Reviews

MINISTER? PASTOR? PROPHET? Grass-roots Leadership in the Churches by Lucas Grollenberg and others. *SCM*, London, 1980. pp 102 £3.95.

The wave of recent Catholic writing on leadership in the Church has scarcely touched Britain, although readers of *The Clergy Review* have been kept abreast of developments. This slim volume, admirably translated by John Bowden, from a special number of *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, certainly brings us up to date.

The brief introduction by Lucas Grollenberg OP is meant to bridge the cultural gap between the Dutch situation and English readers. It contains the splendid bloomer that a vicar general in the Catholic tradition is equivalent to a bishop's chaplain in the Anglican tradition. Actually there is no exact equivalent: a vicar general is a cross between the diocesan chancellor and an archdeacon – but in any case a much more august and potent figure than a bishop's chaplain.

The first of the four papers is by Jan Kerkhofs SJ of the *Pro Mundi Vita* documentation centre in Brussels. Using official Vatican information, now about five years old, he shows that half of the congregations in the Catholic Church outside Western Europe have no resident priest. Some of these parishes are very large. A few hundred such parishes and mission centres have been entrusted to lay people (332 to women religious), who conduct liturgies of the word, communion services and the like. The only prospect in countries like Mexico, Brazil and the United States of America is that this situation will only become increasingly serious. In Europe the only churches now capable of keeping pace with the demand for priests are Poland and Yugoslavia. Holland, Portugal, Belgium and France are in by far the worst predicament, but less than half the priests who die or resign are being replaced in West Germany, Ireland, Spain and Italy. Great Britain, interestingly enough, is replacing three out of four – but that favourable ratio is probably boosted by men from Ireland. In fact, over vast tracts of the Catholic Church, the regular Sunday liturgy is now conducted by a lay catechist (60% of Sunday services in Indonesia, for example). The Tridentine-model Catholic priest is rapidly disappearing. While Kerkhofs does not force any conclusions upon us, the data show that, by the end of the century, if the Pope sticks to his commitment to an exclusively celibate clergy, and assuming that no national or regional episcopal conference will dare to ordain married men, the majority of parishes in the Catholic Church will not have even weekly or even monthly celebrations of the eucharist; they will be nourished by liturgies of the word (conducted by men and women who may not "preach"), and by communion (brought from stocks of consecrated bread kept perhaps many miles away). It becomes all the more absurd that the Pope who urges devotion to the eucharist, as in his Holy Thursday letter last year, should be ensuring that, by the end of his pontificate, the majority of Catholic congregations will be without priests.

It was instructive to talk recently with an elderly European priest in South Africa who couldn't speak highly enough of the four Zulu nuns on whom he relies for the preaching in his vast parish; when he retires or dies in the next five or ten years, they will be on their own. It can hardly be the Pope's intention but perhaps there is no other way to free the Catholic Church from sacerdotalism.

Anton Houtepen, in the second chapter, argues that the disappearance of the

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Tridentine model of the Catholic priest is no cause for alarm or despondency. On the contrary, if we allow ourselves to be instructed by the complexity of the New Testament evidence and (we may add) if we look seriously at what is happening already, it seems that a re-distribution of ministerial roles could take place quite easily: "The one paramount factor is the conviction of the need to be faithful to the one *paradosis* (tradition), which must be safeguarded by the whole community, but which is the special concern of those who are chosen from the community to work within that community and to interact with it" (p 29).

Jos Vollebergh, a social psychologist, argues that organizations need not become unstable when the function of leadership is consciously distributed in what ecclesiastical jargon calls a "collegial" way.

In the fourth and final chapter, a "creative retrospect" which is offered as "inspiration for ministry in the future", Edward Schillebeeckx OP brings together a great deal of recent scholarship to show how different the conception of the ministry was in the first thousand years of the Church's history from the model of the Catholic priest with which we are familiar today. He is not recommending, in some archaizing spirit, that we should go "back"; he is simply trying to free us from the grip of one particular picture so that we may welcome and work for the re-distribution of the ministry which the disappearance of the Tridentine priest inevitably entails, instead of blocking it desperately, lamenting it hopelessly or whistling in the dark about the "increase of vocations".

The key text is canon 6 of the Council of Chalcedon (held in the year 451): "No one is to be ordained in an absolute way, *apolelumenos*, either priest or deacon, or anything else in the ecclesiastical order, unless he is particularly designated to (proclaimed in, *epikeruttoito*) a given local community, whether in the city or in the country, whether in a martyry or in a monastery". The Council goes on to declare null and void the ordination of any priest or deacon without this affiliation to a particular congregation or community. By the Middle ages this canon was taken to forbid ordination without a title, i.e. a benefice, a patrimony, or a fixed income or pension, which would ensure a suitable style of life for the cleric. But, drawing in other legal and then liturgical evidence, Schillebeeckx argues that canon 6 embodies a whole ecclesiology according to which this relationship with a particular community goes much further than simply being entitled to be supported by them: "the concept of *ordinatio* comprises not only the laying on of hands by a 'bishop' with *epiclesis* or the prayer of the whole community to the Spirit, but also, if it is to be valid, the calling and appointing by a particular Christian community" (p 58). In other words, there was no conflict between being called and accepted by the local community and being ordained by the bishop: "A man was not first consecrated a priest, so that he possessed priestly authority on this basis, and then, already provided with all the necessary equipment, appointed priest somewhere as a result of the pastoral direction of an episcopal curia" (p 59). Schillebeeckx reminds us of some splendid utterances by Pope Leo the Great in the middle of the fifth century (the first pope to advance systematically extremely "daunting claims" about his role as successor of St Peter): "He who must preside over all must be chosen by all"; "No one may consecrate a bishop against the will of Christians and unless they have explicitly asked for him". In the late eighth century Pope Hadrian I wrote as follows: "We never intervene in any choice of bishops nor shall we ever intervene. Anyone who is canonically chosen by the people and its clergy ... will be granted *ordinatio* by us in accordance with the received tradition". More than a thousand years later, in the early nineteenth century, it was still true that bishops were not chosen but only confirmed by the Holy See; it was only during the restoration of the Catholic Church in post-revolutionary Europe that the papal curia began, at first very reluctantly but then with in-

creasing efficiency, to take over the appointment of bishops.

The way was opened, however, in the twelfth century when, as Schillebeeckx shows, the ancient link between priest and people was reduced to the feudal question of benefices (p 66). By the time of St Thomas Aquinas, whose theory of sacramental character retains residually the ancient link between ministry and church (p 67), the emphasis had moved to the idea of the priest as the man with "power over" the eucharist: to simplify somewhat – instead of being the accepted leader of the community who was also the obvious person to preside at the eucharist he becomes the one who can say Mass whether or not he is in any local community at all. There is a parallel development of flockless shepherds, so that papal diplomats and bureaucrats receive the status of bishops even though it is plain that they will never function as bishops.

This brings us to the reappearance of the ecclesiology of the local church in the aftermath of Vatican II (with the encouragement of Pope Paul VI), and the inevitable implications for the redistribution of the ministry. We are, of course, facing the predictable backlash at present. The boundaries between lay and clerical ministries have become somewhat confused. An ancient religious order in which a handful of lay brothers have been ordained deacons has decreed that they are not to be regarded as having transferred to the clerical state. As the Tridentine priest begins to disappear over vast areas of the Catholic Church, increasingly extravagant claims are made about the intrinsic connection between ministry and celibacy. Schillebeeckx cites the absurd article by Jean Galot S.J. published in 1964, in which he makes sacramental character the foundation of priestly celibacy; the same Galot is now among the most influential theologians in the Roman curia, and was in fact one of the three consultors of the Holy Office who "interviewed" Schillebeeckx in December 1979! A campaign has just been launched in England and Wales to encourage schoolboys to think of becoming priests – at the very moment when the Pope is insisting that candidates must be absolutely sure of what they are doing when they put themselves forward because he will never dispense them from their vow of celibacy whatever happens. But the Catholic Church is well able to live with internal contradictions of this sort. After all, notwithstanding solemn insistence on the divinely ordained hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons (reaffirmed at the Council of Trent), no one seems to have worried, or even noticed, that there have been no real deacons in the Catholic Church for a thousand years. The efforts to re-establish the order of deacons since Vatican II have so far not beeen very successful. Perhaps this is no matter for regret. As Edward Schillebeeckx says (p 77): "Even now there are more than enough Christians, men and women, who in ecclesiological and ministerial terms possess the charisma, e.g. many catechists in Africa, and men and women pastoral workers in Europe and elsewhere; or who are at least prepared for appointment to the ministry *if they do not feel that that means being clericalized and having to enter the service of a 'system'*" (my italics). There is no shortage of ministers in the Catholic Church; there is only shortsightedness in being able to identify them. The fascinating question is how far her present leaders will allow the Catholic Church to slide into a community of priestless (and so Mass-less) congregations. In the meantime, this special issue of *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* offers a promising and realistic vision of the likely future.

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