

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE PRESS IN THE DOMINICAN ORDER

A RELIGIOUS Order, Père Lacordaire said, is an expression of the ideal of man as raised and inspired by God. Greater or lesser loyalty to this ideal is the measure of the success or failure of a religious Order. The motto *Veritas, Truth*, is the mark of the Dominican Order, the symbol of its ideal. To uphold, to spread and to defend the Truth was the high ideal of St. Dominic in establishing the Order of Friars Preachers. But if the quest for truth is a noble aspiration, it is none the less an arduous pursuit. To maintain the truth without counting the costs, to become its apostle by preaching it in season and out of season, to vindicate it without flinching when challenged, is an achievement which entails much labour and strenuous self-sacrifice. An apostle is not *sent* to preach his own fancies and theories, but to teach and defend the truth of God and His Church in whose name he speaks, so that if he, as the Church's representative, indulges his own fancies and speculations, he forfeits his rights in the apostolate of truth, and is likely to become a traitor to the Word of God and His Christ, according to St. Paul's strong words.

St. Dominic, who

' . . . by his wisdom upon the earth

A splendour was of light cherubical ' (*Paradiso xi, 38*),
disdained the facile acquisition and easy-going way of learning for himself and for the members of his Order.

' But through his longing after the true manna,
He in short time became so great a teacher,
That he began to go about the vineyard,
Which fadeth soon, if faithless is the dresser.

* * *

Then with the doctrine and the will together,
With office apostolic he moved,

Like torrent which some lofty vein out-presses '

(*Paradiso xii*).

In St. Dominic's design the Friar Preacher should be spiritually and intellectually equipped as an apostle or, according to Pope Honorius III's bidding, 'the Champion of the Faith and the true light of the world.'

'Of him were made thereafter diverse runnels,
Whereby the garden catholic is watered,
So that more living its plantations stand' (*Par.*, *ib.*).

The apostolate of truth may be carried out publicly from the pulpit and the professor's chair, or privately by directing souls towards perfection and leading them along the paths of faith and Catholic living. But there is also another kind of activity no less profitable in winning souls to God, and indeed even wider in its sphere of action: the apostolate of the press. A book, and still more a periodical, can reach where the voice of the preacher or of the lecturer cannot penetrate; it can declare the word of God to those who will not, or cannot, approach the living apostle.

St. Paul, who 'became all things to all men that *he* might save all,' urged the early faithful to seize the opportunity and to learn from all 'whatsoever things are true, modest, just, holy, lovely, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline' (*Phil.* iv, 8). If St. Dominic, rooted as he was in the spirit of St. Paul's Epistles, were living in our day, when the press is the chief factor in moulding man's opinion, he would certainly have intensively employed the printed word, in addition to the spoken, as a powerful means of spreading, upholding and defending the Truth. The Friars Preachers, then, have attempted to make special use of the press in order to fulfil their Founder's ideal. It was for this purpose that twenty-one years ago the English Dominicans undertook to launch BLACKFRIARS.

The story of BLACKFRIARS, of how and why it entered the printed field in competition with the innumerable English reviews and magazines, is told on another page. We propose here to commemorate its 'coming-of-age' by giving a survey of the Dominican periodicals that are its contemporaries in the different Provinces of the Order,

and so to illustrate briefly the apostolate of the periodical press in the Order of Friars Preachers.

These periodicals may roughly be classified in three groups: (I) technical; (II) devotional; (III) cultural. Obviously, it is not possible to enter here into detail and give an exhaustive account of every Dominican periodical; we have to limit ourselves to the more outstanding publications, particularly of the first group. We are even compelled, for several obvious reasons, to omit from this sketch some even of the more outstanding Dominican journals and simply to list the majority of the others.

I.

By *technical* periodicals I mean those which deal in a strictly scientific and scholarly manner with the various sciences, with biblical problems, theology, Church history, Patristics, Canon Law, philosophy. They are destined for the professional reader rather than for the general public.

(1) *Revue Biblique*. The Bible was in mediaeval Universities the text-book of the *Magister in Sacra Pagina* and the centre towards which all other sciences, as 'handmaids to their queen,' converged. In the Catholic Church Holy Writ still remains, and always will remain, the basis of theological speculation. For more than seven centuries the Dominicans have been to the fore in promoting biblical studies. Hugh of St. Cher, the second Dominican professor in the University of Paris (1230-1235), was the first to comment on all the books of both Testaments. With the help of his Brethren he attempted a critical revision of the Latin Bible, collating the text with the Hebrew, Greek and Latin manuscripts and with the passages cited by the Fathers (*Correctorium Bibliae*, 1230-1236). He was also the first to produce a biblical Concordance. Then John of Darlington with two Oxford Dominicans, Hugh of Croydon and Richard Stavensby, composed the *Concordantiæ Anglicanæ*, so called to distinguish them from Hugh's. It was through the efforts of St. Albert the Great, and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas, that the direct and literal interpretation was restored to the schools in preference to the mystical or allegorical

treatment then in use. The Dominicans were among the very first to translate the Scriptures into the vernaculars; indeed, besides different translations in Italian, French, Spanish and other languages, the first pre-Lutheran German translation was due to a Dominican. Again, it was two Dominicans of the sixteenth century, Santes Pagnini and Sixtus of Siena, who composed the first Biblical Introduction. In our own times the first Catholic Institute of Biblical Studies was founded in 1889 at Saint-Etienne in Jerusalem by the Dominicans. It was therefore fitting that the first technical Dominican periodical should be the *Revue Biblique*.

The first issue, which appeared in 1892, was a new and great venture. It was, in fact, not only the first Dominican periodical, but the first, and for a long time the only, Catholic periodical devoted entirely to biblical studies, discussing competently and without bias the problems raised by the modern study of the Bible. Its motto, *Nova et Vetera*, summed up an extensive programme. New considerations have to be interwoven with old and established truths, and each argument is examined according to the strict rules of scientific research. Exegesis is pursued not only with the help of Patristic interpretation, but also in the light of ancient documents and recent discoveries; textual and literary criticism, history, philology, geography, topography, archaeology, are all brought in to illustrate the Bible, to render its understanding easier and clearer, to defend it from rationalistic and heterodox attack. The constant aim of the Editors has been unbending loyalty to objective truth, their main preoccupation that of St. Augustine and of St. Thomas: *sic Scripturæ exponantur, quod ab infidelibus non irrideantur*. Père Lagrange and his collaborators, among whom are included many of the most celebrated biblical scholars, have set up an undying witness to the Bible and to Catholic scholarship in the forty-nine volumes of the *Revue Biblique*. The war has unfortunately prevented the celebration this year of its Golden Jubilee.

(2) *Revue Thomiste*. Founded by Père Thomas Coconnier of the Province of Toulouse, then Professor and Rector Magnificus of the University of Fribourg in Switzer-

land, the *Revue Thomiste* first appeared in 1893. Its motto, *Vetera novis augere*, is conveyed also in its subtitle: 'Questions du temps présent.' It sets out to study and discuss the most debated current problems in the more basic provinces of learning and culture, in theology, philosophy, sociology, history, and the natural sciences. It approaches these sciences from the Catholic standpoint and views them in the light of St. Thomas's teaching. It would imbue the cult of learning with Christian principles and inspire the learned with the doctrine of the greatest Catholic philosopher and theologian that they may acquire a wider and more profound grasp of the Truth, the full possession of which is found only in the harmony between faith and reason. The solidity and depth with which the most important intellectual and social questions of the day have been discussed has justly earned the *Revue Thomiste* a high place among the leading Catholic reviews. Among its contributors it suffices to mention: Coconnier, Denifle, Berthier, Mandonnet, Gardeil, Montagne, Lagrange, Sertillanges, Pegues, Hugon, Garrigou-Lagrange, Maritain, Dom O. Lottin, O.S.B.

(3) The *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* was launched in the midst of the modernist crisis, in 1907. In the name of critical science, of religious experience and of modern culture and learning, the foundations of the Christian Religion were threatened. The Dominicans of the Paris Province boldly challenged the subtle heresy. They have shown that one can be an unbiassed critic, brimming over with learning and culture, without ceasing to be a practising Catholic and a convinced religious. Indeed, true criticism increases one's convictions. As from a mountain height one enjoys a clearer and wider vision than in the crowded and misty valley, so the Catholic, who joins to a solid faith the resources of theology, philosophy and other sciences, is in a better position to approach philosophical, social and religious problems than one who is continually vexed by doubts and wavers between old errors and new theories. Special features of the *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* are an exhaustive review of Reviews and the *Bulletins* dealing with Apologetics, history of dogma

and Ecclesiastical Institutions, philosophy and history of philosophy, science of Religions, biblical theology, speculative, systematic and mystical theology and Christian non-Catholic theology. For the range and wealth of their information and their authoritative impartiality these Bulletins have won high praise from such great scholars as Professors E. Gilson and M. Grabmann.

Following in the steps of these French periodicals others soon appeared in different languages. (4) In 1910 came the Spanish *La Ciencia Tomista*, which enjoys the reputation of having a wider circulation than any other periodical in Spanish-speaking countries. (5) In 1920, G. Häfele and G. Manser, with other Dominican Professors of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), undertook the editorship of *Divus Thomas* (not to be confused with the *Divus Thomas* edited from the Collegio Alberoni of Piacenza, Italy), which had originally been founded in Vienna in 1886 by Professor Dr. Ernst Commer, T.O.S.D., under the title: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie*. (6) In 1923, the Dominican University at Rome, the 'Angelicum,' started the *Angelicum, Periodicum trimestre Facultatum Theologicæ, Iuris Canonici, Philosophicæ*.

Quite recently, in 1938 and 1939, a new burst of Dominican activity produced periodicals in (7) Czechoslovakia, (8) in Yugoslavia, and (9) in Poland, the *Polski Przegląd Tomistyczny*; in Belgium and in Holland, where (10) the *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* was set up alongside (11) the *Thomistic Tijdschrift voor Katholiek Kultuurleven*, which had been running for several years. We may rightly lament the loss of these reviews under the Nazi war machine; but we may hope with confidence that the loss is only temporary. And we console ourselves with the flourishing American (12), *The Thomist*, edited by the Dominican Province of St. Joseph, which supplies a long-felt need in English-speaking countries. 'Speculative philosophical magazines in English are much too few; speculative theological magazines are non-existent.' It is, according to the sub-title, 'A speculative Quarterly Review of Theology and Philosophy.' And its aim is 'the long Dominican tradition of service to truth; service, not

- (4) Roman Province : (a) Il Rosario ;
(b) Bollettino del Terz'Ordine Domenicano.
- (5) German Province : Marienblatt.
- (6) English Province : (a) The Rosary ;
(b) The Dominican Annals.
- (7) Province of Dalmatia : Duhovni Zivot.
- (8) Irish Province : (a) Holy Name Monthly ;
(b) The Imeldist.
- (9) Province of Peru : La Rosa del Perú.
- (10) Province of Columbia : Albores.
- (11) Province of Lyons : La Couronne de Marie.
- (12) Province of Piedmont : Vita Nostra.
- (13) Province of Poland : Szkoła Chrystowa.
- (14) Province of Malta : (a) Ir-Rusariu ;
(b) Militia Christi.
- (15) Province of Canada : (a) Le Rosaire pour tous ;
(b) Sous les Cloîtres.

III.

Cultural Periodicals. The earliest cultural periodical is perhaps (1) *L'Année Dominicaine* founded by the Province of France in 1859. It contains valuable information concerning Dominican history and hagiography and other subjects of general cultural interest. (2) Since 1894 *La Revue Dominicaine* of the Canadian Province has published solid studies on current problems, (3) *La Revue de la Jeunesse* founded in 1909, now called *Revue des Jeunes*, carries on a very fruitful apostolate, particularly for youth in schools and universities.

'Les Editions du Cerf' control a series of publications: (4) *La Vie Intellectuelle*, (5) *La Vie Chrétienne*, (6) *Qu'en pensez-vous?* 'What they publish is the result of real contacts. All kinds of people come constantly to their offices: working-men, technicians, professors, authors, artists, ministers of State, ambassadors. To the poor and to the rich, to the learned and to the simple, they teach, in language completely up-to-date and intelligible, the authentic Christian attitude to the real problems of the day.' It was Pope Pius XI who bade Père Bernadot begin *La Vie Intellectuelle*, and the Pope himself outlined its programme.

The Dominican University of Santo Tomas at Manila completes its educational apostolate in the Philippines with three publications in English and Spanish: (7) *Unitas*; (8) *The Letran News*; (9) *Voz Estudiantil*.

The Italian Provinces issue (10) *Memorie Domenicane*, founded in 1883 by P. Tommaso Granello, O.P., later Archbishop of Seleucia, a publication of great historical, literary and artistic value; (11) *La Stella di S. Domenico* founded by P. Angelo Giacinto Scapardini, later Archbishop of Vigevano; (12) *Veritas*.

The 'Centre Dominicain d'Etudes Russes *Istina*' publishes (13) *Russie et Chrétienté*, in order to foster intellectual and religious relations between Catholics and Russians. Further:

The Irish Province: (14) *The Irish Rosary*.

The Province of Aragona (Spain): (15) *Contemporanea*.

The American Province: (16) *Dominicana*; (17) *The Torch*.

The Maltese Province: (18) *Scientia*.

We should also make special mention of the several missionary magazines, which in French, Italian, Spanish, German, foster the apostolic labours of their brethren in the Mission fields. Even the Missionaries themselves, amid their absorbing activities, find time to publish periodicals, among which I would single out the Japanese publication edited by Vincent Pouliot, B.Litt. (Oxon.), of the Dominican Canadian Mission, who for some years was a theological student at Blackfriars.

Lastly, we may add to this already long list the many *Annals* issued in French, German, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian by the several Provinces of the Order. For their literary and artistic value the Italian *Sicut Rosa*, and another in Dutch, edited by the well-known writer and Art-critic, H. Molkenboer, O.P., Professor at the University of Nijmegen, deserve special notice. Austria, too, had a Dominican Annual remarkable for its varied and instructive contents.

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The periodicals are one of St. Dominic's most luxuriant plantations in the 'garden Catholic.' They may be aptly called the *Plantæ virentes Ordinis*, which bear plentiful

and varied fruit. In their variety, not only of language, size and shape, but also of culture, learning and scientific approach, they all bear the same mark of unity, they all aim at the same goal of fulfilling in their special spheres St. Dominic's ideal—the service of Truth. 'When so many false shepherds are leading the masses astray, when so many demagogues are making themselves the apostles of inhuman causes and leading the people into slavery of the State, the Machine, the Majority, they proclaim aloud the claims of God and the dignity of the human person . . . Their role as scouts, as front-line sentinels, though more dangerous, seems to them to be preferable. They show that the defensive policy, begotten of timidity, is not the only one to be employed by Catholics' (BLACKFRIARS, 1939, pp. 535-536). Such a procedure involves risks, and here and there perhaps a false step was taken. But they continue with courage to present the eternal message of Christ to the men and women of to-day. Some have already reached a venerable age, others are still very young; BLACKFRIARS, although not among the seniors, is no longer a minor: it has now attained its maturity. With the experience of the past, it may look forward to the future to accomplish with vigour, with enthusiasm, with sound doctrine, the ideal for which it was founded, which is identical with St. Dominic's ideal, to uphold, to make known and to defend the Truth of God and His Church. . . . *Ut crescat et floreat per ævum!*

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