

In keeping with Père Lagrange's whole life was his *Testament spirituel* :

' I declare before God that it is my desire to die in the Catholic Church to which I have always belonged, heart and soul, since I was baptized; and to die in her faithful to my vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the Dominican Order. I therefore commend myself to Jesus Christ my Saviour and to the prayers of His Mother who has ever proved so gracious to me.

' Further, I declare in the most positive terms that I submit all I have written to the judgement of the Apostolic See. And I feel I may add that it has always been my aim in all my studies to do my best to forward the reign of Jesus Christ, the honour of the Church, and the good of souls. And I would repeat once more : " I am a child of Mary : *Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac.*" '

HUGH POPE, O.P.

IN STUDIIS PERSEVERARE

The obligation to be perseverant in study is an essential characteristic of the Order of Preachers. It has been so from the beginning. The modern form of the Constitutions shows the importance which the Order attaches to it, not only by the express statement of this obligation in Constitution No. 189, but by the repetition, almost word for word, of that statement in No. 690. In a document generally regarded as reflecting the succinctness of the Code of Canon Law, with which it was brought into conformity in 1932, and as somewhat sharply contrasted with earlier editions in this respect, such a repetition carries enormous force. It provokes an enquiry into the mode of life which it conditions and into the character of those who are dedicated to its fulfilment. The text itself is instructive : ' Our priests, by reason of their vocation, or of the special purpose of the Order, are all the more (i.e. by comparison with those students not yet ordained to the Priesthood) bound to be perseverant in study throughout their whole life, especially in the study of dogmatic and moral theology, of sacred Scripture, of the Holy Fathers, and of the other sacred sciences, both for the purpose of fostering spiritual

life in themselves, and in order to render themselves daily more fit to exercise the apostolic ministry with fruit.' (*Constitutions*, 189).

The reference to the special purpose of the Order requires the further quotation of Const. No. 3: 'Our Order is known to have been specially instituted from the beginning for preaching and the salvation of souls. Wherefore the chief aim of our study ought to be how we can be of use to the souls of our neighbours. With this our proper purpose, the teaching and guarding of the truth of the Catholic faith, both by word in the schools and by every kind of writing, is intimately connected.'

Well might Blessed Jordan, St. Dominic's successor as Master General, answer a questioner in these words:

Regulam fratrum predicatorum? Et hec est eorum regula:
honeste vivere, discere et docere.¹

'The rule of the Friars Preachers? This, to be sure, is their rule; to live aright, to learn and to teach.'

A comparison of that summary with the *Constitutions* already quoted emphasises the point of the order of the parts of Blessed Jordan's reply: to live aright, to learn and to teach. A good life has value in itself; for the Order of Preachers it is also seen as a means to a special, apostolic purpose. Even more obviously it is necessary to learn to be capable of teaching. If we now ask what special contribution is made by the pursuit of learning to the good life as manifested in the Order of Preachers, the sequence of means, *honeste vivere et discere*, and end, *docere*, indicated by Blessed Jordan gives us a great part of the answer. For the good life of the Friar Preacher looks outward from itself to an apostolic goal; and the learning of the Friar Preacher is gained not for its own sake but in order that he may teach. The end and the means alike display the same outward-looking character, and show themselves as functions of the second commandment of charity 'who seeketh not her own' (1 Cor. xiii. 5 and cf. the Rule of St. Augustine *passim*).

The precept of charity is of course essential to the Christian life in all its forms; it is placed at the beginning of the Rule of St. Augustine, and at the head of the *Constitutions O.P.* which supply the particular legislation that is lacking in the Rule. The life of the Friar Preacher is therefore designed to be one of charity displayed chiefly in teaching and the studious pursuits which teaching requires. Since that which is to be studied and taught is the truth of the

¹ Related by Gérard de Fracheto, O.P., quoted by P. Mandonnet, O.P., in *Saint Dominique*, Vol. II., p. 266.

Catholic faith, we can see that the object or material of these activities is one immediately apt for the exercise of charity in its purest form, the love of God and the willing of supernatural good to the neighbour.

The presence and operation of charity connotes the co-existence of all the virtues. For if regard be not had to the demands of the love of God and of the neighbour in all departments of life, charity will be absent, and the other virtues are the perfections which enable this regard to be maintained (cf. St. Thomas, I-II. 65, 3 ad 3). Nevertheless special spheres of activity tend to emphasise the presence of some virtues beyond others, and thus to establish different types of the Christian character. In this particular case one risks being arbitrary, since there is no virtue which a life of apostolic study does not call for and tend to promote. Faith provides the sphere of all enquiry; the student and the preacher are only encouraged to carry on their labours by their reliance on the divine help which is the motive of Hope; Charity, as we have seen, permeates everything they do; without Prudence the method of studying will defeat its own object, resulting either in overwork or dissipation of energy; or the studies themselves will not be such as are fitted for their apostolic purpose; Temperance is required for a clear mind, and a lively though restrained imagination; Fortitude is called for by intellectual and moral opposition from without, and the difficulties inherent in persistent study; Justice must regulate argument and the acknowledgment due from every student to his predecessors, teachers, and collaborators.

Aristotle regarded the complete moral character as foursquare (*Nic. Eth.* I. 1100 b.22); the Christian character may be described analogously as heptagonal; clearly the life of the apostolic student has at least as good a chance as any of realising such completion. Indeed, since his character is distinguished not merely by the cultivation of the moral, but also of the intellectual virtues, one is reminded of Aristotle's final description of the happy man as he whose supreme and ruling virtue is Sophia, speculative wisdom. But since Aristotle only rather grudgingly allows him social contact with his fellow-men, we may prefer to remember Plato's philosopher-kings who return from their contemplation of the source of all being and goodness to bestow its fruits on their subjects from a sense of duty to the community, or even under compulsion from the community, to which they owe their privileged capabilities and occupation. From these, too, the apostolic student differs in having the interior motivation of charity which ensures the conditioning of all his studies by the love of God and of his neighbour. It is only if his charity

fails that the sanctions of law and of obedience put him in a similar position to the Platonic philosopher referring his knowledge to the common good under duress.

The very curriculum of Dominican studies, however, dissuades from any selfishness or remoteness from the world of men. Thomist theology bases itself on the truths of faith, revealed for man's salvation, and besides speculative theology the study of Canon Law and of moral principles as exemplified in practice is also necessary. Such considerations are indispensable for those who will be called on to undertake the pastoral office in any of its forms, since human action is always immediately concerned with particular circumstances, the here-and-now in which principles and motives combine and are embodied. These immediately practical studies import a different manner of consideration into the life of the speculative student, who is thus doubly armed with facts and causes, with universal principles and particular conclusions, and so becomes endowed with insight into the progress of affairs, and ability to direct them. This qualification is well exemplified by St. Antoninus, O.P., named in his own day the Angel of Counsels, of conspicuous ability as an administrator and a tireless student. In his *Summa Theologica* he lays particular stress on the importance of the study of Canon Law, and that precisely because of the demands of charity. The theologian, who aims at divine contemplation, cannot, he argues, attain this except with the help of charity and the works of virtue generally, all of which belong to the life of action (vid. op. cit. P.III, Tit. 5, Cap. 2). This argument is the Christian counterpart of Aristotle's in *Nic. Eth. X*, 1178, b2, where he says that the wise and happy man will need a few companions in spite of his self-sufficiency, so that he may choose to act virtuously towards them.

St. Antoninus is clearly writing with a vivid conception in his mind of the Greek, medieval and even renaissance student, liable to be ensnared by the delights of speculative knowledge into pursuing it for its own sake, and consequently apt to become estranged from the ordinary interests of human life. In an age which more and more emphasises practicality and technicality as the goals of education, we might rather be inclined to stress the value of speculative training for the acquisition of understanding and of the power to direct and guide instead of acquiescing in mechanical reaction to the stresses of the moment.

The combination of speculative and practical science here described as employed in the interests of charity, results in certain characteristic by-products. The Friar Preacher sees obedience as an intelligent and responsible carrying-out of orders. To accept commands is to

undertake responsibility, not to abdicate it. This attitude involves a readiness to bear interior burdens and may be expected to be in company with a heightened consciousness of the individual's own powers. Such self-knowledge is not a little affected by prolonged study carried out under rule, though the activity of prayer has a still stronger influence in this direction. But study too encourages the deliberate control and use of the various powers of the soul, and this is the other side of that outward-looking tendency in the life of apostolic study on the presence of which we remarked at the outset. With the emergence of this other side, our picture of the ideal apostolic student shows new depth and solidity. A balanced life of speculative and practical study which both penetrates the world of common observation and illumines the student's own consciousness is of immense value to the preacher. Habituated to the understanding of universal truths as well as to the accurate marshalling of facts, the apostolic student is ready to declare the truth he studies and through self-knowledge is versed in persuasive modes of declaring it.

Another by-product is joy. Any activity of sense or intellect that takes place unhindered from within or without is crowned with the experience of joy. The Friar Preacher, studying habitually for long years, is in one of the best possible situations for experiencing the joy of the mind with such marked frequency that it is a notable feature of the Order's life. Other explanations may be found for it; this is one certain source.

The faults for which students and teachers have commonly been reprehended by moralists are pride in their knowledge, over-subtlety, and vain curiosity which may even be reflected in moral dissipation. The religious life as a whole has its own remedies for such temptations, but the very studies recommended to the preacher exclude these defects as being immediately contrary to them. *Veritati opponuntur vanitas, falsitas, mendacium*, wrote St. Albert the Great (Comm. in Proem. Luc.); 'to the truth are opposed vanity, falsehood, and lying.' The student bent on penetrating the truths of the Catholic faith with the purpose of defending and proclaiming it convincingly will have no time for trifling and diletantism, while the fact that the truths he studies are primarily those of faith will constantly remind him of his position as a faithful servant and humble debtor to the God whose self-revelation he can so imperfectly understand. It is noteworthy that the Doctors of the Church have commonly combined with depth of thought, exposition of a straightforward and practical character, not least among them St. Thomas Aquinas, in whose thought the Dominican mind is formed.

His express purpose in the *Summa Theologica* was to do away with a useless multiplicity of questions, and it is often observed that while many writers end up by obscuring further what they are trying to explain, St. Thomas always brings light and simplicity even to those matters of which his treatment is less full.

In conclusion there should be noticed the complementary qualities of patient endurance and forthright courage which may be expected in those described by Pope Honorius III. in his bull of confirmation as *pugiles fidei*, 'champions of the faith,' and who profess to follow St. Dominic, called by Pope Gregory IX. in the Bull of Canonisation, *strenuus athleta*, 'vigorous athlete.' For them study is no matter of taste, to be taken up or laid aside when they please, but something to which they are bound by rule, and all the more so because of the high position which their rule assigns to it. For study is itself made the rule which regulates the manner of their public prayer, ordered to be recited 'briefly and succinctly, lest their study be the least bit hindered' (Const. No. 573); for some it regulates their attendance at public prayer; it is assigned as a reason that permits the mitigation of watching and fasting. Constant study is itself an austerity, and its manner, its matter and its purpose alike contribute to a robust character, patient in searching for the truth and courageous in asserting it.

IVO THOMAS, O.P.