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EDITORIAL

ST. DOMINIC died in the priory of Bologna on the morning of August 6th, 1221; the Oxford Blackfriars was opened nine days later. He had clothed our first prior at Bologna, he had sent him north that June and this house may be considered as the last and one of the most characteristic of the Saint's foundations. It is fitting, therefore, on this double anniversary to attempt to estimate the method chosen by St. Dominic for the apostolate and the fashion in which it has been preserved through the seven centuries of the English Dominican history.

A study of St. Dominic's apostolate would seem to fall naturally into two divisions; an analysis of his approach to the particular problems of his time and a sketch of the solutions that he adopted. Thirteenth century Catholicism was confronted by two groups of problems. The first group was not period but perennial. It was due partly to the inevitable conflict between the Catholic conception of the Church as a living reality, one, holy, apostolic, and the clogging claims of local vested interest, partly to the not uncommon conjunction of weak spirit and unwilling flesh. But in the early 13th century it gained in emphasis from accidental circumstances, the temporal triumphs of two great pontificates, and the growing dissatisfaction with religious wealth and the material prerogatives of priesthood. The Franciscan movement was the vivid response of vitally Catholic consciousness.

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The second group of problems centred round difficulties of the mind rather than morals and was derived from persistent contact with Islamic culture, from the resurgence of a singularly metaphysical heresy and from the birth of the university system. The coming of the universities was synchronising with new forms of speculation, often unorthodox in tendency, subtle in exposition and tropical in growth. Both heresies and universities found a common background in the fresh clamorous life of the towns. The Dominican movement provided the Catholic response.

It is curious to note the quality of St. Dominic's reaction. Born of a knightly family, probably the more consciously noble since theirs was apparently a rather barren nobility, he was securely placed in the already overburdened feudal structure of Castille. He had been bred in the small and conservative *studium* at Palencia, had been superior of the Augustinian Chapter at Osma and had been employed in the rather cumbersome diplomacy of the Court. There was nothing in his past that would cause him to sympathise with the new self-assertion of the townsmen the busy preoccupation of professors and the intellectual difficulties of Moors and heretics. It would have been natural if his preconceptions had led him to rely on the use of authority and of the Catholic sword.

Yet throughout his apostolate it was his policy to work through existing institutions, to recognise and to imitate the good in his opponents and to meet them on their own ground with their own weapons. The loose-knit heresies of southern France and the north Italian towns were united by the public and strenuous asceticism of their leaders and the logical consistency of their deductions. Their preachers formed an essentially mobile force confronting the static organisation of each local church. St. Dominic was to share in their mobility, to meet trained disputants with trained disputants, and to meet austerity with austerity as logic with logic. It was a method paralleled in 13th century missionary endeavour by the Dominican Arab schools and the rhythm of the *Contra Gentiles*; the friars were to go beyond the boundaries of the small medieval world intent not merely on what the heathen should hold but on what they held and on the reasons why they held it, and on the truth as well as on the error in Islamic thought.

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The same recognition of reality prompted the Dominican solution of the problem of the universities. Recognising the limitations of the finite, St. Dominic did not attempt to annihilate or to create. He concentrated his Order in the university centres, Paris and Bologna, Pavia and Toulouse and he sent his friars to the universities to work in them from within. They were to learn as well as to teach; the accepted methods of instruction and the existent lecture lists were to form the framework for their action. It is significant that of all St. Dominic's solutions this was to meet with the more permanent success. Dominican life in the universities was to give the Summa to the Order and the world.

The English province founded by St. Dominic was to be perpetuated and emphasised in the great history of the Oxford Blackfriars and the work of the Cambridge Dominicans. Working in England his followers were to work from within. They were never to be more efficient than when they entered most deeply into all the national life, they were never to be more English than when they were in exile. It is characteristic that many of the greatest of their qualities seemed summarised in Father Bede Jarrett, whose life of St. Dominic in his own best biography. The twenty years of his very personal influence upon English Catholicism show that, though problems change, solutions stay constant. He chose as St. Dominic had chosen, he acted as St. Dominic would have acted, never losing his hold on the real because it seemed repellent, never despairing of man or of institution, using the good in evil to overcome it, and the truth in error to refute it, never more spontaneous than when he was moved by grace and finding the perfection of his own nature in the supernatural following of God.

The profound thanks of the Dominicans of Blackfriars, and indeed of the whole Order, are due to the donor of the Dominican GRADUALE *MS. which has proved to be of such value and interest. We are grateful to Fr. Walter Gumbley, O.P., F.R.Hist.S., who, with the assistance of Fr. Daniel Callus, O.P., S.T.M., established the approximate date of the MS. and has contributed the interesting account of it which appears in this issue. The MS. will be known as the* BLACKFRIARS CODEX.

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