

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Limits of the Papacy: Authority and Autonomy in the Church* by Patrick Grantfield

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to do – or the opposite. It is all too easy to arrive at a point of not being able to see, of not wanting to see, of not even being able to want to see. The author quotes both Aquinas and Aristotle to illustrate the close link there is between freedom and the quality of moral action. ('He who avoids evil just because it is a command of God, is not free' – Aquinas.) An approach to moral teaching which does not appreciate the significance of inner freedom and personal responsibility – and does not encourage them – would be a disservice to morality and Christianity.

Subsequent chapters touch on some controversial themes and traditional problem areas: the question of moral absolutes, the principle of double effect, the issue of civil law and morality. On the question of absolutes ('intrinsic evil') it would seem that there is an irreconcilable difference between theologians. Too much authoritarianism in morals brings its own inevitable train of ill-effects. The author cites that peculiar abdication of responsibility which leads some people to think that all is well if they can wangle a favourable view from one of their clergy. The clergy are hardly in the business of relieving people of moral duty.

The general thrust of the principle of double effect the author sees as important. It cannot be easily abandoned, but neither can it be thought of as a matter of Christian faith. Some attempts to reformulate it have not been spectacularly successful. In the world in which we live Christians are sometimes left with a choice which is less than ideal. Sometimes, perhaps to avoid greater evil, we find that we have to do what is wrong. Which is preferable? A glib solution to a moral dilemma which helps to assuage my guilt? Or is there a greater moral wholesomeness in still continuing to treasure all values, even when I have to act against one of them? I must admit that my sympathy is with the author in favouring the second approach.

The final two chapters deal with conscience, and the nature of sin and forgiveness. They are the finest chapters in a book that combines a high standard of theological scholarship with lucid writing. It is a truly 'catholic' book, where you are as likely to find a citation from Séamus Heaney, Murdoch or Sygne as from Aquinas, Augustine or Rahner.

'Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, must himself become more of a man' – a great magisterial quote from Vatican II. The author does not refer to it, but it summarizes well the theme of this exceptional book. The whole moral venture is nothing more and nothing less than this: the art of being fully human. *Tolle, lege.*

SÉAMUS RYAN

*Thurles*

**The Limits of the Papacy: Authority and Autonomy in the Church.** Patrick Grantfield. London: Darton, Longman and Todd. Pp. 207. Price Stg.£9.95.

This book has a provocative title, but its substance is an exploration of the delicate relationship between Roman power and local autonomy in the

Church. The author situates his study against the background of the last decade which has seen decisive Roman intervention in the life of the local Church. Action has been taken against noted theologians, and against priests and religious involved in politics. The Hunthausen affair showed that some bishops too were not above suspicion. There have been differing reactions to this exercise of Roman authority. Some have seen these interventions as absolutely necessary for the preservation of the purity of the faith, while others consider them to be ill-timed and unjustified. The evident increase in the use of papal authority leads Grantfield to an examination of the claims of papal primacy, both in its theological development and canonical expression. The two Vatican Councils and canon law leave no doubt that the Pope has the fullness of executive, legislative and judicial power. No aspect of Catholic life is exempt from papal authority, exercised either directly or through the Roman Curia. In the past there were attempts to limit papal power such as Conciliarism and Gallicanism. Of course the papal office is not an example of absolute power. The Pope's actions are limited by the purpose of his ministry. He is also bound by the natural and divine law. There are, besides, dogmatic limits to papal authority. The Pope cannot define something that is in no way related to revelation, while manifest heresy or insanity makes a Pope subject to deposition. In the light of these limits to papal authority, Grantfield goes on to discuss the idea of collegiality.

Episcopal collegiality was not a doctrine that was accepted easily at Vatican II. Some Council Fathers were uncertain that it was compatible with the Roman primacy as defined at Vatican I. A story has it that one Father, having carefully studied the New Testament, argued that, besides the Council of Jerusalem, the only other example of collegial action he could find in the Scriptures was in Matthew 25:26, which says that at the arrest of Jesus, 'all the disciples deserted him and ran away'. However the Council did agree that episcopal collegiality had a secure scriptural foundation. Vatican II's doctrine on collegiality was enthusiastically welcomed by theologians, even if the doctrine was a classic example of compromise: a formulation broad enough to satisfy the various factions and ambiguous enough to allow for further clarification. The Synod of Bishops was established, and national episcopal conferences got a new and dynamic role. Nevertheless in the last few years, some theologians feel that the collegial ideal is threatened by a renewed centralization and recent Roman interventions. Thus Grantfield wants to re-examine collegiality. He maintains that it is a fundamental theological concept which depends on the papacy and yet is 'dialogic'. The author accepts that the Synod of Bishops cannot perform a strict collegial act, because individual bishops cannot delegate the supreme and full authority of the College of Bishops to those few bishops who are selected as representatives to the Synod. But Grantfield thinks that the Synod, even if it is an advisory body, has unrealized potential. He wants the process of consultation improved and the rule of secrecy relaxed. At the moment formal membership of the Synod is limited to bishops and some male religious superiors, while female religious and lay people attend as non-voting auditors. Grantfield would like all to be voting members of the Synod. The difficulty with this is that ordination is normally a require-

ment for the exercise of authority in the Church. He also advocates that the Synod act as a deliberative body, whose decrees would become binding upon confirmation and promulgation by the Pope. All in all, Grantfield sees a much more prominent role for the Synod of Bishops.

The episcopal conference is another expression of collegiality, one which has played a big role in post-conciliar Catholicism. In Ireland the Bishops Conference is not a novel body; we are very used to our bishops meeting and acting in unison. Before Vatican II, however, episcopal conferences had no formal status. There has been a theological dispute about the precise basis of these national conferences. For example, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger holds that they have no theological basis, having only a practical concrete function. According to his view, no episcopal conference, as such, has a teaching mission; its documents have no weight of their own except that of the consent given to them by the individual bishops. For Grantfield, this is narrow interpretation which tends to diminish the importance of episcopal conferences. He acknowledges that in juridical terms the Bishops Conference may not be an example of collegiality in the fullest sense; yet he thinks they have a valuable contribution to make to the life of the post-Vatican II Church, particularly as a brake on a renewed Roman centralism. The author regards collegiality as a promise unfulfilled, a concept which needs more effective structures if it is to be a living reality. He thinks the Church is still understood by many in a monarchical way, and that the process of understanding collegiality is only beginning.

The concept of collegiality is related to the way that Rome and the local Church are connected. The bishops aren't mere delegates of the Pope, but possess genuine power in their own right. For the author, the principle of subsidiarity is a key element in the relationship between the local diocese and Rome, even if he accepts that the principle can only be applied analogically to the Church. Certainly the local resolution of problems is best if at all possible, but the right of appeal to Rome must be retained. One gets the impression that Grantfield thinks this right is abused sometimes. Even if this is the case, it is a right that must be vigorously maintained if the Roman primacy is to have real meaning. The same problem arises with the author's doubts about the method of papal intervention in local dioceses. The Roman primacy must be exercised in some concrete way, even if this upsets some people. Criteria for Roman intervention in a local diocese include the unity of the Church, necessity and the good of the Church. The difficulty of course is how these criteria are applied to a particular diocese. Rome does not intervene unless it believes it has valid reasons, while some in the local Church can see Roman actions as high-handed and arbitrary. Ultimately Rome must retain its freedom to act in a given case if primatial authority is to be an authentic reality. The necessity of this freedom of action is not given enough weight by Grantfield. However he has a balanced account of the *sensus fidelium* and its relation to the reception of papal teaching. This leads him to discuss the papacy from an ecumenical perspective, exploring some areas in which the Pope might voluntarily limit his authority, while keeping a strong primatial authority. Two areas suggested are the adoption of a patriarchate system and the structuring of collegial activity in a concrete legal system.

This is a well-written book. Grantfield's style is clear and concise, his explanation of theological and canonical concepts a model of good communication. When he makes practical suggestions he argues his case well and is aware of possible objections. He believes that centralism and the constant exercise of Roman authority impoverish the life of the local Church. However it must be said that the papal primacy is a great bulwark against a narrow diocesan or parochial view of Church life. Recently at the Lambeth Conference, some Anglicans clearly felt the need of a strong primate office which could hold the Anglican Communion together. The papacy is one of God's gifts to the Church, ensuring that the local Church remains true to the apostolic faith and keeping the local diocese open to the needs of the universal Church. To do this Rome must at times exercise real authority. From this perspective, some of Grantfield's suggestions could actually emasculate Roman authority at a practical level. This is a serious criticism because if the papal primacy is to have any meaning, it must possess real power. Nevertheless this is a thought-provoking book which deserves a wide readership.

PATRICK CONNOLLY

*Enniskillen*

**The Mission and Ministry of Jesus.** Donald J. Goergen. Wilmington: Michael Glazier. Pp. 316. Price £9.95.

**The Death and Resurrection of Jesus.** Donald J. Goergen. Wilmington: Michael Glazier. Pp. 287. Price £9.95.

'The time comes when we must move beyond the securities of our specializations and risk putting the picture together', writes Donald Goergen in his Preface to the first volume of a five-volume set entitled 'A Theology of Jesus'. Goergen is a systematic theologian who, like his fellow Dominican, Edward Schillebeeckx, accepts the challenge of doing his own biblical exegesis and thereby of leaving himself open to the criticism of biblical specialists. These first two volumes seem to me fully to justify his enterprise and whatever risk it may involve.

The first volume is concerned with the historical Jesus and gives the reader an informative account of the political and social as well as the religious background to the life and teaching of Jesus. Goergen makes plain his dependence on biblical scholars such as Jeremias, Brown, Cullmann, Reumann, Perrin, and a host of others. He also tells us when and why he is following one rather than another of his authorities (his foot-notes are especially helpful in this respect).

Goergen's approach to his material and to the authors he uses is as far as possible inclusive and constructive rather than partisan and polemical. He tends to favour the both/and over the either/or. This makes for restful rather than engaged reading, but its value is obvious in a book intended for the general reader and as a text-book.

In the first volume Jesus is interpreted as Prophet and Sage. In the second volume the figure chosen for emphasis is Servant. The figures of