

SAINT DOMINIC AND HIS TIMES by M.-H. Vicaire, O.P., translated by Kathleen Pond. *Darton, Longman and Todd, 105s.*

Père Vicaire's two-volume *Histoire de Saint Dominique* was published in 1957, the fruit of a life-time's work first as disciple of Père Mandonnet and then as a scholar in his own right. In a masterly review (in *Blackfriars*, April 1958) Professor Knowles greeted it as 'definitive in its own field' saying that 'St Dominic has been shown, perhaps for the first time since Blessed Jordan of Saxony wrote, in his full stature as a personality and a saint'.

This English edition, set in Perpetua type with eleven illustrations from the Matt-Vicaire *St Dominic* and two more in colour on the attractive jacket, puts deeply in the publishers' debt all English-speaking Dominicans and friends of their Founder. The translator has tackled a formidable task with commendable success, though there is a certain unevenness and an occasional obscure sentence. A number of mistakes in dates and the apparent omission of a line towards the end of paragraph one on p. 404 are probably due to hasty proof reading.

For many people Dominic is a sinister figure or at best a shadowy one. Père Vicaire's combination of *pietas* and scholarship thrusts behind the bogeys of 'Thomism' and the Inquisition and brings to life both the man as his contemporaries knew and loved him and the setting in which he was born and worked.

Pen and camera vividly evoke the Castile of the Reconquest and the towns and country-side of Provence, the cock-pit of one of Christianity's most vital struggles. The description of the theological and historical origins of the Albigensian heresy is one of the highlights of the book. Embodying the Eastern dualism which sees all

material things as the creation of an evil god, its denial of the reality of the Incarnation and the Redemption struck at the very roots of the Christian faith. Under the façade of a literal practice of the 'evangelical life' lurked the 'antichrist' of 2 John 7. The 'Preaching of Jesus Christ' was in name and in fact the Church's spiritual counter-attack and from it evolved the revolutionary 'Order of Preachers' which Dominic was to found.

Père Vicaire avoids theological jargon but 'charismatic', 'Christological' and 'ecclesial' give contemporary overtones to traits which he picks out as Dominic's special characteristics. Like Francis of Assisi he was a charismatic leader raised up by God to meet the crisis of the age and enrich the Church with a new form of religious life. From first to last he was a 'man of the Church' living with it and for it, working hand in glove with its authorities: Diego and Fulk his bishops, the Pope, the Roman Curia. His Order was the answer to the *cri de coeur* which echoes through the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council. The convent of Santa Sabina, its future headquarters, was built within the Pope's own fortress on the Aventine—aptly symbolic of his role in the Church. Above all he was a saint and a mystic in whom self was utterly effaced and possessed by the Spirit of Christ, the source and centre of his life. The 'halo of friendliness' which surrounded him was the radiance of his own friendship with Christ which he cherished as his dearest possession and wanted all to share. The liturgical and contemplative prayer made the basis of the activity of his friars and secured for the whole Order by its cloistered nuns; the stark poverty and

relentless austerity; the ceaseless study and preaching: all this was only the lover's attempt to follow in the footsteps of Christ the Saviour 'for he thought that he would not truly be a member of Christ until the day when he could give himself wholly, with all his force, to winning souls, as the Lord Jesus, Saviour of all men, devoted himself wholly to our salvation' (Jordan of Saxony). Before preaching the truths of the faith he preached by the example of his own life the divinely human life of Truth Incarnate, the answer to the problems of every age, ours as well as his. And what is 'the Dominican inheritance of *Veritas*, the comprehension of one supreme Truth, attainable and maintainable on every level' (Professor Knowles), but the consequence

and application of that intuition of the wedding of divine and human reality in the Person of Christ which was at the heart of Dominic's life?

It is a far cry from the world of the Fourth Lateran Council to that of Vatican II, from Innocent III and the military crusade against the Albigenses to Paul VI in India and the Council Statement on Religious Liberty. Yet these are two key points in Christian history and a confrontation can deepen the understanding of both. In the original French, Père Vicaire's writings have been an inspiration and *ressourcissement* to many. It is to be hoped that the price will not prevent this book from doing the same service for the English speaking world.

Sister Mary Albert, O.P.

HENRY GARNET AND THE GUNPOWDER PLOT by Philip Caraman. *Longmans, 50s.*

Henry Garnet was superior of the English Jesuits during twenty years of active persecution (1586-1606). He was more than that. He was the organizer of the whole network of secret Mass-centres that covered England, and the leader, though not technically the superior, of all the priests in England. Add to this that he was a most prolific letter-writer, and one wonders why we have had to wait so long for a full-length life of him. For this book, in spite of its title, is a complete life. Fr Caraman traces him to his birth-place at Heanor in Derbyshire, to Winchester College and so to Rome. By carefully chosen quotations from his letters he draws a vivid picture of his apostolate and of the extraordinary tension under which he constantly lived. Some of this is from unpublished letters, but it is not easy to say how much of it is new because Fr Caraman refers always to the pressmark of the documents even when they have been printed elsewhere in full. It would have been more helpful to have referred readers to easily accessible sources for the full text rather than to archives as far away as Rome.

About a third of the book is devoted to the Gunpowder Plot in which Garnet was a prominent and tragic victim. On this important issue Fr

Caraman has given us no new documents but he has arranged the complicated material with clarity and assessed it with impartiality. Only on one important point do I find myself in disagreement. Fr Caraman assumes to be genuine the long statement dated 8 March 1606 preserved at Hatfield. I am convinced that this document is spurious, not for the trivial reasons given in a footnote (p. 376) but on internal evidence. Here is a document of nearly 4,000 words without a single correction. It is in a hand very similar to Garnet's, but more like the Garnet of ten years before. His writing appears much less firm in letters written after 1600. There is a passage that makes nonsense because a line or more has been omitted. This is more explicable in copying than in composing. Did Garnet never read over a statement on which his reputation, if not his life, depended? Could he physically have written in such a firm hand within twenty-four hours of being tortured? Fr Caraman argues that his torture could not have been severe because of this document (p. 375). When we remember the ghastly torture of Guy Fawkes and, just a week before, the death under torture of Nicholas Owen we may well wonder why Garnet was more gently treated. Torture in the Tower was a