

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 'psychagogue', 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

Augustine's two treatises on teaching, *De Doctrina Christiana* and the delightful but less well known *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, showing how they function precisely as traditional philosophical therapy but now mediated through the new community, and under the guidance of the new Master and Doctor, Christ himself. The focus is the unpretentious textbook of this new and universal school of humility: 'The skills one develops to read scripture properly are the very ones needed to act morally' (p. 150). But the old methods are still valuable; *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, for example, provides concrete examples of advice on adapting instruction to the needs of the souls of different groups of individuals, for example those with different levels of education.

As in his treatises, so in his sermons: once again we find the classical tradition of rhetorical philosophy replayed in a different key. Kolbet's detailed exploration of specific sermons shows Augustine using all his classical skills first to awaken his congregation to their need of conversion and moral healing and then to guide them towards health. He invites his hearers to attend to their own reactions to a text, and see from these the true state of their own hearts: 'Humble yourself under the flood of grace ... trusting not in yourself, stripping yourself of Goliath and putting on David' (*Sermon 32*). This process of moral-cum-intellectual formation, as the final chapter emphasises, always took place in the context of the Christian community, and in full awareness of the way in which that community shared its life with a wider, and unbaptised, society. 'Not unlike his Stoic predecessors ... Augustine sought to further a Christianity that could account for such cultural intermingling without so diminishing the critical edge of Christianity that it became merely "cultural"' (p. 209).

T.S. Eliot once remarked that 'the most individual parts of a poet's work' may be those in which his predecessors 'assert their immortality most vigorously'. Kolbet's combination of detailed attention to texts and familiarity with the wide context has enabled him to move an old debate beyond the question: how far is Augustine dependent on his classical past and how far is he original? It is precisely in his reshaping of a very traditional ideal, using adapted version of very traditional tools that the originality of the early Christian tradition and of Augustine himself, as he gradually develops its new approach, are revealed.

MARGARET ATKINS OSA

CHRIST, SOCIETY AND THE STATE by Brian T. Trainor, *ATF Press, Adelaide, 2010, pp. vii + 606, £31.50*

Offered as a response to the challenges that arose out of the public debate between Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger at the Catholic Academy of Bavaria in 2004, Brian T. Trainor sets himself the formidable challenge of arguing, most broadly, that the sacred and the secular are 'integral aspects of a single dynamic totality' (p. 3). Fashionably beginning as an intervention into the dialectics of secularization, Trainor attempts to substantiate this claim by plunging headlong into dialogue with a host of diverse voices ranging from Barth, Rahner and the Niebuhr brothers to Hobbes, Bosanquet, Foucault and Derrida. What emerges throughout the book, however, is the pursuit of a certain kind of rehabilitation of universal liberalism and theological metaphysics in the face of contemporary discourses that celebrate the endless proliferation of difference and the overcoming of onto-theology.

Divided into four parts, Trainor begins by taking issue with what he calls 'our curious and over-inflated fondness for the particular' (p. 36), which he claims reveals a misplaced hostility toward the universal. Trainor's bold argument here attempts to show that H. Richard Niebuhr and Michael Walzer