

ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY AND SPIRITUAL POWER IN THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES, by Hans von Campenhausen. A. & C. Black, London, 1969. 308 pp. 50s.

The problem of reconciling the authority of those who hold office in the Church with the individual's freedom of conscience and openness to the Spirit, as we all know, presses upon Catholics these days. It is a problem often falsified by the very terms in which it is formulated; for it can be too readily assumed that the Spirit speaks only in the heart of the individual and not at all with the voice of authority. It is also a problem discussed all too frequently in ignorance of the historical evidence. The traditionalist, on the one hand, will assume that it can be historically proved that Jesus founded a Church equipped with a self-perpetuating hierarchical structure, and that this structure is already in evidence in the account of the life of the early Church that is contained in the Epistles and Acts. The radical, on the other hand, may find himself following the old liberal-protestant line that a hierarchy endowed with authority is a distortion of primitive Christianity as it appears in the New Testament and inevitably quenches the Spirit which should be burning freely within Christ's followers; the only authority an individual possesses is based on his 'charism', his spiritual qualities, and not on his office.

The work under review, written in an irenic spirit by a very distinguished Protestant New Testament and patristic scholar, is an attempt to dispel these presuppositions by showing that 'neither the "authoritarian catholic" nor the liberal-protestant conception of the Church will stand in face of the actual facts about primitive Christianity'.

Jesus himself is the 'perfect combination of official and charismatic authority'. This authority (*exousia*) means more than competence or an inherent personal quality that commands respect; it includes authority over spirits (Mark 1, 27 and parallels) and is closely linked with his miraculous 'power' (*dunamis*). This authority is derived not so much from an office as from a call.

Jesus did establish some form of organization among his followers. He set up the office of the Twelve, not however appointing them ecclesiastical magistrates or plenipotentiaries, but with an eschatological purpose to be fulfilled in the new Jerusalem, where they would 'sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Matt. 19, 29). This is why it was so important to restore the number to twelve after the defection of Judas. The name Cephas

similarly pointed to Peter's eschatological role (or perhaps to his personal qualities); 'the famous saying that the whole Church is to be built on Peter is simply inconceivable in the mouth of Jesus. . . . In the present context, therefore, it must be left out of account.' The Twelve are not necessarily the same as the apostles, who were the plenipotentiaries of Christ and were probably sent by him after his resurrection to be his witnesses and to found Christian communities. Luke mistakenly gives the name of apostles to the Twelve, and so creates the false impression that it was the Twelve who were the leaders and governors of the primitive community. Outside the writings of Luke, Peter is the only member of the Twelve who is also described as an apostle; Paul and James were apostles but not members of the Twelve, as also apparently were Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16, 7). The apostles certainly enjoyed an official position, but, as it depended on their witness to the resurrection, it could not be handed on to successors.

In the congregations founded by St Paul there is no one apart from himself with authority; he possesses it by virtue of his rank of apostle, and it also resides in the whole local community. In the Jewish Christian communities, however, we can observe elders (*presbuteroi*) who exercise authority by virtue of their office (Acts, 1 Peter, James, Apocalypse). The term 'bishop' (*episcopus*) is at first applied to the elders and retains this sense as late as 1 Clement and Hermas at the turn of the century. However, Ignatius of Antioch in the early second century reveals in Asia Minor local churches with a three-level hierarchy of bishop, elders and deacons. The Pastoral Epistles, written in the first half of the second century, similarly envisage a local church ruled by its one bishop.

Professor von Campenhausen traces further stages in the development of this hierarchical structure. Clement of Rome, wishing to commend order and tradition to the turbulent Corinthian church, 'develops his theory of the apostolic origin of the presbyteral system, and of the consequent lifelong tenure of the office'. In the second century Hegesippus and Irenaeus work out the succession-lists of bishops; these lists begin as a counter to the gnostics' claims to derive their secret tradition from the apostles; Hippolytus half a century later turns

them into a chain along which consecration, not only doctrine, is passed. However, the opposite tendency was also strong in the second century: the gnostics, the Montanists and Clement of Alexandria all emphasized in varying ways the importance of the teacher who, though he has no hierarchical position, has been favoured by the Holy Spirit with spiritual insight which he must share with others. The Montanists' denial of forgiveness of sins in its turn provoked a reaction in the third century; the bishop's sole right to re-admit the sinner into the community is now crystallized. Cyprian carries this view to its limit: there is no salvation outside the Church, i.e. outside the authority of the bishop. The authoritarian nature of the Church's structure is now complete.

The author's utter command of the primary and secondary sources gives his argument immense weight. Nevertheless, at several points it depends not so much on the evidence as on an interpretation of the evidence which looks suspiciously circular. For example, we are told there is no early evidence for the monarchic episcopacy since the Pastoral Epistles must belong to the second century (because they speak of the monarchic episcopacy?).

Catholic ecclesiology maintains that the position of the bishops and the pope is *de jure divino* not *de jure humano* (Vatican I; DS 3058, 3061). That is to say, it seems to be impossible for a Catholic to hold that Christ founded a Church with *carte blanche* to determine its structure, and that the papacy and episcopacy

are simply structures which the Church chose for itself to be the visible means through which grace and teaching should come from the Spirit. If one allows that Professor von Campenhausen's conclusions concerning the gradual evolution of office in the Church are correct (and it has been indicated that these conclusions should not be accepted without extreme caution), are they compatible with this traditional Catholic ecclesiology? Can a Catholic accept the suggestion that there was no church (not even the church of Rome) ruled by a bishop until the second century? In fact the theory should not be rejected *a priori*, because it seems consistent with Catholic teaching to hold that, though the papacy and episcopacy necessarily belong to the Church as founded by Christ, they remained latent in the post-apostolic generation, and did not emerge until the second century. If the author's conclusions are rejected, it should be on historical not dogmatic grounds.

J. A. Baker has translated the book in an idiomatic and even lively style (one sometimes suspects that the translation is livelier than the German). The original version appeared in 1953, and it is a pity that references to works published after the early 50s have not been included in this edition. It is a pity, too, that there is no scriptural or subject index. Nevertheless, the publishers have done historians and theologians a great service in making this magisterial work available in English.

E. J. YARNOLD, S.J.

WITHIN THE FOUR SEAS, by Joseph Needham. *Allen Unwin*, and London, 1969. 228 pp. 40s.

This book is a collection of occasional pieces written over the last couple of decades by Joseph Needham, F.R.S., Master of Caius College, Cambridge, and the world's leading authority on the history of Chinese science. They are unified around a single theme: the necessity for a greater understanding of China (and of the East generally) on the part of Western peoples. 'Within the four seas, all men are brothers'. No one, West or East, is better fitted to argue such a thesis than is Dr Needham. Not only has he a knowledge of the history of Chinese culture hardly equalled in the West, but his residences in China have given him an intuitive sympathy for—and consequently a quick insight into—the Chinese character quite unusual among Western scholars. Not surprisingly, since he is himself a scientist (biochemist) and historian of science, it is the

dimension of *science* that takes precedence in his analysis of the relations of East and West. He speaks as a humanist, opposing not only the 'supernaturalism' that he sees as the root of human intolerance and human indifference to social evils, but also the 'hashish of the scientist', the belief that science and technology of themselves will bring in the millennium. He speaks for religion as a sense of the numinous, allied with a social ethic of love and tolerance free from the distractions of transcendence.

The argument of the book is a far-ranging one that only a scholar of Dr Needham's immense erudition could propose with any hope of carrying conviction. Chinese civilization is older than, and until the sixteenth century was, in his view, in significant respect ahead of, that of the West. Its 'bureaucracy of