not move from the position they occupy. They shall form a habitation for Aaron's holy of holies . . . and a house of integrity and truth in Israel' (1 QS viii.4ff.).

The Rabbis similarly took the stone in Zion, i.e. the cornerstone of Isaiah 28:16, as a foundation stone. Their favourite designation for this stone was אֶבֶן שְׂתִיבָה lit. 'foundation-stone', which took the place of the lost Ark in the Second Temple, according to the Mishnah.⁶⁴ It was believed to perform the important function of shutting off the primaeval flood-waters and so providing a foundation, so to speak, for the cosmos.

The Mishnah⁶⁵ states that the אֶבֶן שְׂתִיבָה stood three finger-breadths above the ground, and New Testament writers would thus readily think of the ἀκρογωνιαίος as a stone which could be tripped over. A position at the top of a building is obviously inappropriate.

A synonym among the Rabbis for the אֶבֶן שְׂתִיבָה was טִיבוֹר הָאָרֶץ, navel of the earth,⁶⁶ that is, the point from which the world grew. When Jonah⁶⁷ went 'down to the bottom of the mountains' (Jon. 2:6) he is said to have seen the אֶבֶן שְׂתִיבָה, which God had sunk by his right foot and fixed in the depths.⁶⁸ He was told that the spot was immediately beneath the Temple of God at Jerusalem, and so he was encouraged to pray.

Elsewhere we are informed that this was also where the great subterranean reservoirs were tapped for the benefit of man and beast. Hence the stone became known as the 'stone of quenching'.⁶⁹ McKelvey points out that as such, the stone in Zion, connected as it was with the altar in the Temple, contributed greatly to the mythology associated with the rainmaking ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles.⁷⁰ At the feast water and wine were ceremoniously poured into funnels at the sides of the altar, and flowed, it was believed, into the abyss.⁷¹

⁶³ So the editorial insertion. Both author and editor alter Isaiah's wording by using plurals to make the reference to the community explicit (McKelvey, *New Temple*, 48, note 1).

⁶⁴ *Yoma* 5.2; cf. *Lev. Rabbah* 20:4.

⁶⁵ *Yoma* 53b.

⁶⁶ A. Jellinek, *Beth Ha-Midrash* (1938) 5.63, 1f; Friedlander, *Pirke*, 266.

⁶⁷ Friedlander, *Pirke*, 71.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 266.

⁶⁹ *Jer. Yoma* 5.3; cf. 7:37f.; Rev. 21:17.

⁷⁰ H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum NT aus Talmud und Midrasch*, C. H. Beck, Munich (1922-1961) III. 182; McKelvey, *New Temple*, 188 note I, 190.

⁷¹ *B. Suk.* 49a.

The ritual was intended to induce the sympathetic co-operation of the great deep to secure adequate rains for the ensuing season.

Again, the sacred rock is viewed as the summit of the earth, and as such performs the natural and important role of representing the link between earth and heaven, between the human and the divine—a reflection⁷² of Genesis 28:17, Jacob at Bethel once more.⁷³

For the Rabbis, then, the stone laid by God in Zion, alias the cornerstone of Isaiah 28:16, was clearly a *Grundstein*. Upon this stone the cosmos was built,⁷⁴ and from it creation was sustained. McKelvey,⁷⁵ therefore, wishes to abandon Jeremias' arguments for a copestone and revert to the traditional understanding of the ἀκρογωνιαίος as a stone located at the determinative corner and bonding together walls and foundation. He would doubtless dismiss the reference in the apocryphal first century AD Jewish Testament of Solomon (28:4) as an oddity. This verse describes how Solomon had the ἀκρογωνιαίος put at the top of the Temple at Jerusalem.⁷⁶

This may in fact be another case of 'both . . . and' rather than 'either . . . or'. Rabbinical exposition allowed more weight to mere association of ideas than to logic in some interpretations.⁷⁷ It seems likely, therefore, that both for Jews and for Christians, in biblical times as well as later, the name 'Rock' or 'Stone' evoked a range of ideas wider than merely the foundation-theme on the one hand or the notion of the topstone on the other. We have to bear in mind in any case that stones played a considerable part in the religions and philosophies of the ancient world,⁷⁸ and many aspects of the theme would naturally collect together.

In the Rabbinic view the stone can be a topstone, a 'cap' over the Deep, and a foundation for the Temple erected on top of it. From the Christian standpoint, the stone can be low enough to be a foundation for the believer's life and a cause of stumbling to the unbeliever, and also the architect's crown-

⁷² *Yoma* 54b; *Gen. R.* 4.2; *Num. R.* 13.4.

⁷³ Friedlander, *Pirke*, 266.

⁷⁴ *Jer. Yoma* 5.4, 42c; *Sanhed.* 26b.

⁷⁵ *NTS* 8 (1961-1962) 352ff.

⁷⁶ C. C. McCown, *The Testament of Solomon*, J. C. Hinrichs, Leipzig (1922) 66-70.

⁷⁷ *NTS* 2 (1955--1956) 56ff.

⁷⁸ A. Ehrhardt traces their wide cosmological significance in *HTR* 38 (1945) 177-193.

ing stone which 'makes sense' of the many facets of Scripture as they are interpreted in the light of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Swete (on Mk. 12:10) has much the same thought. The corner-stone emphasizes the cohesion of believers in the Body of Christ. The foundation-stone underlines their dependence on his work and strength.

The image of the rock is associated in Judaism with the idea of community. In Daniel 2 the Son of man concept is connected with the Messianic 'people of the saints' which brings the world powers to an end. A block of stone is interpreted to mean an empire that will shatter all empires. Already in Judaism this stone had been referred to the Messiah. The verb λικμάω in Luke 20:18 is explained only by this Danielic passage. In the description of Abraham as the rock (Isaiah 51:1f.), we have a Jewish preparation for the view that Jesus, and later the apostles, became the rock, the foundation.⁷⁹

The need for the rock was recognized by the Rabbis. 'When God was contemplating the creation of the world, He sat considering the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood. And He said, How can I create the world if these wicked people will arise and provoke Me? But when God beheld Abraham who was destined to arise, He said, Behold, I have found a rock on which I can build the world and set firm its foundation. Therefore He called Abraham "Rock", as it is said, Look unto the *rock* whence ye were hewn . . . look unto *Abraham* your father' (Is. 51:1f.).⁸⁰

Friedlander comments that the reference may point to controversy with Christians. The Jews would of course deny the New Testament claim that Jesus was the Rock (1 Cor. 10:4; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6-8), and point to Abraham as the rock on which the world rested, and also to his children, the house of Israel, as the 'rocks' on which the true synagogue or Church was based, *contra* Matthew 16:18. In claiming that 'in this world Israel are likened to rocks', the Midrash⁸¹ quoted in support not only Isaiah 51:1 but also Genesis 49:24 ('from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel') and Psalm

⁷⁹ O. Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*, SCM, London (1953) 191.

⁸⁰ *Yalkut Balak* 766, quoted by G. Friedlander, *Rabbinic Philosophy and Ethics* (1912) 248.

⁸¹ *Esther R.* 7.10 on 3:6; Strack & Billerbeck I. 877.

118:22. It also identified Israel with the stone cut out of the mountain in Daniel 2:45.

The image of the *building* of a community is fully intelligible from Jewish thought.⁸² The Old Testament speaks of the *house* of Israel (Nu. 12:7; Ru. 4:11; Am. 9:11) and Jesus uses the expression (Mt. 10:6; 15:24). The members of the community are also compared with the stones of a house at Qumran.⁸³ The idea of *edifying*, οἰκοδομέω, is common in its application to fellowship (Am. 9:11f.; Acts 9:31; Rom. 14:19), and Jesus uses the analogous illustration of the temple that he will rebuild (Jn. 2:19). Peter brings the thoughts together when he speaks of his readers 'as living stones . . . built up a spiritual house' (2:5).

It cannot be more than speculation, but possibly Peter recollected John the Baptist's preaching on the subject of the spiritual nature of true Abrahamic sonship: 'For I say unto you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham' (Lk. 3:8f.). 'Able from these stones . . . ' God, Peter knew, was now doing just that. The 'children' of the Kingdom were 'stones' of the new Temple.

Both Christ (I Pet. 2:4) and Christians (2:5) are described as 'living' stones, for they are in vital relationship one with the other. (Usually in the New Testament where the participle of ζάω is used as an adjective, it occurs as an attribute of God: ὕδωρ ζῶν, John 4:10; ὁ ἄρτις ὁ ζῶν, John 6:5; λόγια ζῶτα, Acts 7:38; θυσίαν ζῶσαν, Romans 12:1; ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν, 1 Peter 1:3.)⁸⁴

The destruction of the Temple in AD 70 and the consequent cessation of sacrifice naturally caused great sorrow among Jewry.⁸⁵ Yet it is significant that Judaism quickly adjusted itself to the new situation. The well-known story of Johanan b. Zakkai shows how the best elements in Rabbinic Judaism faced the disruption of the sacrificial system. At the sight of the Temple in ruins R. Joshua b. Hannaniah said, 'Woe to us! for the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for is destroyed.' Johanan replied, 'Do not grieve, my son, for we

⁸² Cullmann, *Peter*, 192.

⁸³ I QpHab. x. 1, though the community of a despotic priest is meant.

⁸⁴ Selwyn, *Comm.*, 158f.

⁸⁵ G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Cambridge, Mass. (1927-1930) I. 503.

have an atonement which is just as good, namely, deeds of mercy; as the Scripture says: For I desire mercy and not sacrifice' (Ho. 6:6).⁸⁶

The Essenes, according to Josephus,⁸⁷ had earlier rejected all animal sacrifice, so it is clear that Peter's call (2:5) for a spiritualization of the ancient ritual would not be felt to be utterly novel.

The Samaritans, too, offered spiritual sacrifices,⁸⁸ for their temple on Mt. Gerizim had been destroyed in the late second century BC, together with its altar of sacrifice. Prayer to the Samaritans was as much an offering as it was to Christians and Jews. 'We offer sacrifices before the Lord on the altar of prayers. In place of the Sabbath offering (discontinued of course for lack of an altar) we sanctify ourselves and praise and proclaim.'⁸⁹ Or as the Karaites put it: 'Praise (שִׁבְחָה) takes the place of sacrifice (זִבְחָה).'⁹⁰

When the Qumran Manual of Discipline uses sacrificial language, it does so metaphorically.⁹¹ Aaron is not only to enact laws but to offer up sweet fragrance. When the new community is established in Israel, they shall 'obtain loving kindness for the land without the flesh of holocausts and the fat of sacrifice. And prayer rightly offered shall be as an acceptable fragrance of righteousness, and perfection of way as a delectable free-will offering'.⁹²

I Peter 2:3-6 not only expounds the 'temple' as referring to Christians; the passage also spiritualizes the concepts of priests and sacrifices, and applies them to Christians and their life.⁹³ Several scholars have drawn attention to the parallels which this text has with I QS v. 5ff., viii.4ff., and ix.3ff. Flusser⁹⁴ is even

⁸⁶ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, SPCK, London (1955) 258.

⁸⁷ *Antiq.* xviii. 1.5.

⁸⁸ J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, SCM, London (1964) 274.

He does not say what significance is attached by the Samaritans to the Passover lamb, still slaughtered on Gerizim. The red heifer, burnt by the Samaritans as late as 1348 CE, was not regarded as a sacrifice or a sin-offering, according to J. Bowman, *Revue de Qumran* I (1958-1959) 83.

⁸⁹ A. E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy*, OUP (1909) 82.

⁹⁰ Macdonald, *Theology of Samaritans*, 267. Many expressions in Karaite liturgies reflect Qumran and Samaritan thought (*ibid.* 33).

⁹¹ S. E. Johnson, 'The Jerusalem Church in Acts' in *The Scrolls and the NT* (ed. K. Stendahl), SCM, London (1958) 137.

⁹² IQS viii. 8, ix. 4-6; cf. F. F. Bruce, *NTS* 9 (1962-1963) 228f.

⁹³ B. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the NT*, CUP (1965) 72ff.

⁹⁴ D. Flusser *SH* 4 (1958) 215-266.

prepared to suggest some literary dependence of 1 Peter 2:5,6 on a Hebrew prototype resembling 1QS viii.7ff. Sherman Johnson⁹⁵ is more cautious, but feels it is more than a coincidence that the 'rich Christian midrashic material on stones and cornerstones' runs so closely to the traditions of the Covenanters. Neither is Gartner⁹⁶ convinced that 1 Peter 2 has a modified form of the symbolism of 1QS viii in which the two rooms of the temple have become one house and one priesthood. This Flusser has attempted to show by bringing together in the references above 'the spiritual house' and 'a holy house for Israel', and 'a holy priesthood' and 'the most holy dwelling place for Aaron'.

There are differences⁹⁷ to be noted between the Isaiah quotation in 1 Peter and in 1QS. In the epistle a formula quotation is involved, but in 1QS it is only a free citation. 1 Peter interprets the passage Christologically, but in 1QS it is connected with the eschatological congregation—though this aspect does also appear in 1 Peter 2:5.

There are some similarities. The Isaiah passage is used metaphorically in 1QS as in 1 Peter. This may also be true of the MT, but it may be noted that the three citations of Isaiah 28:16 in the Midrash⁹⁸ all concern the literal building of the temple in Jerusalem. Unlike 1 Peter, 1QS omits 'in Zion', as if to underline the spiritual interpretation.

De Waard⁹⁹ is prepared to agree with Flusser¹⁰⁰ that there is a literary connection between 1QS and 1 Peter, though he puts it differently if as dogmatically: 'We can say that the Midrash of Isaiah 28:16 in 1QS must have been known to the author of 1 Peter and must have been used by him.'

Whatever be the truth about the literary problems, it is plain from the Qumran texts that before the Christian era began certain Jewish groups expected that in the last days God would build a new Temple, a spiritual Temple not made With hands.¹⁰¹ Besides the passages in 1QS, we now have a

⁹⁵ S. E. Johnson, 'The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline' in *Scrolls and NT* (ed. Stendahl) (*op. cit.*) 136.

⁹⁶ Gartner, *Temple and Community*, 73.

⁹⁷ J. de Waard, *Comparative Study* 59.

⁹⁸ *Eccles. Rabbah* 3.8.2, *Lev. Rabbah* 17.7, *Deut. Rabbah* 3.13.

⁹⁹ *Comparative Study* 60.

¹⁰⁰ *SH* 4 (1958) 235.

¹⁰¹ B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Acta Sem. Neot. Upsaliensis 22), Gleerup, Lund (1961) 220.

Midrash on 2 Samuel 7 included in 4QFlorileg. x: 'And He purposed to build Him a Sanctuary among men in which will be sacrificed before Him deeds of the Law.'¹⁰² Flusser¹⁰³ considers that the fragments provide more evidence of the ancient roots of the Jewish medieval belief that the future eschatological temple would 'not be built by human hands, but will descend ready-built and whole from heaven'.

The tenet goes back to the days when the returned exiles contrasted the poverty of the house they were building with the real or supposed glory of Solomon's Temple (Hg. 2:3; Tobit 14:5). Later, as conditions worsened, many Jews saw their Temple as a den of thieves. The Covenanters went as far as to declare it unclean, but until the finds at Qumran the main evidence for the threatened doom of the existing Temple was in the Gospels (Mt. 26:61; Mk. 14:58; Jn.2:19), though Josephus¹⁰⁴ mentions another Jesus, son of Ananias, a 'rude peasant', who spoke in similar terms in AD 62. The Targum of Song of Solomon 1:17 contrasts Solomon's Temple with the superior Temple to be built in the days of the Messiah; the beams were to be made of the cedars of Paradise.¹⁰⁵ The Midrash on Psalm 90:17 concludes by drawing a contrast between the Temple men built and which was destroyed, and the Temple of the latter or Messianic days which would not be destroyed.

The critical attitude towards the Temple and its sacrificial cultus together with a tendency to spiritualize the worship of the Temple was already making itself apparent in the ancient Hebrew prophets,¹⁰⁶ as Stephen points out in citing Isaiah 66:1. The Covenanters express the same outlook and declare that the community itself is a spiritual Temple. Although it is not clear whether the 'Sanctuary of Aaron' (1QS v. 6) means the whole community or the 'devoted' saints within the community, the central idea of a group as a spiritual Temple is plain enough.¹⁰⁷ The Qumran Community was a hierarchy and the Christian Church bears the same hieratic or sacerdotal character from its earliest days.¹⁰⁸ This is reflected in most of the New Testament writings and far more

¹⁰² Y. Yadin, *IEJ* 9 (1959) 96.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 99.

¹⁰⁴ *Wars*, vi. 5.4.

¹⁰⁵ A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Longmans, Green & Co., London (1900) II. 722.

¹⁰⁶ O. Cullmann *ExpT* 71 (1959-1960) 39.

¹⁰⁷ M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, Nelson, London (1961) 42.

¹⁰⁸ Black, 80; Selwyn, *Comm.* 374.

frequently than mere figures of speech would require. 1 Peter 2 is an outstanding example.

The Qumran attitude, however, is different from that of Isaiah or Peter in one important respect. The atonement is for Israel.¹⁰⁹ There is no suggestion of providing for the Gentiles. Similarly, 1QS viii speaks of twelve laymen and three priests 'who endure the afflictions of the refiner's fire . . . for an eternal planting, a Temple for Israel.

A conclave which is an holy of holies for Aaron;
True witnesses to judgement, and the chosen of grace to
atone for the land,
And to render to the wicked their desert.
This is the tested wall, the precious corner-stone;
Its foundations will not be shaken nor removed from their
place.¹¹⁰

The doctrine about the New Temple 'not made with hands' and the abolition and destruction of the old material Temple is a corollary of the central message of Christianity.¹¹¹ The theme is firmly based on the words of Jesus, and not simply called into being by the demands of controversy. Nevertheless, the teaching was ready at hand when outraged Jews or Gentiles alike asked their questions: Why have you no temple? why no priesthood? why no sacrifice? why no circumcision?¹¹² Examples are already given in Acts 7 (to Jews) and Acts 17 (to Gentiles). It was familiar language to Peter's readers, as he takes up the theme in his second chapter. It was in fact the heart of the Christian gospel.

E. Burrows¹¹³ has an illuminating discussion about the rock—stone theme from a rather different angle. Jerusalem provided an extraordinarily complete counterpart to Babylonian hierocentric pretensions. The Israelite counterclaim is seen early in the satirical allusions to the Tower of Babel (Gn. 11). Jacob's 'ladder' (Gn. 28) suggests the stairs or ramps of a *ziquurat*, the great Babylonian temple tower,¹¹⁴ indicating

¹⁰⁹ Black, 129.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 128.

¹¹¹ A. Cole, *The New Temple*, Tyndale Press, London (1950) 54.

¹¹² C. F. D. Moule, *JTS* I (1950) 39.

¹¹³ E. Burrows: 'Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion' in *The Labyrinth*, ed. S. H. Hooke, SPCK, London (1935) 53ff.

¹¹⁴ G. von Rad, *Genesis*, SCM, London (ET 1961) 279; A. R. Millard, *ExpT* 78 (1966-1967) 86f.

among other things that the Gate of Heaven is to be found not in Ur or Babylon, but in Israel.

Jeremias¹¹⁵ has collected Rabbinic material describing the hierocentric pattern of Jerusalem. The Temple is claimed to be the summit of the earth, in the present age as well as in the age to come. This is explained (as in the parallel Babylonian cosmology) by the idea that the earth, rising from a cosmic sea, was a dome-shaped mountain, whose peak was necessarily the highest point. Thus Palestine is 'higher than all lands'.¹¹⁶ The culminating point is the sacred Rock, which is assimilated to the Stone of Bethel or Gate of Heaven,¹¹⁷ or it is the altar (which Ezekiel¹¹⁸ had perhaps called the Mountain of God, **הַהַר אֱלֹהִים**), a tower in the Talmud,¹¹⁹ likened to the stairs of Jacob in one Midrash,¹²⁰ and called the navel of the world in another.¹²¹

Following the idealization of the temple-mountain in the canonical prophecies such as Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, the New Testament continues the same idea in the Johannine Apocalypse. The New Jerusalem is like a mountain 1500 miles in height—a cube, or perhaps a pyramidal form like that of a *ziggurat*. These eschatological notions are the consummation of the oft-repeated dictum: 'From Zion was the world founded.'¹²² The name of the principal temple in Babylon reflected the same idea: *E-temen-an-ki*, Temple of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth.

The sacred Rock at Jerusalem was also related to the underworld, closing 'the mouth of the **יַהֲדוּם**'¹²³ covering the abyss, source of the Flood. Probably this is alluded to in Psalm 29: 'Yahweh sitteth upon the Flood', following a reference to the Temple. Similarly Psalm 93 speaks of Yahweh's reign over the floods and ends with a reference to the perpetual sanctity of the Temple. We can also compare Psalm 42: verse 7, 'the waters'; verse 9, 'God my Rock'. A Midrash describes the stone of foundation as the keystone of a vault.¹²⁴

There are some New Testament echoes of the Jewish love of the Temple Rock or Stone of Foundation. Matthew 16:18,

¹¹⁵ *Angelos* 2 (1926).

¹¹⁷ *Yalkut Genesis* 120 on Gn. 28:22; *Pirke de R. Eliezer* 32.35.

¹¹⁸ Ezk. 43:15.

¹¹⁹ *Sukkah* 49a Bar.

¹²¹ Jellinek, *op. cit.* 5.63.1f.

¹²³ *Targ. Ps.-Jonathan* on Ex. 28:30.

¹¹⁶ *Qiddush* 69a.

¹²⁰ *Gen. R.* 68. 16 on 28:12.

¹²² *Yoma* 54b Bar.

¹²⁴ *Yalkut Genesis* 120 on 28:22.

in reporting Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, almost certainly alludes to the Rock of the Temple, from the parallelism with Isaiah 28, where the oriental theme of the sacred foundation-stone upon the mouth of the entrance (תִּהְיוּ) to the underworld is again evident.

Isaiah addresses those who are said to have made a compact with Sheol, and who claimed that 'when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come near us' (Is. 28:15). The oracle continues: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a corner-stone of sure foundation: he who believes shall not give way' (or similar). Then comes a figure of building (line and plummet), and finally mysterious words about a flood overflowing from its secret place and sweeping away the wicked. All is explained if the allusion is to the Stone of Foundation firmly established over Sheol and the תִּהְיוּ.

The figures correspond in the Matthean passage. The stone in Isaiah is 'he who believes', and it is laid by God. Simon in the Gospel becomes the Rock through his act of faith, and this faith is effected by a revelation from God. In both passages there is a figure of building. In both the foundation is indefectible in relation to the aggression of the underworld.

The argument, which is substantially that of Jeremias,¹²⁵ is completed by a further consideration.¹²⁶ According to Mark 9:2, Peter's remarkable profession of faith and Jesus' first warning of his own death took place six days before the Transfiguration. Mark rarely gives dates. Perhaps Peter remembered that these outstanding events coincided with two notable days in the Jewish calendar. There are independent reasons for supposing that the Transfiguration occurred about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.¹²⁷ The saying about the Rock, therefore, may well be connected with the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10), which falls six days before the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15).

The association of Peter's confession with the Day of Atonement with its expiatory rites is felicitous, bearing in mind the ultimate ground of Christian faith in the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ. To his readers who have made a like confession of

¹²⁵ Angelos, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ Burrows, *op. cit.* 58.

¹²⁷ C. H. Turner (on Mk. 9:5) in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Gore, Goudge and Guillaume, SPCK, London (1928) III. 81; N. Hillyer, 'First Peter and the Feast of Tabernacles' in *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970) 39-70.

faith in Christ, Peter can write: 'To whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.'