

It is amazing how advocates of a new kind of Catholic Church made in the image and likeness of democratic political structures can take the smallest thing and make it bigger than Papal authority. Imagine what they could do if a few anti-Popes arose, as they did in the 1300s. Of course, the Pope emerged from that disaster with his primacy and authority intact; so it will happen in the present attack from the Lilliputians. But remember how those tiny ones had Gulliver staked out on the beach, as some are trying to do to the Pope today. We cannot know in this life how even unsuccessful attacks on the Papacy contribute to such catastrophes as the Protestant Revolt.

I am referring, now, to one Patrick Granfield, O.S.B. — whether priest or mere monk I cannot tell, since I have only a review of his book *The Limits of the Papacy* to go by. But it is clear that in the hands of this Catholic University of America professor, collegiality can be conjured from the very traditional thing it is into a looming Trojan horse from whence will emerge the new democratic managers of the egalitarian Church.

The agenda is to have the Pope give the Synod (of Bishops) deliberative (that is, legislative) power, and then to have that body enlarged to include lay persons. This, combined with granting local (national and-or diocesan) churches some sort of autonomy, will end in having the Pope being no more than head of a team. If uneasy rests the head that wears the crown, how uneasier is the hand that wields a gavel, or coaches a football team. Obviously as just one of a team, even though its "head," the Pope cannot only be overruled, but dismissed from "rule" that is granted him, after all by thinkers such as Granfield — who I am sure will abound in such an enlarged Catholic "parliament."

This vision is given by the ex-Jesuit Peter Hebblethwaite, in a review in, appropriately enough, the *National Catholic Reporter* (Oct. 16th). I say appropriately enough, for the *NCR* has long treated the Pope as simply a scrub on a team made up of professional players (thinkers) such as Granfield. Indeed, to *NCR* editors and writers, the Pope is not much more than a water boy, carrying some antique refreshment for those of peculiar tastes. Like a water boy, the Pope is an indulgence for those of lesser tastes, but of no real purpose for those whose tastes run to richer and more "adult" elixir. They are too prudent to dismiss him altogether, for there is no accounting for odd tastes among team members. As for his being "head" of the team, they will allow him out on the field first, while they plot the strategy on the sidelines — undisturbed and better unnoticed, lest some ask, "What are they doing running things?"

Granfield, as interpreted by Hebblethwaite.

Granfield, as interpreted by Hebblethwaite, argues that the Pope "is accountable for his actions to the Church." There would seem to be a built-in problem here, however. For apart from the Pope, no number of other bishops, no Council, nor any mass of members is "the Church." It is obvious, therefore, that no number acting against the Pope, judging him, or vetoing him would be "the Church," and their actions would therefore be anti-Church. It is conceivable that a Pope might submit himself to others, as in a sense Gregory XII did in accepting the solution of the Council of Constance to the scandal of the anti-Popes of the Avignon and Pisan rebellions. But then it is a question of the Pope making the Council answerable to and dependent upon him, and not vice versa. It is his primacy that validates a joint decision, and not their right to judge or their power to hold the Pope accountable. Any contrary thesis, whether by Granfield or Hebblethwaite, cannot sustain itself against the teaching of several Councils, including Vatican II — especially the preliminary or "prefixed" note to chapter III of *Lumen Gentium*:

"The Pope, as supreme pastor of the Church, may exercise his power at any time, as he sees fit, by reason of the demands of his office. But as the Church's tradition attests, the college, although it is always in existence, is not for that reason continually engaged in strictly collegiate activity. In other words it is not always 'in full activity' (*in actu pleno*); in fact, it is only occasionally that it engages in strictly collegiate activity and that only with the consent of the head (*nonisi consentiente capite*). The phrase with the consent of the head is used in order to exclude the impression of dependence on something external; but the word 'consent' entails communion between head and members and calls for this action which is exclusive to the head" (emphasis in the document).

The note goes on to conclude that the Bishops cannot act as a college in default of the Pope's action.

As for autonomous local churches, such a term can be thought of in regard to discipline but never in regard to faith or morals,

for this would be to accede to the "branch" schismatic heresy about such churches.

Hebblethwaite admits that the Granfield scenario — if indeed it is the Benedictine's and not simply that of the ex-Jesuit — depends upon interpretation of Vatican II's doctrine. Though the reviewer finds this interpretation more in keeping with "the letter and spirit" of Vatican II than that of Cardinal Ratzinger, the truth is it is not in keeping with Tradition nor the judgment of the Universal Church as to history. If Vatican II could be embraced or better enfolded into the Granfield-Hebblethwaite "interpretation," then the worst doubts and fears about Vatican II held by some would be justified. The truth is any objective reading of Vatican II rejects the multitudinarian ideas of Granfield-Hebblethwaite, just as past Councils rejected the same ideas of Jean Gerson and other early egalitarians.

Such books as *The Limits of the Papacy* are dangerous, however, because they are used by some virulent enemies of the Pope, such as the radical feminists and the moral antinomians — the homosexuals and the contraceptionists. It can also be comforting to those bishops who are already in a state of intellectual and moral schism and who barely tolerate and hardly obey a Pope they hold in contempt.

It is clear the Papacy needs a major defense at this time, in a struggle that is moving toward a showdown of some type that cannot be exactly foreseen or predicted. It will probably fall to young Catholics of today and the next generation, before their deaths, to take sides in growing contest between those who wish to reduce the Pope to a figurehead or chairman of the Church and those who know the Papal Primacy cannot be surrendered or modified without treason to Christ who granted it.

One of my duties, in the years left to me, will be calling attention to, and analyzing, the forces in this struggle, not that such work is new either to me or *The Wanderer* itself.

I believe, as the struggle progresses, it will become more and more apparent to those who have found one reason or another to either deny or minimize it. There is a conscientious *denouement* in such struggles — the point where those of God's will can no longer doubt or temporize, but must decide and confess the faith. We can only pray God sends us effective leaders for that day of decision.

"So Granfield believes that effective collegiality has to come. Its path lies through the synod, through the relative autonomy of the local churches (subsidiarity), and through taking seriously episcopal conferences" — (*NCR* review).

If we allow it to reach Granfield's point of "collegiality" without speaking out, declaring our rejection of such dilution of Papal authority, and mounting a campaign in defense of the Papal Primacy and authority, then we will surely have failed our Catholic duty. It may mean we will have to retreat to some sort of catacombs to remain Catholic, but only as a base from which the true Faith may once again be spread to the Gentiles.