

FATHER BEDE JARRETT

The publication of the 'Life' of Father Bede Jarrett by Kenneth Wykeham-George, O.P., and Gervase Mathew, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 12s. 6d.) is an event of more than usual significance for this review, of which Fr Bede was the founder and for a time the Editor. Readers of BLACKFRIARS will scarcely need the recommendations of reviewers to draw their attention to the biography of the Dominican whose inspiration was so important in the early and difficult days of this journal's career. We are fortunate in being able to publish the tributes of two of his friends, Sir Ernest Barker and Fr C. C. Martindale, S.J., occasioned by the appearance of his biography and a reminder, eighteen years after his death, of the extent of his true achievement.

SIR ERNEST BARKER WRITES:

Many memories came back to my mind as I read Father Wykeham-George's and Father Mathew's Life of Bede Jarrett. I was carried back nearly fifty years, to the year 1904 (or was it 1905?) when he became my pupil and read with me for Honours in the School of Modern History. The way it happened was this. I had had for some time a connection with the Benedictine house of residence (then called Hunter-Blair's Hall), and I had taught some of the Benedictines—not least Father Paul Nevill, now and for many years past the Headmaster of Ampleforth College. The Benedictines—as has been their wont for nearly 1,500 years—were hospitable; and their Hall in Oxford was the hospitium of members of other Orders. One of the 'guests', or rather members, of Hunter-Blair's Hall was Father Bede Jarrett; and that was how he became my pupil, two years after Father Paul Nevill. He read with me down to the year 1907, when he took his Schools and was placed high in the First Class. (I was one of the examiners that year, and I was proud of the sustained excellence of his work.) It was a very good year, both among the men and the women students: Lord Eustace Percy was another man who was placed in the first class, and among the women was Professor Ada Levett, as she afterwards became, whom I had also taught for a little time in her student days.

Father Bede was a genuine scholar with a real passion for historical study. If I taught him, I also learned from him; indeed he was the original inspiration of a little book I once wrote on 'The Dominican Order and Convocation', in which I tried to argue that the growth of the representative principle in the thirteenth century, first in the Convocations of the Church and afterwards in the assembly of the nation, was perhaps connected with the early development of representative institutions in the system of the Dominican Order. But Father Bede was not only a scholar, who sought in his later days, among all the preoccupations of office, to make a contribution to the development of medieval historical

studies; he was also a statesman, if I may use that word, and a guide of the policy of his Order in England. It was the glow of his inspiration, and the undaunted patience of his faith, which brought the Dominicans back to a place of settlement and residence in Oxford exactly seven hundred years from the time when they had first settled there in 1222. That was the fruit of his historical training and his sense of tradition; and that is his lasting memorial. But he has also a memorial in the affection of those who knew him and remember the grace that shone in him.

He wrote historical works—including one on *The English Dominicans* and another (to which he did me the honour of asking me to write a foreword) on the Emperor *Charles IV*. He also wrote on medieval economics and medieval social theories. But these are not his chief memorial; nor do they fully evince the power of his mind or the patience of his scholarship. The demands of administration and the many calls on his time were the enemies of a 'work of long breath'; and he never found the leisure which is essential to concentration. It is his life rather than his books which is the abiding testimony; and it is the whole man, rather than the scholar, who lives in the memory.

FR C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J., writes:

A 'religious vocation' is a fact that takes many shapes. St Paul was evidently at first a youthful 'fanatic' and only after some time realised his true call—we hold that the call was not abrupt, though the realisation of it was: for it was said: 'It is hard for thee to kick against the goad', which implies a process, not a single kick, nor even a single application of a goad! We ventured recently to call the late Fr R. H. J. Steuart essentially a 'man of vocation', because though his call seemed almost accidental he remained faithful to it even when it often looked as though he could not, so alien was it to all the elements that composed his versatile and seemingly inconstant character. On the other hand, Fr Bede said that 'his only reason for becoming a priest and a Dominican was that as long as he could remember he had always wished to be both'. It is true that the ecclesiastical influences that surrounded him had always been Dominican, that is, at home—for he and his four brothers went to school at Stonyhurst—but those brothers, his uncle and his father all were or became soldiers and it was assumed that he too would be one. But while his vocation was not 'encouraged', this loyally Catholic family did not 'oppose' it, and we must study Fr Bede and his career entirely in 'Dominican' terms. Yet it is valuable to know that he too had his difficult hours, and twice thought of leaving the Dominicans.

We are told that he knew that the Dominican motto was 'Truth', which I venture to take also in the active sense, i.e., not only loyalty to a tradition however venerable, or to a formula however exact, but as 'truth-giving', rather as the 'notes' of the Church are essentially active: 'apostolic'

cannot mean just 'descending from the Apostles', but acting *like* the Apostles—the Jews were not to be just by pedigree 'children of Abraham'! Hence no wonder that he felt his Dominican vocation to be one of fidelity to the special part to be played by the Friars Preacher *within* the Church, but also, a forth-going, 'missionary' one. It would be easy to 'review' this book by making a sort of outline of the positions occupied by Fr Bede within his Order, or to make a sort of 'outline of a skeleton' of his exterior activities, but all who read this review are certain to get the book and space would be almost wasted. Enough to say that he was given responsible positions very young, and (unless I err) was four times consecutively Provincial. But this kind of *cursus honorum* is not what rivets my attention.

He became consciously concerned with his Dominican life just when two currents (there, and certainly elsewhere) were running side by side or even splashing up against one another. There were what has been crudely called the 'conservative', and the 'go-ahead', tendencies. It is most interesting that in his noviciate-retreat he *chose* (was not, apparently, just *given*) the *Life of Lacordaire* (which was tumultuous enough!) and the *First Principles of Religious Life* by Fr R. Buckler. We cannot tell how far—so young as that!—he realised that fidelity must go hand in hand with development. But it is evident that when he ultimately (not single-handed, of course) created Blackfriars at Oxford, he was hoping to realise his ideal that the Dominicans *must* have roots in universities and operate therefrom, yet could not have forgotten the fear of non-Catholic universities that still beset his youth. Few can be unaware of the fierce division of opinion when the opening of a Jesuit Hall in Oxford was suggested. The balance has gone definitely to the one side: Blackfriars and Campion Hall co-exist and, thank God, thrive.

As time went on, Fr Bede became more and more 'expansionist'. The Dominican 'mission' in the West Indies was not exactly what he hoped for, for most of the inhabitants of Grenada and its locality were already Catholic. Few men can have suffered more than he because of the defeat of his vision of India (he always wanted to strike at the 'middle'—in this case, Benares!), or of Persia (indeed, of Egypt). I may be rash in saying that *if* his special wish for a close co-operative study of Eastern and Western philosophy and *mysticism* had been realised, the present state of things might have been much less deplorable. He made a happier and more permanent start in South Africa, and we can but hope that what is happening now will not issue into a wholesale migration of Natives into Communism. Had he lived longer, he might well have had more to say about this, and about the influence of Russia.

Now a man's accomplished work and even his writings can seldom reveal the whole of his interior self. Almost the only thing we regret about

this book is the portrait opposite page 136 (and on the cover). It suggests (to me, at least) a *tormented* man. This, in some ways, he may indeed have been; but the frontispiece shows more of the 'peace in the Holy Ghost' that (along with love and joy) was habitually his. He regarded it, says Fr Hilary Carpenter in a brief 'introduction', as the supreme tragedy in life to be *content* with life. (We remember Pius XI's constantly repeated phrase: 'Always more! always *better!*') Yet 'serenity' is, I think, what chiefly struck me when I met him. To make a list of discernible virtues is not illuminative and often all-but contradictory (prudence: zeal). But since it is certain that he held that his life, and all life, were guided by the over-ruling loving Providence of God, perhaps we are not wrong in recognising his peace of soul alike in his successes and his failures.

O.P. writes:

Anyone who came to know Father Bede Jarrett in his last years would be sure that here was a character that had never substantially changed. The springs of life and liveliness that were visible in an extraordinarily serene and even massive personality had clearly been running deep within him all his life. That is one reason why this long-desired *Life* of Fr Bede is so satisfying. The present writer only met him during the last eighteen months of his fifty-two years and it is of the greatest interest to find in this book the record of the years preceding the personal experience. As one traces the life from boyhood on, the words Fr Bede utters in letters, sermons and books attest the same radiant personality, the same steady power. Fr Bede had been given the great gift of completely integrating his love of men with his love of God. The latter always came first, but there was never any conflict when his intensely affectionate nature came in contact with his neighbour. And from his love of God came those enormous reserves of time and strength and solicitude with which he made his very many companions and friends feel that each was particularly dear to him.

It is hard, as Pericles says in his Funeral Oration, to hit exactly the right note in such a memorial. 'For those who have known and loved the dead may think these words scant justice to the memories they would hear honoured.' No doubt many will wish that one side or another of Fr Bede's character and activities should have received more emphasis. These feelings will cancel out. The authors have wisely and self-effacingly allowed Fr Bede to tell the story mainly in his own words, and it is with deep gratitude to them that one reads again the authentic message of the living voice and recovers so much of the joy one had in a great friend, a great Dominican, and a great priest.