

A History of *Blackfriars* and *New Blackfriars*

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In 1920 Father Bede Jarrett, then provincial of the English Dominicans, wrote to a friend saying that he had just bought the *Catholic Review* for the province. The *Catholic Review* was a quarterly journal edited first by Father Benedict Williamson and then by Father Henry Rope. The new publication was to be called *Blackfriars*. In the view of its first editor, Father Bernard Delany OP (1890–1959), Father Bede had wasted the forty pounds he had paid for it since the journal was defunct and there was to be only a notional continuity between it and the one that was to replace it. In purchasing the title Father Bede was fulfilling a long-cherished ambition to establish a Catholic periodical which would express a specifically and characteristically Dominican voice in England.

As early as 1910 a similar project had been mooted by Father Hugh Pope OP (1869–1946), a celebrated apologist and exegete who had taught at the Dominican house of studies in Hawkesyard, Staffordshire, but who was then teaching Scripture at the Angelicum, the Order's Roman university.¹ In the *Hawkesyard Review*, an in-house journal mostly edited by the Hawkesyard students, Father Hugh argued the case for a Dominican review suggesting that, in the contemporary world, it would be a sign of the Order's commitment to the ministry of the Word. In the midst of the Modernist crisis, whatever Scripture scholars wrote was of interest to those in higher authority and was often carefully scrutinised. It was for this reason that Pope's article in an obscure English Dominican publication with a tiny circulation attracted the attention of the Master of the Order, Father Vincent Cormier (1832–1916). Cormier was favourably impressed by Hugh Pope's proposal and wrote a letter congratulating him and giving his blessing to the project. Nothing more was to come of it until Bede Jarrett's election as provincial in 1916. By then Europe was in the throes of a bitter war and the new provincial had other plans for the development of the intellectual and apostolic life of the English province.

The pattern of English Dominican life was drastically reshaped by the broad vision of Father Bede Jarrett. In his short lifetime he was

recognised, both at home and throughout the world, as a fine preacher and writer who represented the best of Dominican tradition.² At the Rome General Chapter of 1929 his qualities were recognised; he received 31 votes in the election for the Mastership of the Order. He was runner-up to a French Dominican, Stanislaus Gillet. Father Bede wrote afterwards, with characteristic humour and humility, 'I could not believe that the Holy Ghost who also knew me would so far violate the "conveniences".'³ Father Bede set about establishing missions, founding houses and eagerly promoting the intellectual life of the friars. His firm view was that they should be prominent in the academic life of the country. At the same time, Father Bede remained a quintessentially English figure, a patriot without a narrow nationalist cast of mind, with a broad sympathy which his devout Catholic faith tuned to the highest of humane visions.

Father Bede's character and outlook, as his letters show them developing, were an interesting blend of the radical and traditional. His deep sense of the value of tradition, and his own intense attachment to the story of his own Order and province, gave him a certain spaciousness of outlook, which often seemed revolutionary to the less imaginative of his brethren. In his history of the English Dominicans, published in 1920, just as he was finishing his first term as Provincial, Father Bede brought the story through to the twentieth century.⁴ He traced a pattern of continuity from the medieval Dominican province to that of the twentieth century. The point he was making was quite clear. The book was a manifesto for his own work as well as offering an historical justification of it. The pattern he discerned was one of development in the face of adversity. He clearly believed that through being true to its historical roots and by using the glorious achievements of the past as a paradigm, the twentieth century English Dominicans would be living their vocation to the full and reclaiming their rightful place in the English Catholic community:

The flagship of Father Bede's reconstruction of the public profile of the English Dominican province was Blackfriars, Oxford, which he had begun to dream of seriously during his time as a curate in St Dominic's parish, London, before the Great War. In 1921, his dream was partially realised when the foundation stone of the new Dominican house of studies was laid in St Giles, in the centre of Oxford. Father Bede hoped that friars would come from all over the world to study and teach, promoting that renaissance of Dominican life and thought of which he believed contemporary Europe stood much in need.⁵ In 1994 the vision was fulfilled when Blackfriars was at last admitted as a Permanent Private Hall in the University of Oxford. Once more Dominicans were to be found on the Theological Faculty of that university, indeed the

priory was able to boast of more members of Faculty than any other Oxford college save Christchurch.

Blackfriars was very much part of Bede Jarrett's evangelical strategy. When the new priory was founded the editorial offices of *Blackfriars* were established there and Father Bernard Delany, who had proved so pessimistic at the outset, was appointed its editor. The new journal was to find a place for itself amongst the other religious periodicals, all of which were struggling for a stall in the marketplace. From the outset, *Blackfriars* was to have a distinctive style. In many ways, the closest model for Jarrett's programme for the English Dominicans was drawn from the French Dominican pattern.

In November 1936, in an edition marking the 200th issue of *Blackfriars*, the editor, Father Hilary Carpenter, reviewed the policy of the journal for its readers. He suggested that the character of *Blackfriars* was determined by its purpose and not by the 'imagined interests of an illusory public'. He went on to state explicitly that it was hoped to parallel in England the work of the French Dominicans for French Catholicism.⁶ The French province was gifted with a wide variety of resources which enabled them to produce three reviews: *La Vie Spirituelle*, *La Vie intellectuelle* and *Sept*. The English province, given the minority status of English Catholicism, could not hope to achieve a comparable output. However, it was possible to aspire to replicate the different functions of the French reviews in the tone and composition of the English Dominican journal. The common link drawn between the provinces was fidelity to the doctrine of St Thomas. *Blackfriars* was to be doctrinaire only in its approach to doctrine. In other matters it was to show a breadth of vision and a willingness to engage in controversy.

As the editor wrote:

The masters of our spirituality have never confused unity with uniformity. An article by an English Dominican in *Blackfriars* will not necessarily coincide with the viewpoint of a province or even with that of an editorial board. It will only show that we have all of us enough certitudes to welcome opinions.⁷

A theme that appears in this editorial which was to be a constant refrain throughout the history of *Blackfriars* and its successor *New Blackfriars* was the conviction that English Catholicism had its own distinctive character and had its own witness to offer to the English Catholic Church. Within the tapestry of English Catholicism, English Dominicanism had its own place. A certain pride of place, a stress on the spiritual lineage of the province appears in many of the public editorial statements. The editor described it in 1936 as being in the great tradition of 'Catholic Englishry of which Father Bede Jarrett was the

symbol and the glory’.

It was intended that in *Blackfriars* some serious theological work would be presented to an intelligent readership at a fairly high level, but it was also hoped that the fruits of scholarship might be ‘translated’ and packaged for an audience that might not have immediate access to the best that contemporary theological scholarship might offer. The review was also to be a medium for stating the teachings, ideals and principles of the Dominican apostolate.

The first editor of *Blackfriars* summed up the editorial policy of the review as being to ‘state, defend and teach the truth of the Catholic faith by word of mouth and by the written and printed word.’⁸ In other words, *Blackfriars*, was to be a printed continuation of the ministry of preaching. Father Bernard Delany likened it to an open-air pulpit. If its inspiration and character was to be Dominican, that tradition was very much characterised by dialogue and disputation. Lay people were also to be invited and encouraged to contribute. Also, as he once wrote, ‘heckling, within the limits of the game, was to be allowed’.⁹ Since the journal was understood to be secure in its Catholicism there was no need for its editors or contributors to be strangers to controversy. It was never designed to be a sectarian review or a narrow apologetic tract, it was hoped that it would achieve a respectful hearing from amongst those ‘whose indifference or antipathy to Catholicism were equally taken for granted.’

During his provincialate, Father Bede Jarrett took a keen interest in *Blackfriars*. As he once wrote to a friend, ‘You see I don’t edit the review. I haven’t time or the necessary gifts; but I keep my eye on it and report each month on the contents so as to play the part of a Northcliffe.’¹⁰ When he ceased to be provincial he was elected prior of Blackfriars, Oxford, and appointed editor of *Blackfriars*, a position he held until his premature death on 17 March 1934.

The editorial policy of *Blackfriars* was to garner a breadth of material including film reviews, literary critical pieces, poetry and apologetic articles designed to increase the intellectual appropriation of the faith by an informed laity. Through its pages the currents of European theology and social thought were introduced to England. The laity was represented on the editorial board through Father Bede’s nomination to it of Joseph Clayton, a journalist and member of the Fabian Society, whom he had received into the Catholic Church in 1910, and Stanley Morison, an expert typographer. After considering printing the journal at St Dominic’s Press, Ditchling, it was eventually decided that the work should be carried out by a less gifted firm which employed modern production methods. However, some concessions were made to aesthetics and the Ditchling group of Dominican tertiaries in that the

cover was designed by Eric Gill.

An important emphasis in the editorial policy of *Blackfriars* was to be its topicality. A monthly journal allowed some treatment of actuality. In advice given in 1926 to the first editor, Bede Jarrett wrote,

I think you need to edit *Blackfriars* more ... I think what it lacks still is actuality. It doesn't enough deal with the things of the present month, for I've come to the conclusion that Catholics go to their reviews etc., for munitions in the warfare of conversation at meal times with those outside the Church. They like to be provided with ideas, reasons, and proofs, which they can then fire off at their friends and defend the Catholic position in various parts of the world or in various sciences, or to be able to explain any Catholic matter of interest.¹¹

Before the Second World War English Catholicism was essentially a working class phenomenon. It had small upper class and aristocratic constituencies, but was lacking in a substantial middle class. Higher education was not open to Catholics until the educational reforms of the 1940s allowed greater access to the universities. Despite the literary and apologetic output of eminent Catholics like G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, Catholics did not adopt a controversialist approach to Protestantism. This stance was not always understood in the wider ambience of the Dominican Order. In a Europe still smarting with the wounds consequent on the French Revolution the irenic tone of English Catholicism seemed out of place, not to say eccentric. Ecclesiastical authorities accustomed to a more robust and aggressive confrontation between Church and world were sometimes suspicious of the tolerance manifested by certain groups within English Catholicism in general and by the English Dominicans in particular.

The concern for actuality did not often harmonise with that general caution expected of Catholic periodicals of the time. Criticism had frequently been levelled against Bede Jarrett on the grounds of his being too conciliatory in his approach to those outside the Catholic Church. He was never known to use the word 'heretic' when speaking of non-Catholic Christians and in every encounter he began by attempting to establish the truth which both parties in the debate shared. This characteristically Dominican model of debate found a place in the columns of *Blackfriars* and sometimes aroused the hostility of those who counted themselves more militant defenders of the faith at home and abroad.

A minor crisis was provoked by an article written by Father Vincent McNabb which appeared in *Blackfriars* in July 1920.¹² McNabb described the general significance for English Christianity of the

forthcoming Lambeth Conference. Father Vincent always maintained the highest respect for Anglicanism, his article stressed the continuity the Church of England enjoyed with the medieval English Church and pointed out the immense opportunities offered by the conference for the reconciliation, as well as discussions about the unification of the Churches. He also pointed out that only 300 bishops had been present at Nicaea and about the same number at Ephesus. The gathering of 300 Anglican bishops for the Lambeth Conference was seen in similar terms to these earlier conciliar events. McNabb's other remarks suggesting that the Anglican bishops met in the shadow of Anselm, Lanfranc and Becket, caused a great deal of anxiety, even amongst his own brethren. The editor, Bernard Delany, was even delated to Rome by one of the English Dominican friars for printing the article, the friar in question had baptised Delany as a baby!

The matter was taken up by the Holy Office, which involved Cardinal Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster, and also the Dominican Master General. Partly through the English Benedictine, Cardinal Gasquet, matters were resolved quietly, but not before the whole matter of relations between the Churches was publicly aired.¹³ Throughout the dispute the general line followed by *Blackfriars* was that militant and controversial polemic is likely to do more harm than good; aggressive tactics did more to drive people away from Catholicism than attract them to it. Similar problems had been experienced by the English Jesuits at the beginning of the century with regard to their periodical *The Month*.

The editorials and articles of the 1930s and 40s were principally concerned with issues relating to the increasing political fragmentation of Europe and the threat, the reality, and the consequences of global war. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and its treatment by *Blackfriars* caused some controversy and provoked a deal of adverse criticism in the Catholic press and amongst prominent Catholics in England. The anti-clerical legislation intended to secularise Spanish society had aroused anxiety in England, particularly since it was interpreted against the backdrop of the persecution of Catholicism in Germany under the Hitler regime. Matters were made worse by the outbreak of extreme violence against Spanish priests, religious, and Catholic institutions in Catalonia. Such attacks prompted a wholesale reaction against the Republican cause in England. The English Catholic community was still deeply imbued with the values and character of a recusant Church and rallied to the support of its persecuted brethren in Spain. Inevitably, on the outbreak of civil war in Spain in July 1936, the Catholic Church, in a desperate attempt at self-preservation, rallied to the Nationalist cause. In the following years that association was to have

dire consequences and to result in many Catholic martyrs. In England such excesses promoted a strong anti-Republican feeling which led many leading Catholic figures to identify 'God's cause' with the Nationalist programme.

The English Dominican response to the Spanish Civil War was highly nuanced; it was consequently widely criticised as a 'betrayal' of the Catholic Church. Whilst expressing shock at the massacres of Catholics, and accepting the involvement of atheistic Communist agitators in some of these events, the editor wrote in 1936 that attention must be turned to the causes of such conflict.¹⁴ It was not sufficient, he said, to brand one side or the other right or wrong. Perhaps, he suggested, the violence visited on the Church and her representatives might be due to a deficit in the religious sense of the people. Perhaps events would not have taken this turn if this religious sense 'had not been consistently undermined by an atmosphere of materialism, and the rights and just claims of the working classes disregarded.'¹⁵

In the same issue of September/October 1936, an anonymous Dominican correspondent wrote: 'It should go without saying that the prayers and most deeply felt sympathy (the word is grotesquely banal) of Catholics throughout the world are with the Catholics of Spain during the present almost unprecedentedly hideous persecution. That a Catholic *esprit de corps* should on that account induce us to side with the insurgents and have no sympathy whatever with the "rabble" in their resistance to what they believe (and their opponents seem to give them plenty of reason to believe) to be the threat of an oppressive, murderous and reactionary tyranny, not only does not follow, but is fundamentally un-Christian.'¹⁶

The same writer went on to claim that the political prospects for Europe looked bleak, in that it was widely believed that the days of the old liberal-bourgeois states seemed to be numbered and that the future appeared to lie with the authoritarian states of the Right and Left. In his opinion there appeared to be little to choose between both models.' ... it is the choice between honest-to-God and the not so honest exploitation of God as the State's big Policeman, plus the safeguarding of clerical life and limb and the material possessions of Holy Church. It is true that the Right, speaking generally, at least offers us the opportunity of administering the Sacraments and within strict limits, something of the Word. But meanwhile? It is necessary to assert and reassert that if the Left will not have God, it does not follow on that account that He is on the Right.'¹⁷

The attitude of *Blackfriars* to the conflict in Spain was roundly criticised by an influential group of Catholics, amongst whom was numbered Archbishop Peter Amigo, the volatile bishop of Southwark.

The English Capitalist press, which was resolutely pro-Franco, also expressed strong reservations about the editorial policy of *Blackfriars*. The Communist newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, misrepresented *Blackfriars*, claiming that it supported the Communist viewpoint. The leading Catholic newspaper, *The Universe*, in attempting to refute the errors of which *Blackfriars* stood accused, merely widened the circle of appreciation by repeating them.¹⁸

The response of *Blackfriars* was typical. One of the charges levelled against it by its critics was that it was unrepresentative of Catholic thought. This claim was refuted by the editor who quoted from a wide spectrum of world Catholic opinion. The treatment of the war by European and American journals was presented in excerpt form with editorial comment. Moreover, to ensure that the English Dominican ideal of a broad vision of truth was represented, a pamphlet dealing with the background to the Spanish Civil War published by the British Communist party was also summarised with comment by the leading controversialist of the province, Father Vincent McNabb.¹⁹

Blackfriars, which according to Fr Vincent McNabb might have suffered the fate of the Holy Innocents and not survive long after its birth, continued publication until 1964. However, in the 1950s some hints of the changes that were to occur as a result of the Second Vatican Council were beginning to appear in the pages of *Blackfriars*. With the editorship of Iltud Evans (1950–1958) the various social and political concerns of post-war Europe were presented in a theological light in the columns of *Blackfriars*. Iltud Evans had been a journalist before he joined the Order in 1937. His own personal interest lay in a creative reappropriation of Catholic tradition. He was a gifted communicator with great gifts of personal compassion. He was to use both in the latter part of his life in a very fruitful ministry to priests who found the changes consequent on Vatican II difficult to accept. His other pastoral concerns led him into the sphere of penal reform and questions of crime and punishment.²⁰ At the same time, the emerging middle class, who had found their way through improved access to higher education into the professional classes of British society, were taking a great interest in social and ethical matters. English Dominicans became closely associated with activities of *Pax*, a Catholic peace movement founded in the 1930s but given new impetus by the horrors of the Second World War and the threat of atomic warfare. Reflection on nuclear arms surfaced in theological circles and English Dominican Thomists found themselves exploring the theory of the Just War in a very dangerous Cold War world. These debates, naturally, found their place in *Blackfriars*.²¹

The same inquiring, analytical skills in the context of a broad view of tradition, were also applied to the field of sexual and personal

morality. The influence of the relatively new study of psychology had been making itself felt in moral theology. The English Dominican writer and teacher, Victor White, had been a friend of Jung and was a regular contributor to *Blackfriars*.²² Illtud Evans, sensing that the parameters of debate in the sphere of moral theology might need to be redrawn and the subject cast in a different way, commissioned a series of articles from Gerald Vann O.P., well-known as a preacher and broadcaster and with a penetrating grasp of Thomism and morality. The series was entitled 'Moral Dilemmas'. The idea behind it was that Christian moral principles might be restated in a language that might hope to have meaning for those who were totally ignorant of the niceties of a formal moral theology. Vann's first contribution to the series dealt with what he called, 'Muddled Marriages'.²³ This was followed by another article dealing with the question of the regulation of birth in the context of conjugal love.²⁴ The compassionate tone of both articles was thought, in some circles, to incline towards 'laxism', and aroused hostility. Father Illtud stood behind his brother-contributor, and wrote: 'Even in their misery ... separate and beyond the community of grace, they can begin to hope. That is what the Gospel is about, and that is the situation the Church exists to serve. But it must be seen to be so.'²⁵

The tone set by Father Illtud harmonised with many of the later themes of the Second Vatican Council. He hoped for a radical liturgical reform which would recover the sense of the Bible as the creative Word of God, and for a development of pastoral liturgy through which the people of God might enter more fully into the liturgical mystery which exists precisely for them. In all of this he found himself in the tradition of *Blackfriars* as it had been originally founded by Father Bede Jarrett.

In 1946, *Blackfriars*, was joined by another monthly journal edited by the English Dominicans: *Life of the Spirit*. The editorial in the first number was written by Père A.M. Henry, editor of the French sister-journal, *La Vie spirituelle*.²⁶ *Life of the Spirit* was concerned with the tradition of Christian spirituality and looked to the roots of prayer and contemplation from which any effective Christian witness must spring. It maintained a large circulation and inevitably captured some of the market originally catered for by *Blackfriars*. In 1964 the two reviews merged under the title of *New Blackfriars*. In the decade that followed, the influence of the conciliar and post-conciliar legislation was manifest in the contents pages of the new journal. Liturgical change, ecumenical contacts, questions on nuclear deterrence, race relations, the Vietnam war, Catholic education and the debate on artificial methods of contraception, all found a place in *New Blackfriars*.

The change in tone of the journal illustrated a deeper shift in the character and composition of the Catholic Church in England. The

educational reforms which followed the conclusion of the Second World War had promoted an increased Catholic representation in the universities. New universities were founded and many featured theological faculties. A new form of ministry to university students emerged which centred on university chaplaincies. The need emerged for an informed and engaging presentation of the Catholic faith which would encourage theological interests amongst the members of the emerging Catholic intelligentsia. In the late 1950s and 1960s Dominican friars, who were themselves products of the post-war boom in vocations to the religious life and who represented the expanding class of Catholic university graduates, began to engage in this ministry. Herbert McCabe and Laurence Bright were prominent members of this group. Further contacts with the Order were developed through the important work of the Dominican Conference centre at Spode House, Staffordshire. The director of Spode House for almost the entire period of its existence was Fr Conrad Pepler O.P., who had been editor of *Blackfriars* from 1942–1950. These varied contacts provided *New Blackfriars* with an audience throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

A major crisis in the life of *New Blackfriars* erupted at critical period in the wider life of the Church in England. Once more editorial policy was questioned by English and Roman authorities. The issue involved around an editorial written by Father Herbert McCabe who had succeeded Father Illtud Evans as editor. The editorial was prompted by the public defection from the Catholic Church of one of its foremost English theologians, Father Charles Davis. Davis had been a seminary lecturer. He combined the rare gifts of a finely tuned academic mind with a skill at popular communication. Through industry and imagination he had made *The Clergy Review*, a journal which specialised in the continuing education of the clergy, a model of intelligent presentation at an accessible level of modern theology. He undertook the translation of a wide range of modern Catholic continental theologians. It was through his work and by his encouragement that so much of what was called *la nouvelle théologie*, made its way into England. His loss to Catholicism was a major blow not only to his Church but to many of his friends and colleagues in the comparatively small English theological world.²⁷ It was in response to this that Father Herbert McCabe wrote a courageous and finely argued editorial, suggesting that whilst the Church manifested signs of human corruption and fallibility, its hierarchical institutions link us to areas of Christian truth beyond our own particular experience, and ultimately to truths beyond any experience. It was for this last reason that Catholic Christians should remain members of the Church.²⁸

In the tense atmosphere of the time, Father Herbert's contribution to

the debate was considered unhelpful and provocative. Steps were taken against him by various prominent ecclesiastics, and orders came from the General Curia of the Dominican Order that Father Herbert should be removed from office. The same authorities failed to recognise that such an action would merely provide confirmation of the charges levelled against them by Charles Davis and others. In a generous and humble expression of obedience Father Herbert accepted his dismissal and made no public comment on it, save to say that he would do what he had been instructed to do. However, there followed a remarkable public discussion of the matter in the Catholic and secular press. Angry letters were written, protests organised, and a petition to the Master of the Dominican Order was drawn up asking for Father Herbert's reinstatement. The petition was signed by many of the leading and influential English Catholics and was organised by the Newman Association. A prominent member of the Association took the petition personally to the Master of the Order, Father Aniceto Fernandez, a Spanish Dominican of great holiness but little personal knowledge of England. His response was that it might be possible for Father Herbert to resume his position once all the fuss had died down.²⁹ Meanwhile, Father Herbert was temporarily replaced by Father Conrad Pepler and then by Father Pascal Lefebure. It was only in 1970 that Father Herbert was able to resume his editorial chair, beginning his first editorial characteristically with the words, 'As I was saying before I was so oddly interrupted ...'

In a comment on the affair published in *New Blackfriars* in April 1967, the provincial, Fr Ian Hislop, articulated the basis of much contemporary Dominican engagement with the intellectual and academic world and the Church. He described the main task of the Order in England as being the 'theological analysis of contemporary experience'. In effect that meant examining the particular time bound concerns of individuals and institutions in the light of divine revelation. Such an approach is bound to be intellectual rather than narrowly devotional. Its inspiration will always be the search for truth rather than the opportuneness of a statement. Theologians are essential ministers of the Word, but so are those who are able to translate theological positions into language that is readily understood by non-professional hearers and readers. For Father Ian the challenge of the 'McCabe affair' was not simply extended to obedience and order, but to the communication of religious truth. In his sage reflections on the events of 1967, Father Ian Hislop was showing himself to be in precise conformity with the ideals for *Blackfriars* set out by Father Bede Jarrett when the review was founded and as re-stated by Father Vincent McNabb in his article 'Our aim of Truth' which appeared in the first issue in 1920.³⁰

Under the editorship of Father Herbert McCabe, *New Blackfriars*

began to concern itself with Christian-Marxist dialogue. A number of Catholic post-war graduates and academics, who were not theologians by training, began an attempt to enrich English Catholic culture by feeding influences from English literature, anthropology and sociology into a form of political theology. The principal members of this group, many of who were to be associated with *Slant*, a Christian-Socialist journal founded in 1964, were Terry Eagleton, Brian Wicker, Martin Redfern and Adrian and Angela Cunningham, together with the Dominicans, Herbert McCabe and Laurence Bright.

The end of the 1960s was an epoch of great student unrest and political instability. The Vietnam war cast a long shadow, and the decline of the imperial powers had prompted a reassessment of their role and the price paid for their colonial enterprises. The development of the 'New Left' found an echoing political and theological tendency within the context of English Catholicism. The Second Vatican Council generated an atmosphere of 'liberalising' hopefulness amongst the educated Catholic middle class. Many of those who wrote for *New Blackfriars* were associated with Christian-Marxist dialogue and saw their work as addressed to this 'progressive' constituency. They attempted to provide some coherent intellectual foundation for the potential radicalisation of the middle class, and opposed that tendency which aimed at derailing the 'revolutionary' programme in the Church. A representative of this party wrote that the danger which faced Catholicism in England was that of becoming 'a great liberal party, having severed its connections with the important issues of capitalism, the Third World, nuclear violence and brutal cultural impoverishment.'³¹

The broader intellectual context for this enterprise lay in an anthropological crisis, whose terms were described in concise compass by Fergus Kerr O.P., as a crisis of a theory of meaning which had its origins in the fragmentation of a coherent theory of man. He suggested that mainstream Christians in England were accustomed to thinking in terms of two interpretative theories of man: the medieval-theological and the liberal capitalist models.³² Neither of these either facilitated serious comprehension of modern experience or resorted to it for radical purposes. The work of Heidegger and Wittgenstein was called upon to disclose that persons were not simple substances in a world of objects but rather constitute the field of significance in which the world occurs as a world at all. Modern men and women were aware of the inadequacy of the models which had operated in the past, but they had not yet evolved an alternative which would allow social, political and religious institutions to correspond to modern theories of humanity.³³ Those who contributed to *New Blackfriars* during the 1970s wrestled with this question making use of ideas coming from the world of culture and

literature, such as those of Raymond Williams, R.D. Laing, F.R. Leavis, and in the realm of philosophy and politics, Marx, Sartre, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty.

Father Herbert McCabe remained editor until 1979 when he was succeeded by Father Alban Weston O.P. A brief interlude followed with Father Fergus Kerr O.P. acting as editor in the space between Alban Weston and the appointment of Father John Orme Mills O.P. Father John returned from acting as assistant to the Master of the Order for Communications and the Media. His professional knowledge and expertise ensured the healthy survival of *New Blackfriars* for twelve years. He was succeeded by Father Allan White O.P. who functioned as editor until he was in turn replaced by Father Fergus Kerr in 1995.

During this period, *New Blackfriars* went through a number of economic crises. Production costs were ever on the increase and successive financial recessions prompted fluctuations in the circulation figures. At the instigation of Father Herbert McCabe, moves were made to establish a Dominican press which would be dedicated to the production of *New Blackfriars*. Through the generosity of the Dominican Sisters of St Catherine of Siena of Newcastle, whose headquarters are at Bushey Heath in Hertfordshire, the requisite equipment was purchased and a press established. Since the foundation of the press the printer has been Sister Jacinta O'Driscoll O.P., whose family had connections with the world of Catholic journalism. The press has moved a number of times, but for a lengthy period was housed in premises kindly lent by Father Philip Carpenter, a priest of the Westminster diocese and a generous benefactor of the Dominicans in England. In 1992 the press moved to St Dominic's Priory where it was once again generously housed by the prior and community.

The regular appearance of *New Blackfriars* is something of a miracle. It is printed and assembled by one person and dispatched with the help of volunteers from the Dominican parish in London. It is administered by one business manager, a Lay Dominican Mrs Anna Baidoun, who succeeded the late Mr William Ford who had established many of the current administrative systems of the journal. Currently, *New Blackfriars* is sent to fifty three countries and to 700 libraries throughout the world. At least half of its individual subscribers are to be found outside the United Kingdom. In the seventy years of its existence it has established itself as one of the leading English language journals covering a wide spectrum of strictly academic and speculative theology, to comment on matters of social and political concern. In many ways, it continues the task set out for it by Father Bede Jarrett at its foundation. It is a tribute to his vision that it did not suffer the fate of the Holy Innocents, despite several attempts at its assassination.

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- 1 Bernard Delany O.P., 'The Beginnings of "Blackfriars"', *Blackfriars* 34, 1936, p. 308–319, 309.
- 2 Kenneth Wykeham-George and Gervase Mathew, *Bede Jarrett of the Order of Preachers* (London, 1952)
- 3 Letter from Bede Jarrett to Austin Barker, 21 September, 1929, in Bede Bailey and Simon Tugwell (ed.) *Letters of Bede Jarrett* (Downside Abbey and Blackfriars Publications, 1989) p. 152–153.
- 4 Bede Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921).
- 5 Allan White O.P., 'Father Bede Jarrett, O.P., and The Renewal of the English Dominican Province', in Dominic Aidan Bellenger (ed), *Opening the Scrolls. Essays in Honour of Godfrey Anstruther, O.P.* (Downside Abbey, 1987) p. 216–234.
- 6 Hilary Carpenter O.P., 'Editorial', *Blackfriars* 17, 1936, p. 803–805.
- 7 *ibid.*
- 8 Bernard Delany O.P., *Blackfriars* I, 1920, p. 3–5.
- 9 Bernard Delany O.P., 'The Beginnings of *Blackfriars*', p. 313.
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 318.
- 11 Cited by Bernard Delany O.P., 'The Beginnings of *Blackfriars*', p. 318.
- 12 Vincent McNabb O.P., 'The Lambeth Conference', *Blackfriars* I, 1920, p. 221–230, and 'Canterbury and Rome', *Blackfriars* I, 1920, p. 381–389.
- 13 Bernard Delany O.P., 'The Beginnings of "Blackfriars"', p. 316–317.
- 14 Editorial of September/October 1936, *Blackfriars* 17, 1936, p. 647–649.
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 648.
- 16 'Extracts and Comments', *Blackfriars* 17, 1936, p. 704–712.
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- 18 *ibid.*, p. 777–786.
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