

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CEPHAS—PETER

Paul mentions on several occasions a certain Cephas whom he evidently considers of great importance (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). Was this the apostle St Peter? Some suggest that it was not, and therefore that there is no evidence that Paul recognised Peter as head of the Church.

The fourth Gospel tells us Our Lord promised Peter that his name would be Cephas (John 1:42). The word Cephas is Aramaic (*kepha*) for rock. The Greek for rock is usually *petra*, but there is also a Greek word *petros* with the same meaning. According to Tricot, Benoit and Medebielle neither the Aramaic *kepha* nor its Greek equivalent *petros* were used as a proper name.¹ The reason why Simon the apostle is called Cephas is given in Matt. 16:18, where Our Lord says to him: 'Thou art Peter (*petros*) and upon this rock (*petra*) I will build my Church.' Since the language Our Lord spoke was Aramaic, *petros* and *petra* are merely translations of the same Aramaic word *kepha*. The less common word *petros* is used since it is the masculine form. So Our Lord really called Simon *kepha*, which may be translated into Greek as *petros* (or *petra*), or transliterated as *kēphas*, as in John 1:42. Cephas is primarily a descriptive name, indicating Peter's position as the rock on which Christ was to build his Church; but it then became a proper name, like John, James, etc. The same applies to the Greek *petros*, and it is by this name Peter that he is usually referred to in the New Testament.

When St Paul therefore refers to Cephas it would seem obvious that he means St Peter. But objections arise. Why does Paul mention both names in the same context (Gal. 2:7-9). How is it that Clement of Alexandria writes in his *Hypotyposesis*, 'He whom Paul, when he went to Antioch, withstood to the face, was one of the seventy disciples, and had the same name as Peter the Apostle'?² Moreover it was customary to mention Cephas in the lists of the Seventy, e.g. in those ascribed to Hippolytus and Dorotheus Tyrus; and in the Armenian calendar there is a feast of St Cephas, disciple of Paul.³

Yet the majority of the Fathers consider that the Cephas of Galatians is to be identified with St Peter. In fact, Jerome, Chrysostom and

¹ Tricot, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, XII, 1747; Benoit, *Bible de Jérusalem* note on Matt. 16:18; Medebielle, *Dictionnaire de la Bible Supplément*, II, 551.

² Quoted by Eusebius, *Ecl. Hist.* I, 12.

³ Asseman, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, p. 648

Gregory the Great mention the opinion of Clement and his followers, but merely to refute it.¹ Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Augustine, Theodoret of Cyr and Theodore of Mopsuestia among others definitely refer this passage in Galatians to Peter the Apostle. At the Reformation some Catholic apologists revived the view of Clement, in face of objections against the primacy of Peter and his successors based on Gal. 2:11-14. But this attempted solution failed to convince either Reformers or Catholics. Thus Suarez the Jesuit theologian calls such an answer a 'frivolous expedient' (*De leg.*, IX, 15, n. 7). It is most likely that Clement tried to distinguish the Cephas of Galatians from the Apostle Peter for the same reason as these Catholic apologists. We certainly know that the passage in question caused the early Church some embarrassment, for Origen and his school had to resort to the interpretation that Peter and Paul were just pretending that they were in opposition at Antioch. Clement took an easier way out of the difficulty by deciding that Paul 'withstood to the face' not Peter, but another disciple who had the same name in its Aramaic form.

A comparison of Luke 24:34 and 1 Cor. 15:5 completes the evidence for the identification of Peter with the Cephas of Paul's epistles. Luke indicates that before the risen Christ had appeared to all the apostles he had first appeared to Peter. Paul gives a list of those to whom Christ appeared after the Resurrection, mentioning first Cephas, then all the apostles. The Cephas of Paul is surely to be identified with the Peter of Luke. The fact that in Gal. 2:7-9 Paul used both 'Peter' and 'Cephas' is certainly no argument in itself that he considered them to refer to two different persons. This is the only occasion on which Paul uses the Greek form Peter, and Cullmann suggests that it is 'perhaps because he here cites an official document, in the Greek translation of which the form *Petros* was used.'²

B. ALGER

SIMILARITIES WITH PAGAN RELIGIONS

What attitude ought we to adopt to the parallels so frequently adduced from extra-biblical sources, in support of a denial that the Bible is the revealed word of God?

This has always been a problem to some extent, but it has increased considerably since the nineteenth century when so much positive knowledge was acquired of various pagan religions, and in particular

¹ Jerome, *In Gal.* 2:11 (P.L. xxvi, 340-1); Chrysostom, *Homily on Gal.* 2:11; Gregory the Great, *In Ezech.*, II, Homily 6 (P.L. lxxvi, 1003)

² Oscar Cullmann, *Peter*, London 1953, p. 18

other Semitic beliefs. The prevailing reaction at that time, and in that particular philosophical climate, was to hail the similarities which these investigations uncovered, as proof that there was no need to postulate supernatural origins for Christianity: the similarities were supposed to show that Christianity was simply a natural development. The reaction of Christian scholars was on the whole a somewhat vehement denial of the existence of any such similarities. Such a reaction was understandable in the circumstances, but exaggeration is a deviation from the truth, in whichever direction it occurs. There are undoubtedly many striking similarities: as Dorothy Sayers put it: 'There have been incarnate gods a-plenty, and slain-and-resurrected gods not a few.' But to exaggerate the similarities at the expense of profound differences is equally a deviation from the truth; and the differences are far more striking. We have to try and strike a balance, neither ignoring the latter nor denying the former—and striking a balance is one of the feats that most men find particularly difficult. This same problem has arisen once more, apropos of the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are those who, for reasons best known to themselves, have heightened the undoubted similarities between Qumran and Christianity and seem to imagine that the very foundations of Christianity have thereby been shaken.¹ But we have not been asked to consider here any particular instances of these similarities, but rather to consider the phenomenon in general.

We may look on it in this way: man of his very nature has always realised his own misery and his own insufficiency in relation to the supreme being: 'primitive' man has always felt the need to contact the divinity, and to obtain salvation. Thus, for instance, the broad pattern of an incarnate, dying, rising god is hardly surprising. The more specific pattern has varied according to time and place and all sorts of particular influences. Now as Christians, the very foundation of our faith lies in our belief that God actually intervened in the course

¹ *Time* describes the various reactions to the Dead Sea Scrolls: 'One faction, headed by French Orientalist André Dupont-Sommer (whose views were popularised in the U.S. by Amateur Scrollman Edmund Wilson), held that the Dead Sea Community more than Bethlehem might have been the cradle of Christianity. Philologist John Allegro of Britain's University of Manchester strongly implied that the scrolls put into question the uniqueness of Jesus. At the other extreme were theologians who summarily dismissed the scrolls as having no major importance to Christianity. Only lately have scholars accumulated enough facts to be able to settle down to a sober appraisal of the scrolls' significance. The majority verdict: the scrolls do not shake the foundations of Christianity, but they greatly contribute to the understanding of those foundations. . . . The only Christians whose faith the scrolls can jolt are those who have failed to see the paradox that the churches have always taught: that Jesus Christ was a man as well as God—a man of a particular time and place, speaking a specific language, revealing his way in terms of a specific cultural and religious tradition. For Christians who want to know more of that matrix in which their faith was born, the People of the Scrolls are reaching a hand across the centuries.' (15 April 1957, pp. 38-43)

of history ; that meant that inevitably He limited His action in many ways. He had to choose one particular people, one particular place, one particular time in which to reveal Himself. This is our belief, but what are the consequences of this belief ? If God does reveal Himself to men, then He must ' speak ' in an intelligible way to them : obviously to choose the Chinese as His particular people, and then proceed to ' speak ' to them in a Semitic language and according to Semitic ideas and aspirations would be nonsense. To reveal Himself in a way completely different from anything known until that time would be absurd, since it would be a completely unintelligible revelation. Hence similarities between God's revelation of Himself which we find in the Bible, and the modes of thought and belief we find in other ancient Semitic religions, far from being surprising, are quite inevitable. This is simply an implication of our Faith, but it is not always realised ; and it may be paralleled by the instances of Christianity's making use of various details taken from contemporary pagan practices. If the missionary in Africa were to pay no attention to African thought forms, modes of expression and religious beliefs, and if he were to address his potential converts as he would a crowd in Hyde Park, one might doubt his chances of success. How could his audience understand what he was talking about, even though his actual words were translated into their language ? Whilst, therefore, alleged similarities must be examined on their individual merits, we may be assured that there is nothing surprising nor alarming in their existence : they will never disprove the Divine origin of Christianity ; the lack of any similarities would not prove it.

THE CREATION OF WOMAN

Is it correct to say that woman, having received human nature only mediately through man, and to be a helpmate to man, is not an image of God in the same full sense as man ?

Presumably the reason for suggesting that woman received human nature only mediately through man, is the story of the formation of Eve from Adam's rib (if this be the anatomically correct term). But the purpose of this story is to teach us that woman belongs more closely to man than any other two creatures can belong to each other, when they are joined together as one flesh in marriage. Its purpose is to emphasise the closeness of the marriage bond, and to describe in the most telling language, the purpose of marriage in relation to God's creation. It is therefore quite unreasonable to seek in this story for any pronouncement concerning the nature of woman as such.

In a distinct and quite separate story (Gen. 1:1-2, 4a) we are told how God created all things, with the crowning work taking place in His creation of man to His own image and likeness. I have spoken of God's creation of man, but I could have said, His creation of Adam, for it makes no real difference whether we retain the Hebrew word as a proper name, or translate it by a common noun. The author is concerned with the creation of mankind, and more especially with the truth that mankind is essentially different from all other forms of life, a difference which is so wonderfully expressed by saying that man is made in God's own image. In such a context as this, it is wrong to separate man from woman, and to think that God only made the one sex in His own image. This is made perfectly plain: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27). It is true that the Scriptures teach that woman is the subordinate of the man in certain respects, again within the context of marriage; but this is not the consequence of her having been created according to God's image to a lesser degree than man. Woman, made in the image of God, is to reflect that image and fulfil her nature in the particular way determined by God, which differs in certain ways from that decreed for man; otherwise one might ask why God made mankind male and female.

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