

REVIEW

PETER. Disciple, Apostle, Martyr. By Oscar Cullmann, D.D. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

PRIMAUTE DE PIERRE dans la perspective protestante et dans la perspective catholique. By Charles Journet. (Alsatia, Paris; n.p.)

Dr Cullmann's *Peter* is important for several reasons. It is the latest sign that the dialogue between Catholics and Protestants has been reopened. Catholics and Protestants are again talking to each other, first in an effort to understand each other, though as Mgr Journet rightly points out, Catholics, holding the faith they do, cannot be content with mere conversations. We want others to hold the faith that is ours. No vague federation of 'churches' will ever satisfy us, and if such dreams persist they can only bring disillusionment. That Dr Cullmann, profound and frank as he is, is not entirely free from such illusions, is shown in a long note (p. 44) in which he pleads for an agreement to differ between 'The Roman Catholic Church and the great Christian Council of Churches independent of Rome'.

The book is important for another reason. Dr Cullmann has boldly addressed himself to a discussion 'of the very thing that separates us', and we can be grateful to him for his honesty and clear-sightedness. One of the greatest benefits, though an incidental one, of this book is that it enables us to measure the enormous differences that still separate a learned and sympathetic Protestant divine from Catholics. We are all the more indebted to Mgr Journet for providing an answer that is at once prompt, firm and charitable, but there is room for other Catholic answers and it is to be hoped that they will be forthcoming.

For any deep understanding of Dr Cullman's book it is necessary to remember that he is arguing on two fronts, on the one against the liberal Protestants and on the second against Catholics. As against the first, he strenuously maintains the authenticity of the great Petrine text of Matthew 16 and will have nothing to do with the 'faith' exegesis of the 'rock'. For this and much else (his suggestion that the *logion* of Matthew 16 may have been uttered at the Last Supper is attractive and not without foundation) we can be grateful, but the liberal Protestants will rejoice at his subtle onslaught on the Catholic position. His chief contention is that St Peter's function as foundation and deputy-shepherd was personal and temporary. Peter had no successor, i.e. no lawful successors who had received the power of jurisdiction from him. Peter exercised his jurisdiction only for a very short time, until James took over the control of the Jerusalem church and Peter became the leader of the 'judeo-Christian mission'. The balance of evidence is that he went to Rome and there died a martyr, but whether he did or did not found the Church there, we cannot say.

These positions are based immediately on a tortuous and unsatisfying exegesis of texts in *Acts* and St Paul, and on a very searching examination of the patristic and archeological evidence. As to this latter, it seems to us that it is necessary for Catholic scholars to re-examine that evidence more rigorously, and it is to be regretted that, at any rate in this country, no *scientific* account has been given by a Catholic scholar of the recent excavations under St Peter's. It is surprising, too, that, in view of all the work done on eschatology in recent years, Dr Cullmann holds that our Lord did not intend his Church to continue throughout the ages but that the consummation was to come soon. The shades of Dr Schweitzer still hang heavily over Protestant exegesis on this point.

At first sight, Dr Cullmann's case seems formidable; but as one reflects on it, one sees that its weakness is precisely where the answer is to be found. A discussion of the Primacy of Peter *apart from* the Church can never be fruitful. As in all discussion between Catholics and non-Catholics, the nature of the Church is the crucial problem, and as Mgr Journet acutely observes, this involves sooner or later the divinity of Christ. If Christ's prayer and prophecy about his Church are nullified, then it is impossible to go on maintaining his divinity. In other words, to the *merely* historical way of looking at things, and to go deeper, to the Protestant notion of a merely moral continuity between Christ and his Church, Catholics oppose the great dogmatic fact of the living Church, witnessing to her own nature and origins. It is becoming ever more apparent that the teaching of the Vatican Council about the Church as her own best witness, and the exposition of the meaning of Tradition as a living, continuous thing and not as a more or less tortuous exercise in the manoeuvring of historical texts, will alone rescue the debate from the stalemate it has now reached. That is why to the massive learning but 'historicist' outlook of Dr Cullmann Mgr Journet has opposed a theological answer. It must be regarded as a first essay, though no doubt fuller treatment is to be found in his lengthy study *L'Eglise du Verbe incarné*. Along these lines is to be found not only the answer to Dr Cullmann but the presentation of the Church that the man of today most needs. May we respectfully suggest that our English theologians address themselves to a task that cannot but be fruitful in results?

In conclusion, we feel obliged to say that Dr Cullmann's book is not suitable reading for the theologically uninstructed.

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