




Husserlian motif of a 'return to the lifeworld' without abandoning realism. This closing chapter also strikes the reader as a response to Nietzsche's critique of philosophy as escapism, the denial of life, and a revenge upon reality. Hence the fact that Hildebrand speaks about the power of philosophical knowing – one which still does not surrender philosophy to Utilitarian, will-to-power, or realpolitik enterprises. Hildebrand also admits that philosophy involves not only philosophers but also other agents of philosophical knowledge called mediators. Philosophy even pertains to non-philosophers, who are nevertheless existentially impacted by the depth and dignity of philosophical knowing. For Hildebrand, there is something Catholic about philosophy – both in the etymological and confessional sense of term, since philosophy not only pertains to everyone (albeit in different ways) but also prepares the soul for the acceptance of revelation: still today, philosophy at its best is a preamble to Christian faith.

The present edition not only includes editorial footnotes and clarifications from past editions but also adds new ones, thanks to the meticulous preparation of the text by John F. Crosby. The book also comes with an eloquent and clear introduction by Robert Sokolowski, which takes Hildebrand on his own terms, while sidelining the polemic between Hildebrand and Husserl on essences and the realism/idealism question. This edition also includes as an appendix parts of Josef Seifert's Introductory Essay to the 1991 edition, which is quite fitting, not only because Hildebrand dedicated this work to Seifert but also because Seifert's introduction is quite comprehensive. Unfortunately, only part of this introduction is included in the appendix; for the remainder, we are referred to the website of the Hildebrand project. While one understands that in the age of virtual media, the invitation to continue reading a part of this edition online is not overly taxing, still, an integral version of this essay in printed form would also have been fitting. All in all, the publishers are to be commended for reissuing a text whose message remains as much as needed today as when it was first published and is just as appealing for experts as well as for interested readers of philosophy wishing to become re-acquainted with realism.

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The Dominicans in the British Isles and Beyond: A New History of the English Province of the Friars Preachers Edited by Richard Finn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2023, pp. xix + 387, £90.00, hbk

Reviewing a book that covers 800 years of the life of a multi-faceted and complex human organization is a daunting task. It is, however, nothing compared to the

challenge of researching and writing such a book. This challenge, taken on by Fr Richard Finn OP, has not been made easier by the lack of forerunners in the field, ripe for contradiction, disagreement, or approval, or as a baseline from which to begin. This is a bold venture.

As the English Province of the Dominican friars celebrated their eighth centenary, in 2021, one of their number had completed the Province's first published history since their seventh centenary. In 1921 Bede Jarrett OP published *The English Dominicans*. Fr Jarrett was not a historian. He was a busy Prior Provincial when his book appeared. His energy was engaged, as Fr Finn records in Chapter 7 of his book, less in historical research than in the reshaping of the English Province in the interwar years, to which he brought leadership and imagination, developing priories in Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh and expanding the mission of the English friars to the Caribbean.

It is arguable, therefore, that Fr Finn is the first person, since the thirteenth century, to immerse himself fully in the surviving records of English Dominican life, and he is, of course, the first to set out a narrative of some of the often-painful experiences of the twentieth century. He offers an account of the Dominican English Province that draws on a wide range of printed sources, but primarily on an astonishing range of archival resources, Dominican and other, and that demonstrates the complexities and frustrations inherent in working with the patchy survival of crucial material.

This densely packed archival resource package makes possible the fulfillment of the hope expressed by the author in his Introduction, that others will be encouraged 'to write further and better histories'. (p. 10) It will, of course, become a standard text for generations to come, but it is to be hoped that those generations will also use it as a launch pad for the creation of further works of history that will illuminate the place of the Dominican friars in the history of Britain. While they feature, to some extent, in the scholarly literature on medieval England, they are scarcely visible in post-Reformation publications, with the honorable exception of the work of Fr Godfrey Anstruther OP. There is much more ground to be uncovered and explored in order to record and interpret the immense influence of the Dominicans across eight centuries, not only in their own internal life and mission but also in their influence on social change and their responses to it.

This book is structured in eight chronological chapters, and each one, while connecting to the ongoing story of the Order, demonstrates a different context, new issues, and changing priorities. The common thread, however, is the friars' mission of the preaching, lived out in priories and convents, centers of study and learning, parishes, and missions, related in diverse ways to the lay society that they sought to serve.

Chapter 1 reflects the fragmentary nature of the evidence surviving from the first hundred and fifty years and depends, to some extent, on later sources found in England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, from which a variety of patterns of expansion emerge. Royal and noble patrons were crucial, and winning influential and wealthy friends was vital in the competition for attention between the mendicant orders, and with the secular clergy. The pious Henry III was the Dominicans' chief benefactor, but almost always in kind (timber, stone, and land) rather than cash, and was careful to treat the Franciscans with equal generosity.

The Dominicans, however, frequently acted as confessors to the king and to wealthy nobles and their wives, and their preaching often took place in wealthy towns, giving them considerable influence and enabling them to ‘carve out by 1348 an accepted, valued and distinctive place in the spiritual economy and urban landscape of the British Isles’ (p. 65). This led to the appointment of some 20 Dominican bishops in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland during the thirteenth century, and ultimately to the election of Robert Kilwardby OP as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Bridging the huge period between the Black Death and the death of Mary I (1348–1559), the second chapter is inevitably densely packed, although gaps in the sources make it difficult to give a systematic account of Dominican life in a number of areas. Plague decimated the general population and reduced the number of friars, but by how many is unclear (p. 67). The first community of nuns was established in the mid-fourteenth century, but the friars were clearly weakened by internal disputes over observance, by the spread of ‘anti-mendicant’ preaching, and were preoccupied with preaching against the ideas of John Wycliffe and the Lollards.

Nevertheless, the Province retained its attractiveness to wealthy, often royal, patrons and continued to provide royal confessors in England and to collaborate closely with the Scottish monarchy. Dominican bishops were frequently appointed, particularly in Wales and Ireland (pp. 91–5), offering tempting morsels for further regional historical research. All of these pose fundamental questions about the rapid and comprehensive suppression and dispersal of the Dominicans in the 1530s. Mendicancy depends on charity and patronage, and this was inevitably withdrawn comprehensively, as the English reform took shape, leaving the Dominicans and Franciscans in difficulties. There are clues offered (pp. 99–105), but it is clear that, as in other areas, Fr Finn’s overview of the archival sources and existing literature exposes the need for further research in depth.

What happened to the English Dominicans as a result of the progress of the Reformations across the sixteenth century? Fr Finn seeks to nuance Godfrey Anstruther’s account of the immediate post-Reformation period as *A Hundred Homeless Years*, by suggesting that English friars were not homeless, though they were ‘unorganised and prone to mishap’ (p. 111). There were repeated attempts to remedy these circumstances throughout the seventeenth century but with limited success.

The account of the restoration and restructuring of Dominican life in England in the period before the mid-nineteenth century is the focus of chapters three, four, and five, and it is dominated by the figure of Cardinal Philip Howard OP. The surviving records finally permit the emergence of personalities and characters in their engagement with the reconstruction of both the mission of the Dominicans and their internal structures. In the same way as the other religious orders that were driven to extinction in England in the sixteenth century, the possibilities for restoration, and for the recording of that restoration, rested on the stability, support, formation, and intellectual engagement only possible in Continental Europe.

Fr Finn poses perceptive questions that could be asked of other religious orders at any point up to the mid-nineteenth century: ‘In what, then, did the friars’ mission actually consist, how extensive was its reach, and what was the Provincial’s role?’ (p. 170). Clearly, there was a struggle to find an English toehold and dependence on

the house at Bornhem, in Flanders, continued for a long time. The eighteenth century became, as it did for most religious orders striving to re-establish themselves in England, a period of dependency on Catholic gentry, and the power exercised through their purses (p. 191). As Catholics began to shake off the effects of the penal laws, and population was generally increasing, the Dominican Province faltered, at the least opportune time.

Just when urban missions began to be increasingly in demand, the Dominicans were unable to step forward, at least for a generation or two. Yet, the period from 1850 to the First World War proved to be a golden time of expansion and development for the friars, the nuns, and the emergent sisters. Yet, to the historian, the issues that arose from the expansion of pastoral missions (including to the Caribbean), patronage and financial support, relationships with bishops, and the intellectual life of the Province were the prelude to the challenges to be faced in the first half of the twentieth century.

Fr Finn touches on these, with an inevitable sense of ‘gloss’ in a book of this reach and breadth, but does not shy away from them. He acknowledges the creative and charismatic leadership of Bede Jarrett (Provincial 1916–32), but also recognizes ‘the damage done by the Province’s inability, both during Jarrett’s lifetime and afterward, to prioritize some apostolates over others’ (p. 274). The era after World War One was one of immense creativity and development for the Province, with expansion overseas to South Africa, the foundation of further urban missions, as Catholic population continued to increase, along with an effective education system. The Dominicans’ intellectual and spiritual apostolate flourished, with establishments in Oxford, Edinburgh, and Cambridge, and in less formal, but equally creative ways, through publishing, and, what many believed to be ‘one of the most important works of the Province’ (p. 342) – Spode House. Was it, however, all as golden as it might sound?

Painful though it naturally is, to expose the cracks and leaks in one’s own family home, Fr Finn does not shy away from an analysis of the underlying issues that led to the difficulties following the Second Vatican Council. As he suggests, it might look as though the first 60 years of the twentieth century was a period of ‘success and growth’ (p. 327), but ‘despite real successes, there were also unresolved problems’, including ‘severely stretched resources’, ‘disagreements over how to live with each other’, and ‘many demands, with often little financial support to sustain the different missions’ (pp. 327–28).

It is a fairly safe bet that the majority of people, Dominicans and others, who open this book, will head straight for Chapter 8, which covers the period from 1964 to the present, and will have their own view on it, either based on personal experience or hearsay. The 1970s and 1980s were, in many ways, a brutal period for the English Province (and they were not alone), characterized by painful losses and conflicts. Yet out of this trauma came the courage and vision to renew and rebuild, but also to rationalize and refine the use of resources, human and otherwise. The Dominicans have faced difficult choices and emerged bruised, but with a new emphasis on the ‘Dominican Family’ in its various forms and fresh confidence and willingness to serve the Church.

This book is a tour de force in its range, its archival detail, and its capacity to offer an account of 800 years of Dominican history from within, and yet with a capacity to

stand back and allow others to take on the challenge of more detailed research and historical appraisal. 'Finn's *Dominicans*' will doubtless become a standard work for years to come.

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