



Reviews

MY JOURNAL OF THE COUNCIL by Yves Congar OP, translated by Mary John Ronayne OP and Mary Cecily Boulding OP, edited by Denis Minns OP, *Liturgical Press*, Collegetown, MN, 2012, pp. lxi + 979, £73.99, hbk.

As a veteran (prisoner of war from 1940 until 1945, including a spell in Colditz), with an increasingly savage neurological disease, rendering him immobile, Yves Congar entered the *Hôpital des Invalides* in Paris in 1984, where he died on 22 June 1995, aged 91. The previous year Pope John Paul II recognized his contribution to the Church by appointing him a Cardinal (*'Trop tard, trop tard'*). With his three massive books on 'Catholic ecumenism', 'reform in the Church', and the theology of the laity, his orthodoxy was long under suspicion among fellow theologians and especially by the ecclesiastical authorities. In 1954 he was banned from even visiting Dominican study houses, let alone teaching in them. In July 1960, however, Pope John XXIII appointed Congar as a consultant to the Preparatory Theological Commission for the Second Vatican Council, the long-term aim of which the Pope envisaged as the reunion of separated Christians and the renewal of the Church that would necessarily precede. These were very much Congar's dreams. At once he began writing the journal, which this book contains.

Initially, like his similarly suspected friend Henri de Lubac SJ, Congar feared they were token appointees, 'hostages', gagged by the oath of secrecy they would have to swear. Despite their contribution in the preparatory stages, neither was invited by the French episcopate to advise them when the Council actually opened in September 1962. After a misunderstanding about who would defray his expenses in Rome, Congar was taken along as personal theologian to the Bishop of Strasbourg, Jean-Julien Weber, who had rescued him from dreary exile with the English Dominicans at Cambridge. In the event Weber seldom asked him to do anything but his young Coadjutor, Léon-Arthur Elchinger, soon involved Congar in meetings with the German bishops. As the journal shows, Elchinger was the one who inserted Congar into the network of North West European bishops and theologians who were to play a decisive part at the Council. By the end of September the Pope had appointed Congar a *peritus*. On 21/22 January 1963 Congar was back at Le Saulchoir, the study house from which he was banned some nine years previously: he gave a lecture (p. 253) but says nothing about the content — to the best of my recollection he told us that, after much scepticism, he now believed that good might come of the Council.

Of course this journal is only one participant's record, albeit a key mover in the drafting of the principal texts. Impressive editorial apparatus offers context for assessing Congar's role. Thirty pages of Introduction by Eric Mahieu, editor of the original French edition (2002), describe Congar's career as a theologian, confirming his readiness to provide the required scholarly backing for the Council fathers' intentions and intuitions, and his sustained understanding of John XXIII's vision. Then, in ten pages, Mary Cecily Boulding provides a very useful analysis of Congar's input. In another ten pages Paul Philibert OP highlights the 'intransigent conservatism' — the *intégrisme* — against which Congar struggled all the way through: a mentality which, according to Philibert, reappears in 'the tendency to restorationism in today's church' (p. lvi). The

apparatus includes chronological tables that recapitulate Congar's involvement in drafting texts, as well as a plan of Rome that pinpoints the institutions to which he trudges, often in heavy rain and always in pain from the already well advanced neurological ailment (seldom getting a lift). He records the speeches the bishops made in St Peter's, sometimes rather sketchily, often exhibiting (in Boulding's phrase) 'uninhibited and brutal frankness' — but since footnotes locate every speech in the *Acta Synodalia*, readers could in principle test his judgments.

Moreover, every one mentioned in the course of the book is identified, or nearly everyone — sometimes Congar misreports a name. The 'John Reeves of the Province of England', however, with whom Congar clashed in May 1965 at a meeting on the apostolate held at Santa Sabina in preparation for the next General Chapter of the Dominican Order (River Forest 1968), was John-Baptist Reeves — 'JB' more familiarly — a sturdy Lancashire Catholic, who died in 1976 aged 88, deploring the 'changes' introduced by Vatican II: it is no surprise that he contested Congar's views about devotions and the Rosary (p. 760). As he confesses, Congar was 'embarrassed' at having to take part in this meeting in the first place: for one thing he hated Santa Sabina (lunch was 'dismal', he had an impression of 'emptiness, of desert', he was 'frozen to the bone' — as Boulding says, he was 'an inveterate grumbler'): mainly, however, he had to miss meetings at the Secretariat for Unity, at a vital stage in the history of the Council.

Congar did not admire either of the Masters of the Order with whom he had to deal at Santa Sabina: Michael Browne was 'an old fogey' (*'une baderne'*, p. 60); Aniceto Fernandez could be 'VERY tedious' (p. 194), and more in the same vein. At a late stage Browne, by then a Cardinal, 'is profoundly dissatisfied that the priest is not being defined by the celebration of the Eucharist and he wants to warn the Pope' — an example of Congar's deadpan humour (p. 850). The journal abounds in such observations that invite quotation, not always so negative. For example, while many bishops expected the Council to issue a new Marian dogma (for what else was it convoked?), Congar was pleased to find that several English bishops expressed categorical opposition from the outset: G.P. Dwyer, J.C. Heenan and Cardinal William Godfrey (p. 24). On the other hand, himself favouring the introduction of communion under both kinds, Congar takes delight in deriding Godfrey's objections: hygiene, lipstick, teetotallers (p. 131). During the final stages in 1965 Congar appreciated working with Joseph Ratzinger: 'reasonable, modest, disinterested, a great help' (p. 748); in 1963, however, as references to Ratzinger's collaboration with Karl Rahner suggest, Congar seems to have regarded the then 35-year-old as a good deal more adventurous theologically than himself. Unsurprisingly, Congar admired interventions by Abbot Butler of Downside — though 'the English accent will have made it difficult for many ears to understand' (p. 178): he approves of Butler's indignation at denigration of Catholic biblical scholars (p. 199); and backs Butler's getting the chapter on Mary included in the document on the Church (p. 367). Congar regarded Msgr Gérard Philips of Louvain, joint-secretary of the Doctrinal Commission, as the key figure in reaching agreement about the drafts of the principal documents of the Council. In February 1965, in the throes of drafting what would become the Declaration of Religious Freedom, and despite or rather because of his battles earlier, Congar regretted that he was working in an atmosphere of 'euphoric unanimity', in a group that 'lacked the benefit that the presence of opponents — Browne, Franic, Spanneda, etc., who made it necessary to go deeper — brought, in the end, to the Theological Commission' (p. 727). In particular, as regards what became *Gaudium et spes*, he worried about 'whether or not the text can be absorbed, its acceptability, and thus its worth for people in general' (p. 727). By then a weary and increasingly sick man, Congar served the Council fathers with

extraordinary fidelity, making his own unique contribution to the production of the Vatican II texts, as this endlessly fascinating and absorbing book attests.

FERGUS KERR OP

AUGUSTINE AND THE CURE OF SOULS: REVISING A CLASSICAL IDEAL by Paul R. Kolbet, *University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2010, pp. xvii + 342, \$ 45, pbk.*

Everyone knows that Augustine was a great scholar; historians now increasingly recognise the ways in which he was also a deeply engaged pastor. One of the major merits of this fine book is to show us how deeply his scholarship and his pastoral activity were integrated. To do this, Kolbet explains first how the Greek and Roman rhetoric and philosophy that gave Augustine his intellectual formation were already moral and pastoral in their purposes, and then how he adapted the techniques of this same education in his sermons and pastoral writings.

The narrative begins with dramatic tale of the philosopher Dio, who calmed the army with a speech as it threatened to mutiny after the murder of the emperor Domitian in AD 96. Philosophy and oratory were not armchair activities in the ancient world. In his first two chapters, Kolbet traces the history of philosophy as ‘psychagoge’, that is, the ‘leading of souls’, from its roots in Homer, through Plato, the Stoics, the Epicureans and the later Platonists. Following the work of scholars like Pierre and Ilsetraut Hadot and Martha Nussbaum, he explains how intellectual exercises were used in order to train both the heart and the minds of aspiring philosophers, under the guidance of a master. Rhetoric had an important role to play in this task, once it had been purified by those, like Plato himself, who recognised how easily its power could be abused. In particular, skilful rhetoric adapted arguments to the needs of each individual soul as it was guided towards good health. Augustine is very fond of the metaphor of healing souls; as Kolbet points out, this was central also to the classical tradition that he inherited.

Kolbet retells the well-known story of Augustine’s early education with an emphasis on the therapeutic elements in the teachings of Cicero and Plotinus. He then gives a detailed account of the period of philosophical retreat at Cassiciacum between Augustine’s conversion and his baptism, drawing out the way in which he saw himself as a philosophical mentor of his young companions, healing and retraining their souls. Thus in *De Ordine*, young Trygetius and Licentius are rebuked for their competitiveness in the argument, which their teacher describes as ‘the contagious disease of corrosive rivalry and empty boasting.’ At this stage, Augustine still saw the liberal arts, on which he wrote extensively, as an effective tool for such a task.

Ordination dramatically transformed Augustine’s responsibilities and dragged him from monastic and philosophical contemplation into a very ordinary world of public and private affairs. The souls for which he was now responsible were no longer elite. Kolbet shows perceptively how his responses to major heresies were integrally connected with his developing understanding of the way to heal hearts and minds; in particular, Augustine’s growing awareness of human weakness and insufficiency – not least his own – forced him to seek an alternative to Manichee rationalism, Donatist perfectionism and Pelagian self-reliance alike. Similarly, he would come to criticise even his most respected teachers, the Platonists, for their trust in human reason alone.

Augustine had realised through a combination of human, in particular pastoral, experience and meditation on Scripture, that reason was inadequate to heal human souls. They needed Christ, who was both their doctor and their medicine, available to them through the bible and the sacraments. Kolbet analyses