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Review of Leadership & Oversight by Malcolm Grundy and Managing by Henry Mintzberg

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Leadership and Oversight: New models for episcopal ministry

Malcolm Grundy

Mowbray, 237pp; ISBN 978-1-4411-4401-0

Managing

Henry Mintzberg

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 306pp; ISBN 978-1-60509-874-6

Why do bishops wear mitres? A theological response could be they symbolise the Holy Spirit given for leadership and oversight but Mintzberg's volume on managing suggests another possibility. At one point he provides a composite list of qualities for managerial success drawn from a number of studies. This includes the usual suspects, such as being courageous, visionary, energetic, collaborative and dependable. But he also notes American research which indicates height as a quality for success and that bishops 'averaged greater height than the preachers of small towns' (p 197). It is tempting to speculate that one practical benefit of mitres to the Church's senior managers is an added appearance of stature.

Canadian academic Henry Mintzberg is one of the world's leading and most prolific writers on management, and it is insightful to place his latest work alongside Malcolm Grundy's analysis of a bishop's role in various denominations. Grundy was founder director of the Foundation for Church Leadership and has written extensively in this field. He begins by setting out what he calls a series of 'vacuums' amongst the international community of episcopal churches. These ecclesial lacunae include the lack of a proper understanding of: leadership, structured oversight, trust and relationships, diocesan leadership and strategy, vocational understanding, congregations and the centre (diocese), shared oversight, synods and networks, self-understanding and identity. He sets out to remedy this situation by exploring the nature of *episkope* from its New Testament roots through the different manifestations of the role and asks how it might be 'renegotiated for a future confederation of episcopally organized churches' (p 72). To achieve such a renegotiation Grundy examines the routes to senior leadership in the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church in the UK, the Episcopal Church in the USA, the Lutheran Church of Sweden and explores some of the tensions between *episkope* as a profession and a vocation or calling.

After seeking to get under the skin of this role in chapters 1-4, chapters 5-7 scrutinize how bishops might appear to more detached observers – from 'the pew' inside episcopally-ordered churches, from the 'market place' outside these churches and from those churches that are not episcopally-ordered. In his penultimate chapter Grundy proposes to make good the 'vacuums' by drawing from the wells of: (i) tradition (particularly liturgy); (ii) Benedictine life; and (iii) Franciscan spirituality to see how these nurture self-awareness and integrity for leadership. The book's final chapter asks a series of pertinent questions which seek to point the way forward for a renewed understanding of the office of Bishop. A key element in Grundy's discussion is the nature of leadership, which he rightly identifies as an important concern for many contemporary churches. At various stages he perceives leadership as a work of building 'relationships' (p 14) and creative 'imagination' (p 70) whilst in need of greater clarity about the ministry of oversight (p 211). This is where the potential conversation with Mintzberg is most interesting.

Mintzberg's first book on management was published in 1973 and he has continued to be an independent and original thinker in this field, particularly on the nature of organizations and understanding strategy. In addition, he has a deep interest in how management is studied and taught, and has been highly critical of the role of MBAs. This latest volume brings together his innovative mind and an historical perspective that not only reaches back over his four decades of research but also to the earliest years of study in this subject. Much of his work is based on observing, listening and talking to managers in a variety of contexts, and at the heart of this book is a series of managerial observations and his reflections upon them. For those involved in all forms of management within a church or any organization, there is a wealth of insight to be gleaned here.

He sees management as an art, a craft and a science (p 11). It is also a 'calling' (p 13) and this is just one of many links with Grundy's work. He argues that leadership is a necessary component of this calling (p 66) but that good management involves a broad range of competencies – personal, interpersonal, informational and actional (p 91). Central to this are: self-understanding, organizational understanding and understanding the managerial role. In the secular world leadership is often seen as the crucial ingredient for success and churches have been drawn down this path as well. Mintzberg critiques what he calls the 'heroic' model of leadership, arguing that: 'By the excessive promotion of leadership, we demote everyone else. We create clusters of followers who have to be driven to perform, instead of leveraging the natural propensity of people to cooperate in communities' (p 235). He believes that effective management involves nurturing healthy communities rather than seeking yet another hero to take on unrealistic organizational expectations.

In essence Grundy's book is a plea for better led and managed churches, involving improved training of potential leaders. Mintzberg's work on managing is an excellent place to start in this process and provides a creative manifesto for future development of many organizations, including churches.