

12-1-1996

## Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies, by John P. Boyle

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### Repository Citation

Thiel, John E., "Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies, by John P. Boyle" (1996).  
*Religious Studies Faculty Publications*. 38.

<https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/religiousstudies-facultypubs/38>

### Published Citation

Thiel, John E. "Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies, by John P. Boyle." *Theological Studies* 57.4 (1996): 766-768.

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a particular devotional stance towards God, and a rule of faith. The confession of faith that the crucified victim was the Lord shapes the construction of those texts in a vivid way.

Another criticism concerns the reality of forgiveness. One must applaud A.'s construal of eschatology as God's approach to us in the form of forgiving victim. However, it appears tendentious to focus on Cain's creative ability to accept forgiveness from a miraculously risen Abel without also mentioning Cain's act of contrition; one searches in vain for a serious grappling with the question of personal responsibility. I would likewise argue, against A., that a New Testament ethics is still possible provided that it skirts neither the communal vision of eschatology nor the personal taking stock of self found in the Gospels.

None of this detracts from the frequent profundity of A.'s book. Its didactic potential is hard to exaggerate: imagine combining Girard's theory of sacred violence with Balthasar's sensitivity to the drama of love in God's crucified form and couple this with a Dostoyevskian ear for the disruptive power of Scripture. Some will be alarmed by the absence of an extensive scholarly apparatus, though this does not make the work less erudite. Rather than tiresome expatiation of secondary literature, A. opts for "little stories" drawn both from the Bible and from the lives of Brazilian prostitutes dying of AIDS. The significance of this approach has been underrated. Even while deriving a universal claim from God's final reshaping of the cosmos, Christian eschatology can never detach itself from the story-shaped witness of women and men who place God's glory above their own. If eschatology is to take its cue from the mind of Jesus, then it must begin with little stories.

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PETER CASARELLA

**CHURCH TEACHING AUTHORITY: HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES.** By John P. Boyle. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995. Pp. vi + 241. \$38.95.

Who has the capacity to teach in the Church, and under what conditions, and in what manner those who possess the authority to teach exercise it responsibly and wisely continue to be disputed questions. As his subtitle indicates, Boyle offers historical analysis and constructive interpretation that shed light on this issue. He believes there is nothing disjunctive in the relationship between the historical and theological approaches to church authority. B.'s historical analysis leads naturally to theological proposals and his theological interpretation finds a rich context for its judgments in the findings of historical research.

B. begins by sketching the modern conceptualization of the term "ordinary magisterium," the practice of which, particularly since the pontificate of Paul VI, has defined the crisis of ecclesial teaching authority. A careful study of materials in the Vatican archives allows B. to present the exchange of correspondence that led to the first papal

use of the term in Pius IX's letter *Tuas libenter*, itself a response to the perceived threat to the prerogatives of the magisterium posed by Döllinger's Munich Theological Congress of 1863. B. argues from textual evidence that Cardinal von Reisach and the Cardinal Secretary of State Antonelli directly influenced the pope's use of this term and the authority it ascribed to the pope and the bishops. But B. presents a larger sphere of influence by showing that it was von Reisach's reading of Josef Kleutgen's *Theologie der Vorzeit*, with its definition of an "ordinary and perpetual" magisterium, and Kleutgen's own reliance on the post-Reformation controversial theology of Bellarmine that offered less direct, though no less consequential, influences on the conceptualization of the ordinary magisterium in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The practice of the ordinary magisterium in modern times often carries with it the assumption that the teaching charism is exclusive to the magisterium. B. puts this tendency into relief by examining particular issues that illuminate this practice. The paradox of the magisterium's appeal to natural-law argumentation in offering much of its teaching is that a supposedly universal medium of truth is authoritatively taught by privileged interpretation. B. faults the magisterium for taking too juridical an approach to natural-law argumentation in its teaching and claims that the more proper register for the voice of hierarchical teaching is a prophetic one. Fine historical analysis clarifies the issue of the reception of church teaching by pointing to shifting understandings of the "obedience" (*obsequium*) owed to the magisterium. Particularly helpful is B.'s appeal to the Jansenist controversy as a context for modern interpretations that understand *obsequium* as an "internal submission" of the mind and will. B. is concerned that such an understanding of *obsequium* can sever obedience from an authentic act of faith that admits of varying degrees of commitment, and he commends an understanding of reception as "assimilation [of teaching] into the life of the church" (140).

If B.'s study falters at all, it is in two chapters on the role of teaching authority in the revised Code of Canon Law and on the 1990 Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian, where an overly-detailed rehearsal of the texts interrupts B.'s narrative flow. A culminating chapter on "Problems and Prospects" for church teaching authority again picks up the pace of the book's interpretive current by showing the implications of the ecclesiology of Vatican II for a more adequate conception of teaching authority. Understanding the Church as a "community of religious and moral discernment" (168), B. judiciously argues, presupposes a teaching authority measured by ongoing dialogue among all the faithful and fostered by a kenosis of the Holy Spirit to the whole Church that yet acknowledges the human limitations into which the Spirit is emptied. B.'s elaboration of this important insight might have been aided by enlisting the help of liberation and feminist theologians. And his appropriate lament that the theologian is reduced to a "loner" (171-75) in a hierarchically modeled

Church might have been better served by considering the history of that conceptualization.

But these small suggestions for improvement do not diminish the achievement of an excellent piece of historical and theological scholarship that deserves a wide reading.

*Fairfield University, Connecticut*

JOHN E. THIEL

IMAGINER L'ÉGLISE CATHOLIQUE. By Ghislain Lafont. Paris: Cerf, 1995. Pp. 286. Fr. 150.

The heart of this book consists in a very comprehensive and generally moderate set of proposals for ecclesiastical reforms that Lafont, a Benedictine monk who has taught both in France and in Rome, considers to be in line with Vatican II.

L. begins with a rapid survey (in some 80 pages) of the past two millennia. The first thousand years, he maintains, were dominated by a neo-Platonic mysticism in which truth was viewed as descending from a unitary divine source through a series of hierarchical mediations. In the second millennium, beginning with Gregory VII, the process of mediation was institutionalized in a highly centralized system of authority modeled on the imperial ideals of ancient Rome. This authoritarian system, perpetuated through the early 20th century, collided with the modern mentality, which exalts experience and technical reason. In its resulting alienation from the dominant culture, the Church was reduced to the status of a shrinking minority. Today, with the end of the modern age, the Church stands at a new juncture in which a fresh evangelization can be successful, provided that the Church is willing to move beyond the culturally conditioned structures inherited from previous centuries.

Vatican II, L. then explains, proposed the vision of the Church as a structured communion under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It depicted institutions as proceeding from the power of the Spirit and as presupposing charisms. Without rejecting the language of dogma, the council gave preference to imagery and narrative. It proposed an epistemology of the probable in which dogmatic formulas were recognized as secondary and merely approximative forms of discourse. Whereas authority and obedience have generally been conceived in terms of jurisdiction and obligation, this need not be so in a more personalistic and communitarian Church.

In the second half of this work L. proposes a number of concrete reforms, which he regards as following from his historical analysis. Like many others, he would like to see divorced and remarried Catholics, in certain instances, admitted to the sacraments. A married clergy, he holds, could coexist with a celibate clergy in the Latin rite. He favors the election of bishops by a local electoral college. More adventurously, he suggests that the sacrament of the anointing of the sick could be administered by lay chaplains. He would like to see a rite