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THE REFERENT OF *EGEUSASTHE* (YOU HAVE TASTED) IN 1 PETER 2:3

ABSTRACT

In 1 Peter 2:2-3 the addressees are exhorted to “yearn for the unadulterated milk of God’s word ... like newborn babies” (ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη). This exhortation is motivated by: “since you have tasted that the Lord is good” (ἐγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος). This article attempts to establish the referent of ἐγεύσασθε. Viewed as part of the “re-begetting” and resultant new birth (cf. ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς in 1 Pet 1:3), 1 Peter 2:3 suggests that God has given the ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη “something” to sustain them in their salvation. The paper concludes that the implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε is colostrum. The referent then is that God has given the addressees colostrum as part of the beget/rebirth process, to sustain them in their salvation. Having tasted the colostrum they now know that the Lord is good. This experience of the goodness of the Lord becomes the reason why they (must) yearn for (more) milk, so that they can grow up in their salvation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1 Peter 2:2 the addressees are exhorted: τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε ... ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη (“yearn for the unadulterated milk of God’s word ... like newborn babies”). This exhortation is motivated in 1:3: εἰ ἐγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος (“since you have tasted that the Lord is good”). 1 Peter 2:3 suggests that God has given the ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη “something” to sustain them in their salvation. This article attempts to establish the implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε: what is it — in terms of the beget/birth-imagery — that they had tasted? In this way the referent of ἐγεύσασθε is to be established.

First the relevant socio-historic context of the addressees of 1 Peter is constructed (2). Then it is explored what the argument of 1 Peter and of the pericope 2:1-3 suggests as the referent of ἐγεύσασθε (3). The referents of ἀναγεννάω and ἀρτιγέννητος βρέφος in the beget/birth-imagery in 1 Peter is established (4). The author’s use of Psalm 34:8 is studied to see what light it sheds on the referent of ἐγεύσασθε (5). The implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε is established (6). Finally the referent of ἐγεύσασθε is defined, and it is shown how clarity about the referent of ἐγεύσασθε contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the macro argument of 1 Peter (7).

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2. THE SOCIO-HISTORIC CONTEXT OF THE ADDRESSEES OF 1 PETER

The socio-historic context of the addressees of 1 Peter has been constructed by Van Rensburg (2006:475-481), and this construction is utilized as interpretative framework for the investigation of the referent of ἐγγέυσασθε in 1 Peter 2:3. This construction boils down to the following:

- 1 Peter is a genuine letter, utilized as a circular letter,¹ and exhibiting characteristics of the contemporary Jewish diaspora letter.²
- The self-identification of the author is taken as a matter of fact, as do a number of scholars.³ This viewpoint implies that the letter is to be dated before 70 AD.
- The addressees “represented the broad spectrum of people living in northern Asia Minor” (Achtemeier 1996:57), as indicated in the address of the letter: Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας (1 Pet 1:1).
- The labelling of the addressees⁴ as παρεπιδήμιος διασπορᾶς (resident foreigners of the Diaspora, 1:1; 2:11) and πάροικοι (visiting foreigners, 2:11) refers to the fact that the addressees were, already before their conversion to the Christian faith, “visiting and resident foreigners” in the literal socio-political sense of the words (Elliott 1981:32). Having πάροικος status in the first century AD already implied hardships (Berger 1953:626). The suffering was not caused by official persecution, but by spontaneous local social ostracism (Elliott 1986:14; Breytenbach 1998:341; Balch 1981:95).
- However, the πάροικοι label does not merely describe their social position; it indicates their previous status as “God-fearers” as well, the φοβούμενοι and the σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν (Van Unnik 1980:72-74). It is part of the adoption of the honorific titles of the Old Testament people of God, transforming the title into a proud self-identification (cf. Feldmeier 1992:104).
- When these foreigners became Christians, it had positive and negative social consequences. On the positive side: they became part of a Christian group and were no longer isolated individuals or small groups. Those who

1 Cf. *inter alia* Achtemeier (1996:61-62); Aune (1987:159); Goppelt (1978:45); Thurén (1995:93-94); Elliott (1986:11).

2 Cf. Aune (1987:185). The addressees, however, are not just readers in general; they are specific persons in a specific (albeit wide) area (Thurén 1995:95).

3 E.g. Selwyn (1947:27-33); Thurén (1995:25-28); Van Unnik (1980:80). *Contra* Achtemeier (1996:1-42).

4 Cf. excellent surveys on the scholarship on the identity and circumstances of the addressees of 1 Peter by Goppelt (1978:161-177); Achtemeier (1996:50-58); especially Feldmeier (1992).

had been God-fearers and could not become full Proselytes, no longer were second class members in the new Christian group.

- The new Christians, however, also had to cope with negative consequences as a result of their new alliance. The unjust suffering which they had to endure as (political) foreigners, became even more severe, since now one more dimension has been added to their “otherness”: the fact that they have aligned themselves with an obscure foreign sect. This resulted in further and more intense ostracism and discrimination. These circumstances forced many of them to consider to retaliate the injustices they suffered, or even to forsake their new commitment to the Christian faith.

The author uses the letter to persuade the addressees of their status as saved persons before God, of God’s loving care for them, and of Christ’s vicarious suffering and subsequent glory and supreme power. All of this is, however, not the purpose for writing; it serves as basis for the actual purpose: ethical exhortations to have a good lifestyle (τὴν ἀναστροπὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλήν, 2:12) and to persevere in doing good (ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ, 4:19), even amidst and in spite of their own suffering.

3. THE REFERENT OF ἔγεύσασθε AS SUGGESTED BY THE ARGUMENT OF 1 PETER AND OF THE PERICOPE 2:1-3

3.1 The macro argument of 1 Peter

The macro argument of the letter has been argued by Van Rensburg (2006: 481-488). The pericope 1:3-12 is the basis for the rest of the letter, with the key-phrase the reassurance in 1:3 of the fact that God has begotten⁵ the addressees anew: ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς. The body of the letter is largely paraenetic, with the pericope 1:3-12 as motivative basis for four inferential exhortations, viz 1:13-25, 2:1-10, 2:11-4:19, and 5:1-11.

This view of the argument of 1 Peter, and specifically the coherence between the letter opening (1:3-12) and the body of the letter, can be represented in the following way:

⁵ The English equivalent “(God) who has begotten us anew” is used for the Greek participle ἀναγεννήσας, to stay as close as possible to the referent of the verb ἀναγεννάω. The result of this “rebegetting” is a new birth (2:2) (cf. Achtemeier 1996:91).

Synopsis of the argument of 1 Peter

LETTER HEADING

1:1-2: Author, addressees and greeting

LETTER OPENING

1:3-12: Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth

FOUR INFERENTIAL EXHORTATIONS (basis: “God has begotten us anew”)

Exhortation 1: 1:13-25: Set your hope fully on the grace and therefore be holy

Exhortation 2: 2:1-10: The obligation of a person having been given a new birth by God to grow spiritually, both personally and communally

Exhortation 3: 2:11-4:19: Code of conduct for foreigners

2:11-12: The basic exhortation

2:13-17: Relationship with political authorities

2:18-25: Relationship with employers

3:1-7: Relationship with the marriage partner

3:8-12: Relationship with neighbours in general

3:13-4:19: Attitude towards and response to unjust sufferings

Exhortation 4: 5:1-11: Code of conduct within the church

LETTER CLOSING

5:12-14: Conclusion: Purpose, salutations, letter closing

3.2 The place and function of 1 Peter 2:1-3 in the argument

The pericope 2:1-10 is introduced by the relation particle οὖν, which marks 2:1-10 as “Result”.⁶ Because of its content 2:1-10 is interpreted to be on the same level as 1:13-25, which means that 2:1-10 is a second exhortation that has the fact that God has begotten the addressees anew (1:3) as “Reason”. The function of the relation particle οὖν is therefore to mark 2:1-10 as “Result” in a “Reason” ↔ “Result” relation with 1:3-12.

The pericope 2:1-10 can be divided into two sub-pericopes, each with an imperative as main verb, viz ἐπιποθήσατε (2:2) and οἰκοδομείσθε (2:5). The asyndeton⁷ in 2:4ff is interpreted as additive equivalent coordination of 2:4-10 to 2:1-3, implicating the continuance of the οὖν of 2:1. The relative pronoun (πρὸς οὖν) undergirds the connection. This means that 2:1-3 and 2:4-10 is a double “Result” in a “Reason” ↔ “Result relation with 1:3-12.

The inter-relationship of the two sub-pericopes of 2:1-10 can be represented in the following way:

2:1-10: Second (double) exhortation, as consequence of the fact that God has begotten the addressees anew

- 2:1-3: The obligation of a person begotten anew by God regarding personal growth: yearn for the unadulterated milk of God’s word
- 2:4-10: The obligation of a person begotten anew by God regarding growth with fellow believers:⁸ Let yourself be built into a spiritual house where Christ is the cornerstone

6 Οὖν^a is a marker of result, often implying the conclusion of a process of reasoning (Louw & Nida 1988,1:783). Cf. also Denniston’s discussion of οὖν. He (1966:xlx) states that οὖν has an inferential function. He (1966:l) adds that it sometimes refers back to the general situation, and not to any particular set of words. It could refer back to the motive (not the content) of the preceding words, to a far back remark in a continuous discourse, to an individual word or phrase, or to an idea suggested rather than expressed.

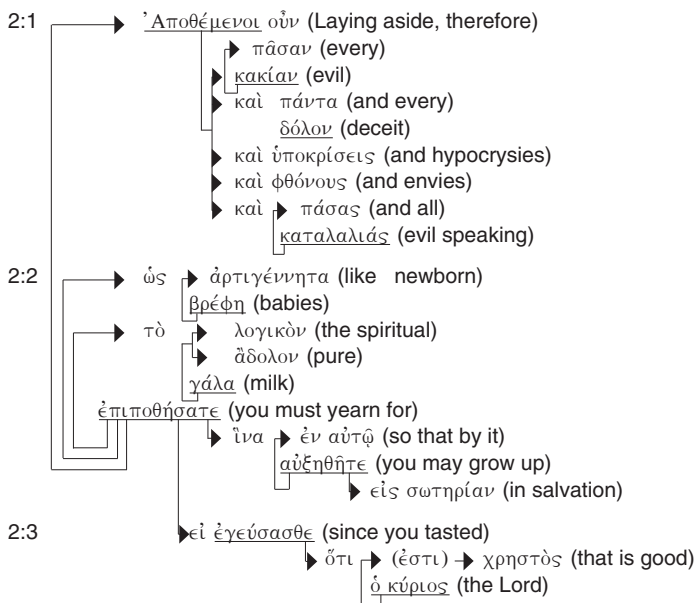
7 Greek can express the interrelation of sentences either explicitly by the use of relation particles, or it can dispense with connection, using asyndeton (Blass, Debrunner & Funk 1961:225). Asyndeton refers to the phenomenon that Greek sentences sometimes do not have a relation particle. Asyndeton in itself, like a “zero” morpheme in linguistic theory (Poythress 1984:318), then actually becomes the relation marker. This approximates what Denniston (1966:xlili) calls formal (as distinct from stylistic) asyndeton.

8 Michaels (1988:93) also points to a shift from an individual to a corporate focus: “having spoken of individual spiritual growth in vv 1-3, Peter now turns his attention to the church as a community of believers.”

3.3 The local argument of 2:1-3

To interpret the referent of ἐγεύσασθε in 2:3 it is necessary to keep the whole pericope 2:1-3 in scope. The imperative ἐπιποθήσατε in 2:2 is the main verb governing the whole of 2:1-3. The participial ἀποθέμενοι in 2:1 is interpreted as subordinate to ἐπιποθήσατε as main verb, signalling an activity (the laying aside of the bonds of sin from their past) that must take place simultaneous with the execution of the exhortation to yearn for the milk.⁹

The following representation of my interpretation of the syntactic structure shows the interrelations on micro level:



⁹ In most Bible versions the participle ἀποθέμενοι is translated as an imperative, which means that two exhortations are given in 2:1-2: to lay aside the listed wrong-doings (ἀποθέμενοι), and to yearn for milk (ἐπιποθήσατε) (e.g. Michaels 1988:82-83). Grammatically it is possible, but this interpretation does not make clear what the logical relation is between the imperative ἐπιποθήσατε and the participle ἀποθέμενοι. Achtemeier (1996:143), although translating ἀποθέμενοι rather neutral ("after putting off ..."), later (1996:145) says: "because Christians have put away divisive vices (2:1) ..., they must now yearn for God's word." This creates the impression that the author exhorts the addressees to first lay aside the listed wrong-doings, and then yearn for the milk.

The local argument of 2:1-3 therefore is the following: The basic exhortation is that the addressees should “yearn for the unadulterated milk¹⁰ of God’s word” (τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε, 2:2b). The way in which this yearning must take place, is “like newborn babies” (ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη, 2:2a), who have been (re)born as a result of having been begotten anew by God. This suggests an expansion of the “new begetting”-metaphor introduced in 1:3 (ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς).¹¹ The argument is: “God has begotten you anew. This resulted in your new birth, and now you are a baby.”

The baby will only grow to its full salvific capacity if it gets the right nutrition, and this is the goal with the exhortation to yearn for milk: ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν (“so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,” 2:2c). A motivation for this exhortation is given in 2:3: εἰ ἐγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος (“since you have tasted that the Lord is good”). This motivation is yet another expansion of the “new begetting” metaphor, utilizing an adaptation from the words of LXX Psalm 34:8. The verb ἐγεύσασθε, as will be argued under point 5 and point 6 below, suggests that the newborn suckling baby has tasted “something” that is good, and will therefore want more.

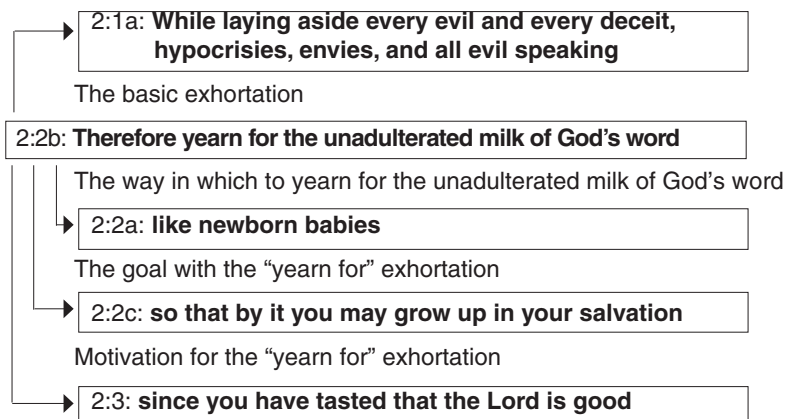
The participial phrase in 2:1 signals an activity (the laying aside of the bonds of sin from their past) that must take place simultaneous with the execution of the exhortation to yearn for the milk. The laying aside of the bonds of sin from their past marks their progress in growing up in their salvation, and it demands a lot of effort and energy. They will only have the necessary energy and stamina when they get the right nutrition (τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα).

This interpretation of the local argument of 2:1-3 can be represented as follows:

Activity to happen simultaneously with the execution of the “yearn for” exhortation

10 Cf. Achtemeier (1996:146-147) for a convincing argument for rendering the phrase τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα as: “the unadulterated milk of God’s word”. In the research tradition both λογικὸν and ἄδολον have been interpreted in different ways, as extensively discussed by Jobes (2002:1-14) in her survey of the research on the milk metaphor in 1 Peter 2:1-3. Different Bible versions evidence the diversity: NRSV/GNT/NLT: “pure spiritual milk”; ASV: “the spiritual milk which is without guile”; Darby: “the pure mental milk of the word”; 1983/92-Afrikaans: “die suiwer geestelike melk”; 1933/53-Afrikaans: “die onvervalste melk van die woord”; NIV/NASB95/NKJV: “the pure milk of the word”; KJV: “the sincere milk of the word”. However, for the purpose of this paper it suffices to translate the phrase τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα as: “the unadulterated milk of God’s word”. The referent of γάλα is thus the “Word of God”.

11 Jobes (2002:1) also views 1 Pet. 2:1-3 as a continuation of the “new-birth motif begun in chapter 1”.



The referent (within the beget/birth-imagery) of this "something" that the addressees have tasted, must now be established. It is the "something" that they have tasted, that has persuaded them that God is good and motivates them to yearn for the unadulterated milk of God's word. The nutrition they gain from this will provide the stamina and energy needed to grow up in their salvation and have the capability to lay aside all evil-doings (sampled in 2:1).

3.4 The argument of 2:1-3, as embedded within the beget/birth imagery

The intentional function of the exhortation τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ ἀυξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν ("yearn for the unadulterated milk of God's word, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation") within the argument of 1 Peter is twofold: (1) to emphasize that their salvation has already been effected, and (2) to persuade them that they have the obligation to grow up in their salvation. If they do not comply, their salvific status is intact, but they will remain babies.

The intentional function of the statement ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη ... ἐγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος ("like newborn babies ... you have tasted that the Lord is good") within the argument of 1 Peter is that it expands the beget-metaphor while reverting back to it. Viewed as part of the "rebegetting" and resultant new birth, God has given them something to sustain them in their salvation. The taste of this goodness of the Lord is the reason why they must yearn for "the unadulterated milk of God's word", which will make them grow up in their salvation.

To identify the referent of the “something” they have tasted, the following now needs to be done: first (4) the referents of ἀναγεννάω and ἀρτιγέννητος βρέφος in the beget/birth-imagery in 1 Peter is investigated, then (5) the author’s use of LXX Psalm 34:8 in his argument, and finally (6) what the grammatical object and (7) the referent of ἐγένεσθε is.

4. THE REFERENTS OF ἀναγεννάω AND ἀρτιγέννητος βρέφος IN THE BEGET/BIRTH-IMAGERY

4.1 The referent of ἀναγεννάω in 1 Peter

The verb ἀναγεννάω is used in the New Testament only in 1 Peter, in 1:3 and 1:23. In the LXX it is not used at all, except for one doubtful variant in *Sir Prolog.* 28 v.1 (BAGD ἀναγεννάω; Michaels 1988:17). To depend on the use of semantic equivalents and etymological derivatives in other books of the New Testament brings with it the danger of illegitimate totality transfer of meaning.¹² It is more plausible to establish the referent of ἀναγεννάω by studying its place and function in the rich family imagery in 1 Peter.

In 1 Peter 1:3-5 and in 2:1-3 there are no less than five components of the family imagery: πατήρ (1:3), ἀναγεννήσας / ἀναγεγεννημένοι (1:3,23), κληρονομίαν (1:4), ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη (2:2), and ἐγένεσθε (2:3).¹³ This suggests (but taken on its own it is not conclusive) that ἀναγεννάω refers to God begetting the addressees anew, a rebegetting that resulted in a new birth. The ἀναγεννάω therefore refers to the starting point of a process by which God has caused the addressees to have re-started their life, this time within an intimate and caring relationship with him.

A search in the TLG produces two relevant occurrences, both concurring with this preliminary conclusion:¹⁴

12 In John 3:3,7 γεννηθῆναι / γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν is used. This could be a Johannine adaptation making possible either the meaning ‘born again’ or — as the use of ἄνωθεν in John 3:31 suggests — ‘born from above’ (cf. Michaels 1988:17).

13 To these five components can of course be added the other facets of the family imagery in 1 Peter, viz. ‘redeemed by God into his household’ (Van Rensburg 2005: 421-422) and ‘having been transformed by God into his nation’ (Van Rensburg 2005: 425-426), which makes the present argument about the referent of ἀναγεννάω in 1 Peter even stronger.

14 In the LXX there are references to divine begetting (e.g. Deut. 32:18; Ps. 2:7; Prov. 8:25), but, as Achtemeier (1996:94) observes, they are not of a kind to suggest a source for 1 Peter 1:3.

- Philo uses the noun ἀναγέννησις once (*Aet.* 8.9), in the sense of regeneration. After having explained the view of the Stoics on the creation and destruction of the world and that fire is the cause of the corruption of the world, he states: ἐξ ἧς πάλιν ἀναγέννησις κόσμου συνίστασθαι προμηθεΐα τοῦ τεχνίτου (“from it again a regeneration of the world takes place through the providence of the Creator”).
- Josephus (*BJ* 4.484) has a very interesting use of a participial form of ἀναγεννώ although in a totally different context. After telling the story of Sodom, he says that there are still the remainders of the fire and traces of the five cities. He then adds: ἔτι δὲ κὰν τοῖς καρποῖς σποδιὰν ἀναγεννωμένην, οἷ χροῖαν μὲν ἔχουσι τῶν ἐδωδίμων ὁμοίαν, δρεψαμένων δὲ χερσὶν εἰς καπνὸν διαλύονται καὶ τεφραν (“as well as the ashes regenerated in their fruits, which fruits have a colour as if they were fit to be eaten, but if you pluck them with your hands, they dissolve into smoke and ashes”).

Interpreting ἀναγεννώ as “beget anew” concurs with the BAGD (*ἀναγεννώ*) suggestion to render ὁ ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζώσαν (1:3) with: “who has begotten us anew for a living hope”.¹⁵

This interpretation is *contra* that of Louw & Nida (1988). This lexicon lists ἀναγεννώ as Domain 13.55 (Be, Become, Exist, Happen), and defines its meaning as “to cause to be changed as a form of spiritual rebirth”, and proposes as English equivalents: “to cause to be born again, to be given new birth”. The lexicon (1988, Domain 13.55) adds: “In its NT usage ἀναγεννώ, of course, has nothing to do with birth as such, but refers to a radical change in personality, with the attendant change in state, and it is for that reason that ἀναγεννώ is here classified in Domain 13”. The lexicon lists γεννώ ἄνωθεν and παλιγγενεσία as Domain 41.53, defining its meaning as: “to experience a complete change in one’s way of life to what it should be, with the implication of return to a former state or relation”. The lexicon (1988, Domain 41.53) adds: “It is also possible to understand ἄνωθεν in Jn. 3.3 as meaning ‘from above’ or ‘from God’, a literary parallel to the phrase ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν in Jn. 1.13.”

The first of the Louw & Nida lexicon’s proposed English equivalents for ἀναγεννώ (“to cause to be born again”) is acceptable, although the focus on the “born again” is already problematic. The second English equivalent (“to be given new birth”) is not acceptable, since not the “birth” is the referent of ἀναγεννώ, but the “begetting”.

15 However, the BAGD’s different rendering of ἀναγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς (1:23) with “born again not of perishable seed”, is not substantiated, and — to my mind — not valid. In 1:23 it is yet again the “begetting anew” that is in focus; the “new birth” is the result of the begetting, and can not supplant the begetting. The result of the begetting, the birth, comes into the argument only in 1 Peter 2:2.

It can therefore be concluded that ἀναγεννάω in 1 Peter refers to God begetting the addressees anew.

4.2 The referent of ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη in 1 Peter

The use of ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη in 1 Peter 2:2 opens a window on the reality of the addressees of 1 Peter.¹⁶ Van Unnik (1980:67) was the first to take into account that the Proselytes were regarded as ‘newborn babies’, as persons who enter a new sphere of life. The rituals through which a person became a Proselyte (circumcision and baptism) signify that all that has gone before, falls away and that former transgressions¹⁷ no longer matter (Van Unnik 1980:67).¹⁸ All of this confirms that the referent of ἀναγεννάω is the process by which God has caused the addressees to have re-started their life, this time within an intimate and caring relationship with him as the one who has begotten them anew, and this resulted in a new birth; because of this new birth the bonds of sin from the past are now broken.

It can therefore be concluded that the referent of ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη as newborn babies, fits the beget/birth imagery very well. The phrase ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη in 2:2 moves the focus away from the initiation of the rebirth-process (the begetting), to the result of the birth: the newborn baby.

5. THE AUTHOR’S USE OF LXX PSALM 34:8

The way the author of 1 Peter uses Psalm 34:8 in his argument sheds light upon the referent of ἐγεύσασθε. He adapts LXX Psalm 34:8 in two respects for his argument:

- The Aorist indicative ἐγεύσασθε represents a change by the author from the LXX Aorist imperative γεύσασθε. This means that he purposefully signals that the act of tasting had already happened.

16 In using this “window” heed is taken of what Breytenbach (2005:190) has aptly said: “In metaphorical language use, some characteristics of the event(s) and/or entity/ies of a source domain are selected and mapped unto the event(s) and/or entities of a target domain. In terms of the rules and functions of mapping across semantic boundaries, it is inappropriate to demand the target to be described as a replica of the source.”

17 Werblowsky (1975:203-204) convincingly argues that the Proselyte baptism had a *halakah*-function.

18 Van Unnik (1980:67) strengthens his already strong argument by showing how the breaking of the bonds of sin from the past (ἀποθέμενοι οὖν πᾶσαν κακίαν καὶ πάντα δόλον καὶ ὑποκρίσεις καὶ φθόνους καὶ πάσας καταλαλίς, 2:1) is reminiscent of the lists of the virtues of Proselytes given by Philo (*De Paenitentia* 2).

- A second adaptation is that the author omits a second imperative (καὶ ἴδετε) in LXX Psalm 34:8 altogether. A reason for this omission could be that in his adaptation of Psalm 34:8 for use within the milk-imagery (building on the beget/birth-imagery) he has given a literal sense to ἐγεύσασθε, and this makes the accompanying verb in the Psalm (ὀράω) inappropriate.¹⁹

This leads to the conclusion that the “something” that the “newborn babies” had already tasted, must have been given to them, within the beget/birth imagery, between the present time of their being “newborn babies” and the time of their birth. This suggests that the tasting happened soon after birth. The yearn exhortation (ἐπιποθήσατε) has as object milk (γάλα), and it is suggested by ἐγεύσασθε in 1 Peter 2:3 that the object of the taste-activity is (a form of) milk.

Immediately colostrum springs to mind, and the possibility that the implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε actually is colostrum, needs to be explored.

6. THE IMPLICIT OBJECT OF ἐγεύσασθε

There is no doubt about the meaning of γεύομαι,²⁰ although its implicit object in 1 Peter 2:3 is not immediately clear. It has already been argued that the intentional function of the salvific utterance in 2:2-3 within the argument of 1 Peter is that it expands the beget/birth-metaphor while reverting back to it (cf 3.4 above). If the implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε can be established, within the frame of this beget/birth-imagery, the referent of γεύομαι becomes evident.²¹

Within the imagery of ‘beget/birth’ and ‘yearn for milk’, and given the fact that the tasting had happened between the present time in which the addressees are “newborn babies” and the time of their “new birth”, the object of ἐγεύσασθε most probably is colostrum,²² the very first milk a mother produces

19 Michaels (1988:90) also gives a “certain literal quality” to ἐγεύσασθε, but then, in the further development of his argument, views “Christ the Lord” as its grammatical object.

20 Louw & Nida (1988, γεύομαι) lists γεύομαι in Domain 24 (Sensory events and states), with only one sub domain: 24.72 (Taste).

21 Achtemeier (1996:148) says about 1 Peter 2:3 that “the citation here functions ... simply to reinforce a point able nonetheless to stand without the scriptural support.” He gives no further attention to the possible implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε. Michaels (1988:83) views the implicit object of ἐγεύσασθε as “the Lord himself, an image capturing the intimacy of the believer’s relationship to Christ.”

22 The author of 1 Peter and his addressees, although fully aware of the sustaining effect of colostrum, would not have been able to explain this effect. Today, however, the characteristics of colostrum are well described. Colostrum is low in fat, and high in carbohydrates, protein, and antibodies to help keep the baby healthy. It is extremely easy to digest, and is therefore the perfect first food for the baby. It is low in volume but high in concentrated nutrition for the newborn. Colostrum has a

during the first few days after birth.²³ The Greek word would have been πύσος (LSJ: *beestings, first milk after the birth*). Suda (Lexicon pi.3179 πῦος) gives the following definition of the meaning of πῦος: τὸ πρὸ τοῦ γάλακτος ἀμελχθέν, τὸ μεταβληκὸς αἷμα. αὐτὸ τὸ γάλα, τὸ γαλακτώδες ὑγρόν. γάλα νέον μετὰ χθεινοῦ γάλακτος ἐψηθὲν ἔνιοι. Ἀριστοφάνης· ἔστι δὲ καὶ πῦος τις ἔνδον καὶ λαγῶα τέτταρα (“Colostrum: That which needs to be milked out before the milk, mixed with blood. It is actually milk, a milky fluid. Some: new milk to be boiled with yesterday’s. Aristophanes: ‘there is also some colostrum added and four chunks of rabbit’s meat.’”)

7. CONCLUSION: THE REFERENT OF ἔγεύσασθε

This means that the referent of ἔγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος is the following: Viewed as part of the “rebegetting” and its resultant new birth, God has given the addressees colostrum, to sustain them in their salvation.²⁴ Having

laxative effect on the baby, helping him pass his early stools, which helps prevent jaundice. Colostrum also provides large amounts of living cells which defend the baby against many harmful agents. The concentration of immune factors is much higher in colostrum than in mature milk. Colostrum actually works as a natural and 100% safe vaccine. It contains large quantities of an antibody called secretory immunoglobulin A (IgA) which is a new substance to the newborn. Before the baby was born, he received the benefit of another antibody, called IgG, through the placenta. IgG worked through the baby’s circulatory system, but IgA protects the baby in the places most likely to come under attack from germs, namely the mucous membranes in the throat, lungs, and intestines. Colostrum has an especially important role to play in the baby’s gastrointestinal tract. A newborn’s intestines are very permeable. Colostrum seals the holes by “painting” the gastrointestinal tract with a barrier which mostly prevents foreign substances from penetrating. Colostrum also contains high concentrations of leukocytes, protective white cells which can destroy disease-causing bacteria and viruses (La Leche League 2006).

- 23 The BAGD (γεύομαι) suggestion to render γεύσασθαι ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος (2:3) with “experience the Lord’s kindness,” and classifying it as a figurative extension of the meaning of γεύομαι, does not allow for this metaphoric understanding of γεύομαι, and is therefore problematic.
- 24 Clemens Alexandrinus (*Paedagogus* 1.6.49.3.1), although too late to impact directly on the interpretation of either ἀγαγεννω or γαλα / γεύομαι in 1 Peter, is evidence of an early linking of the milk and the new birth: διὰ τοῦτο ἄρα μυστικῶς τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀποστόλῳ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τῇ τοῦ κυρίου ἀποχρώμενον θωπῇ “γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότιστα” λέγει. εἰ γὰρ ἀνεγεννήθημεν εἰς Χριστόν, ὁ ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς ἐκτρέφει τῷ ἰδίῳ γάλακτι, τῷ λόγῳ· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ γεννήσαν ἔοικεν εὐθὺς παρέχειν τῷ γεννωμένῳ. (“Wherefore the Holy Spirit in the apostle, using the voice of the Lord, says mystically, ‘I have given you milk to drink.’ For if we have been begotten anew unto Christ, He who has rebegotten us nourishes us with his own milk, the word; for it is proper that what has rebegotten should forthwith supply nourishment to that

tasted the colostrum they now know that the Lord is good. This experience of the goodness of the Lord becomes the reason why they must yearn for more milk. The milk they are urged to yearn for, is no longer colostrum, which, as part of the birth-process (i.e. as part of the process through which God has saved them), was for their initial sustenance. Rather the milk they should now yearn for is τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα the “unadulterated milk of God’s word”, which will make them grow up in their salvation.

“To grow up in your salvation” (ἵνα αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν) does not mean that through the milk they will grow and as a result receive salvation,²⁵ but that the milk will enable them to live up to their status as children of God. Since their rebeggetting and sequential rebirth, they already are saved and are therefore children of God. They now have the obligation to live up to their status as saved persons, as children of God. The more they digest the unadulterated milk of God’s word, the more their lifestyle will evidence their status as persons (re)begotten by God, as children of God.

Having established the referent of ἐγεύσασθε, it is now possible to — by way of conclusion — indicate how clarity about this referent, contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the macro argument of 1 Peter.

The author of 1 Peter, right at the outset of his letter (1:3) and two more times (1:23, 2:2-3), uses the beget/birth-imagery to persuade his addressees that they are what they are because of God: God, in his great mercy and because of no other reason than his own will, took the initiative. The author argues this in terms of the beget/rebirth-imagery: God rebegot them, as if in a woman’s womb, using the everlasting seed of his word. In this way he effected their (re)birth, and as part of the beget/rebirth process, he provided them, as newborn babies, with colostrum — the immediate sustenance they needed. In all of this God’s mercy, his goodness has become evident.

This status that they have before God as his children, is therefore in no way at risk of being changed or neutralised by either their trying circumstances or their own weakness. They received from God, as part of their beget/birth-process, colostrum. Having tasted the colostrum, they have been persuaded that

which has been rebegotten.”). This “immediate nourishment” after the “rebeggetting” is pictured by 1 Peter as the *colostrum*, which — in his beget/birth imagery — his addressees “tasted” as part of their beget/birth-process.

25 Contrary to Achtemeier (1996:147) and Michaels (1988:89). Achtemeier (1996:147) argues that “it is more likely that σωτηρία refers to eschatological deliverance than to Christian maturity.” This would make the growth conditional for one’s deliverance at the time of the final divine judgment, a motif that does not fit in with the macro argument of the letter. Michaels (1988:89) argues along the same lines as does Achtemeier: “εἰς σωτηρίαν in our passage points to a vindication arising inevitably, almost ‘naturally’, out of the spiritual growth that results from receiving ‘pure spiritual milk’.”

the Lord is good. This fact should motivate them to yearn for the unadulterated milk of God's word. The more they feed on and digest this unadulterated milk, the more their lifestyle will evidence their status as persons (re)begotten by God, thus: their status as children of God.

In this way the author empowers his addressees to be ready to receive and practice the directives he will be giving in the remainder of his letter for their lifestyle.

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