

ALBAN AND SERGIUS: THE STORY OF A JOURNAL by Aidan Nichols OP, *Gracewing*, Leominster, 2018, pp. xii + 514, £25.00, pbk

On the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary of the foundation of the St Alban and St Sergius Fellowship and of its eponymous journal, Fr Aidan Nichols OP offers a captivating story of the *Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius*, renamed since 1935 *Sobornost*.

Both the Fellowship and its journal were founded in the context of the immigration into England of numerous members of the Russian intelligentsia. This is a milieu Nichols knows well, having dedicated numerous studies on the Russian theological tradition of the diaspora (see in particular: *Theology in the Russian Diaspora: Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev (1893–1966)*, 1989; *Wisdom from Above. A Primer in the Theology of Father Sergei Bulgakov*, 2005; *Mystical Theologian. The Work of Vladimir Lossky*, 2017).

The Russian emigration to England, less known among Catholics than the 'Paris School', illustrated by the St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute founded in a predominantly Catholic environment, was an opportunity of fruitful encounter between Orthodoxy and Anglicanism, especially of the Anglo-Catholic tradition. The *Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius* became the privileged place of this meeting in a spirit of what is now called the 'Exchange of Gifts' or 'Receptive Ecumenism'. Nichols's thesis, however, is that from its first mission of being a meeting place between Eastern and Western traditions, the journal progressively became more unilaterally 'the voice of the East'.

The first part of the book, entitled 'The Encounter of East and West' is dedicated to the first forty years of the journal. Nichols relates the founding of the Fellowship and of the journal, both marked by the personality of Nicholas and Militza Zernov (ch. 1), and recounts chronologically the developments of the journal decade after decade (ch. 2). The journal aimed to help the Anglican 'Discovering of the Russians' (ch. 3), and the Russian émigrés 'Assessing [of] Anglicanism' (ch. 4). As interestingly explained in one of the first editorials of the journal: 'If that new Anglicanism is to find its soul it needs Orthodoxy tremendously – not that Anglicanism may just become Orthodoxy, but that it may learn from Orthodoxy a Catholicity that is free from the legalism of Rome and an Evangelicalism that has never been distorted by the Protestant Reformation' (p. 26). Conversely, the Orthodox too aspired to meet Anglicanism. An article by George Fedotov entitled 'Meeting the English' stated that '[T]he assimilation of everything which is true and good (Orthodox) in Western Christianity is certainly one of the tasks before us', and drew parallels between the Anglican 'comprehensiveness' and the Russian Orthodox *sobornost* (p. 91).

Nichols dedicates some chapters of this period to more specific issues. Growing interest in icons in the West explains the important place dedicated to artistic questions, illustrated by the articles of Evgeny Trubeckoy,

Joanna Reitlinger, Nicolas Lossky, Vladimir Weidlé, Lev Gillet, and later Philip Sherrard and Donald Allchin (ch. 6). The ‘Sophia Affair’ (ch. 7) occupies a special place in the journal because of the condemnation by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1935 of Bulgakov’s sophiological theology. However, it discusses on numerous occasions other theological debates, such as the different approaches of Orthodox and Anglicans on Tradition, sin, Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology and Mariology (‘Writing Theology’, ch. 8). A particularly interesting dispute took place between the Thomistic Anglican Eric Mascall and the neo-Palamite Vladimir Lossky.

In the 1960s the new awareness of Modern Greek theology, illustrated by Christos Yannaras, John Zizioulas and others, influenced the journal. As Nichols writes: ‘As the luminaries of the Russian Diaspora were gradually extinguished, and the great masters of the Anglo-Catholic (or Anglican Catholic) theology of the inter-War years, and the 1950s, died off without replacement, a vacuum was created in the Fellowship dialogue of East and West. Through their admirers, and (dare one say it?) *faute de mieux*, these Neo-Greek theologians, despite their metaphysical strangeness, entered in and took possession. It was one of the ways in which *Sobornost*, in future decades, would distance itself from its own past’ (p. 188). No less interesting, the last chapter of this first part raises ecumenical issues such as the Russian concept of “*theologumenon*” in parallel with the ‘hierarchy of truths’ promoted at the Second Vatican Council (‘Ecumenical Prospects’, ch. 9).

The second part of the book, entitled ‘A Voice for Orthodoxy’, is dedicated to the last fifty years of the journal, from 1968 until 2018. An editorial of Andrew Louth, editor in the 2000s, is a good summary of the evolution of *Sobornost*: ‘to be not so much a place of encounter between those of the east and those of the west, clearly distinguished, but rather a place where two kinds of belongings may be explored and developed – first, probably, among the ‘western’ Orthodox, whether by destiny or by origin, but also among those who find in the traditions of eastern Christendom keys to the riches of their own western Christian tradition’ (p. 281). Nichols comments: ‘...there was little now, other than a historical retrospect, to suggest a continuing privilege for the relation that started the whole thing off – the relation between the Orthodox and the Anglicans’ (*id.*). The East itself is not only Russian or Greek, but a ‘wider East’ including all Eastern Orthodox, especially the Romanian tradition, and also the Oriental Orthodox, in particular Syriac theology and spirituality (ch. 2). Confirming and accelerating this evolution, in 1979 *Sobornost* incorporated the *Eastern Churches Review*. In an interesting chapter entitled ‘Anglicans and Latins, and their Critics’ (ch. 3), Nichols considers how the journal looked at the Anglican patrimony, in relation to Orthodoxy, and addressed controversial issues such as the *Filioque*. The first fruits of the theological dialogues are evaluated (ch. 4). Liturgy (ch. 5) and icons (ch. 6) remained important topics in the journal, but new issues appeared like ecological concerns (‘Green Orthodoxy’, ch. 7).

This book by Nichols is a great tribute to the unique role of the journal *Sobornost* in the dialogue between East and West, of which Russian émigrés were the ferment. He splendidly illustrates the quotation from Dmitri S. Merezhkovsky given as an epigraph: ‘We are not in exile; we are on a mission’.

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SPIRIT OF GOD: SHORT WRITINGS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT by Yves Congar, OP translated by Susan Mader Brown, Mark E. Ginter, Joseph G. Mueller SJ, and Catherine E. Clifford, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2018, pp. xi + 297, \$65.00, hbk.*

This beautifully presented volume is a collection of eight of Congar’s *opuscula* on the Holy Spirit, originally written in French or German as lectures, talks, reference articles, and scholarly contributions to journals. They have never been translated into English, and the team who have assembled these articles and translated them have done us Anglophones a service. This volume is a labour of love, well-edited with extensive bibliographies and notes, presented by firm admirers of Congar’s work who rightly want to expose a new generation to his thought. Hence the translation is accessible, with Latin quotations helpfully translated into English as well as the odd editorial comment to facilitate understanding.

The translators have also provided introductions to guide the newcomer into Congar’s thought, his historical context, and the issues to which he was responding. Thus the eight articles are grouped into four sections, each with its own table of contents, and each section is preceded by a brief introduction that contextualises the texts in that section. The entire volume itself carries a General Introduction that explains the arrangement of the material, and it gives a brief overview of Congar’s work, his objectives and hopes, and traces the influence of Congar’s copious writings on the Holy Spirit. The translators say that ease of understanding has also determined the way in which the material is organised: thematically rather than chronologically. Personally, I would have preferred a chronological approach, and I suppose one could read them in that order, because part 2, which contained the earliest texts, seemed more foundational and would have helped one understand part 1 better. Furthermore, these writings were intended for different audiences, and so they understandably have ‘different but somewhat overlapping material’ (p. 3). Although I appreciated revisiting Congar’s key ideas, as they were presented repeatedly over the years, I think I would have preferred encountering these ideas chronologically so that one could more easily trace the development of his thought, and his re-articulation of his main pneumatological emphases.