

DOMINICAN PRESS ACTIVITIES

Address of the Master General of the Dominican Order to the Assembly of Dominican Tertiaries Held in Conjunction With the Vatican Press Exhibition.¹



T has become a commonplace to say that if Saint Paul lived in our day he would be a journalist. And if Saint Dominic lived today instead of during the thirteenth century, what would he be? I believe that, for reasons analogous to those which once prompted him to found his Order, he would make no essential changes in its Constitutions. However, because of the very spirit which animates them and which is essentially an apostolic spirit, he would demand that his Order today utilize the Press as one of the most efficacious means of apostolic work.

These are the two thoughts which I shall try to develop briefly. Afterwards I shall explain what the Order of Saint Dominic is actually doing in the field of the Press to realize the apostolic spirit of its founder.

SAINT DOMINIC AND THE PRESS

Why did Saint Dominic found the Order of Preachers? For a clear answer to this question it suffices to recall the religious state of society at that time, the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Certainly the thirteenth century, as a whole, was a century of faith. Evidence of every kind establishes that fact as indisputable. But at the very beginning of the century the Faith in Europe was in great danger for two reasons: the widespread religious ignorance from which the faithful suffered, and the rise of certain heresies favored by this ignorance.

About the existence of this religious ignorance and of a universal ignorance there can be no doubt. Two Councils of the Lateran formally recognized it and strove, but without success, to provide a remedy. Not only were lay people uneducated, even the clergy of the period, for lack of sufficient instruction, were unable to fulfill

¹ Translated by Hyacinth Roth, O.P.

their mission to teach the faithful. All theological learning was concentrated in the Universities, and the priests who studied at the Universities did not endeavor to throw the rays of their knowledge to the more distant parishes. Now it was due to this religious ignorance that in the middle of France, for instance, there cropped up the Albigensian heresy. This heresy foreshadowed that of Communism, at least insofar as it advocated the employment of unrestricted violence for the attainment of its purpose. The Albigenses believed in a complete victory of matter, the evil, over spirit, the good principle. They thought that the terrestrial paradise was irrevocably lost and preached the abandonment of this world by individuals, by the family, and by society through the use of suicide, abortion and war. Contrariwise, the Communists teach that man can recover the terrestrial paradise, but by the same means of hatred and violence.

At first sight one is startled to learn that such doctrines can spread so rapidly and extensively among the people. But one is less startled when one pauses to consider that this was due to the religious ignorance which rendered the faithful unable to separate the cockle from the wheat, error from Truth.

Faced by the Albigensian heresy, favored as it was by the ignorance of Catholics, what did Saint Dominic do? He founded a religious Order in which, within the traditional framework of community life, the religious could prepare themselves for the apostolate by personal sanctification, but by new methods such as the study of the sacred sciences. Sacred learning even in the cloister had not, it is true, awaited the advent of Saint Dominic. Thus far, however, such study had been rather a question of particular cases, of purely personal studies.

Saint Dominic, placed the study of the sacred sciences, together with common prayer and monastic observance, among the Constitutional means of personal sanctification and of the apostolate, and imposed it upon all the religious of his Order except the laybrothers. His intention was that his religious, having assimilated the sacred doctrine by long work of mind and heart before God in solitude, and having become Apostles, should go forth to give others the fruit of their contemplation: *Contemplata aliis tradere*.

Such was the originality of thought of Saint Dominic, confronted with the heresies and religious ignorance of his own age. But what would he do if he were living today? Exactly the same thing. The dangers surrounding our spiritual needs are essentially the same today as those of the thirteenth century: on the one side, an immeasurable ignorance of religion, and on the other, errors which are no

longer heresies but the brutal denial of faith and even of everything spiritual.

The religious ignorance of Catholics today cannot be denied. Pius X in his time made a study which revealed its depth and extent and also its principal causes, such as neglect of the Catechism, disregard for the reading and study of the Gospel, the abuse of profane reading, and a continual association of Catholics with people who have not the Faith and who live a pagan life. To fight against such grave evils we certainly need saints by the thousands who would realize in their daily lives the doctrine of Jesus Christ and who would awaken the indifferent from their spiritual torpor. But we also need, and in a great number, apostles who are acquainted with sacred doctrine, to teach it to those who are ignorant of it, to make it loved by those who once attacked it, and to dissipate the errors of those who have corrupted it.

From this viewpoint we can be sure that if Saint Dominic were alive today he would change nothing essential in the organization of his Order. He would insist, more than ever, that the study of the sacred sciences take first place among the Constitutional means of personal sanctification in preparation for the work of the apostolate.

I believe also that for the same reasons, religious ignorance and the actual diffusion of the subtlest and grossest errors, he would insist upon the most modern and efficacious methods of combatting this ignorance and these errors. He would, for example, require those of his sons who are engaged in parochial work to employ all that is progressive in psychology and pedagogy in the teaching of the Catechism. They would not continue to teach children as if they were adults, expounding an abstract doctrine in language which children cannot understand or to which they give a different signification. He would demand of the Provincials of the Order that their preachers be specially trained for their special audiences; that these preachers, with an apostolic solicitude, adapt the doctrinal teaching to spiritual needs which, doubtless, are always the same, but which are not always manifested and satisfied in the same way due to reasons of age, sex, education, profession and environment. He would demand that in the flood of scientific and romantic literature under which the modern world lies, his most learned and scholarly sons make a united effort to increase, particularly in quality, the works of religious literature, scientific or otherwise, which have already caught the attention of better minds but which ought to be spread broadcast among the middle and lower classes who are more exposed to religious ignorance and anti-Catholic prejudice. Finally, I believe he would demand that

those of his sons who are competent should collaborate in the reforms which we have just pointed out, and make use of the Press to give a greater appeal and penetration to their apostolate.

It is a fact that the Press, especially by means of reviews and newspapers, has become the most effective means for the diffusion of error in all classes of society. Why then should it not become also the most effective instrument of propaganda in the cause of Truth? The sons of Saint Dominic have recognized this and are at work. It remains for me to set forth this work in all its greatness. One will see that in this, as in many other things, they have remained faithful as a group to the spirit and the letter of their holy founder.

THE DOMINICANS AND THE PRESS

Since the discovery of printing the Dominicans have not failed to use it to their own advantage. Their literary activity was particularly intense throughout Italy and Germany during the Reformation. The spiritual struggles of this period were responsible for the publication of pamphlets and controversial tracts which may justly be considered the forerunners of the modern political and daily Press. The Dominicans were especially outstanding in this controversy.

It must be noted, however, that their periodical and daily press is of recent date. It began in France where *l'Annee Dominicaine* made its appearance about the year 1860, during the reform initiated by Père Lacordaire. It is not my intention here to enumerate all that the Dominicans have published or are publishing since in the form of books, periodicals, and collections. This would be both tiresome and long-winded.

Above all, I wish to present an idea of the quality of Dominican publications, and to examine them under the aspect of the apostolate. For that reason I shall content myself with mentioning the reviews published under the direction of the Dominican Fathers in the various Provinces of the Order.

We shall divide these reviews into three classes: those of a more scientific nature, addressing themselves to the intellectuals; the reviews of general culture devoted to the wide popularization of Catholic thought; and lastly, reviews of a specifically religious nature which are by far the most numerous.

One should not be astonished that the sons of Saint Dominic, whose scientific past, in the wide yet exact sense of the word, is so remarkable, have anticipated our times in the foundation of scientific journals. This was the best way to have Catholic thought penetrate into places where the cult of science flourishes more than anywhere else, and where very often the resolve to oppose science to religion

is manifested. There is no better apologetic, and therefore no better apostolate, than that which consists in answering science by science, and in showing on common ground that the pretended opposition between science and religion is more apparent than real, at least if neither religion nor science is confounded with a counterfeit—for instance with superstition or “scientism.”

The Dominicans, then, founded scientific reviews. The *Revue Biblique* of Jerusalem is one of the oldest organs, dating back to the year 1892. Not only is it the oldest one devoted to Biblical Studies published by Dominicans but also the oldest of its kind published by Catholics. But it is not our oldest scientific review. *Divus Thomas* of Fribourg, established in 1886 through the initiative of the secular clergy together with the Dominicans, has been under Dominican editorship since 1923. *Revue Thomiste*, of which the first director was a Dominican professor of Fribourg, Father Coconnier of the Province of Toulouse, dates from 1893. These philosophical and theological reviews were the first manifestations of the Thomistic revival in the Church after the memorable intervention of Leo XIII.

Other publications of like nature have appeared since, brought glory to the Order, and rendered most signal services to the Church. I shall mention the principal ones in the order of their foundation.

The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, a monthly magazine of great repute intended for the clergy, was founded in 1901 at Washington. *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Theologiques*, established in 1907, is edited by the Dominican Fathers of Saulchoir. Because of its information and numerous Bulletins there are, not only in Catholic universities but in the scientific world, no reviews comparable with it. We must also mention the *Bulletin Thomiste*, founded in 1924 by Père Mandonnet, which is a digest of all publications treating of the Thomistic movement and thought. *La Ciencia Tomista* of Salamanca, established in 1910, has acquired an unusual popularity due to the indisputable worth of its chief collaborators. The *Angelicum*, dating from the year 1924, is among the most valued and brilliant of our University publications. The *Philosophische Revue*, founded in 1929, exercises so much influence in Bohemia that it deserves your admiration. Finally the *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum*, published by the Historical Institute at Santa Sabina, is devoted to the writing of the history of the Order. Since its first number appeared, in 1931, it has attracted the attention of historians.

Speaking of scientific reviews of the Order, one must at least mention the vast *Collections* which are added to the Reviews and can

be considered as supplements to them. We have, for instance, in Germany, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland*, which deals with the history of the Province and of which thirty-four volumes have already appeared. In no other Province of the Order is there a work of such nature except in Italy where *Memorie Domenicane* is published. I desire, however, that such examples be followed. If we possessed annals of all the Provinces they would contribute greatly to a future history of the entire Order.

Among the important Collections of the Order I shall also cite the *Bibliothèque Thomiste* and the *Bibliothèque Philosophique* of Saulchoir, the *Studia Friburgensia*, the *Dissertationes Historicae* and the *Manumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica* published at Santa Sabina.

Although our scientific publications are relatively numerous and, as a whole, of good standing, nevertheless they could, rather they must, receive further development. The ideal would be to have each major House of Studies possess its own scientific review, as they exist, for example, in Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland, Holland, and in the Province of Lyons in France. I do not speak of the South American Provinces because they are incapacitated for the time being, unless the new convent at Cusco, where all the theological students of the Province are housed, is soon to show proof of its youthful vitality.

England, Belgium, Canada and Ireland do not possess scientific reviews properly so called, but they have excellent reviews of general culture, such as *Blackfriars*, *Kultuurleven*, *Orientations*, etc. This example ought to be followed by all Provinces which have not as yet undertaken a scientific review. Permit me to call to your attention the Province of Bohemia which, thanks to the wisdom and activity of several young Fathers, has succeeded within the past ten years in launching at the same time a scientific review one dealing with general culture, and a religious review, the influence of which is appreciated everywhere in Bohemia.

The Order possesses about two hundred reviews. One hundred and sixty-three of them are being displayed here at the Press Exhibition.

Now we shall say a few words about the leading Dominican reviews devoted to general culture. Some of them have begun by being spiritual reviews, Rosary magazines for the most part. Thus in England, *The Rosary*, founded in 1869 (London); in Spain, *Contemporanea*, of the Province of Aragon and *Rosas y Espinas*, established at

Valencia in 1915. The last mentioned is a monthly magazine of elegant taste and rich illustration. . . . In Canada we have the *Revue Dominicaine*, begun at Montreal in 1915, which in recent years has made great progress both as to its format and editorial presentation. In Ireland there is the *Irish Rosary*, an excellent monthly review founded in 1897, and also a Review edited for the past two years by the students of the Province—like the *Ideales*, a publication of the students of Salamanca—both enterprises as young as their collaborators but, like them, full of expectation. Then in the United States, *The Rosary*, a popular magazine of great appeal edited at Somerset, since the year 1891, and *The Torch*, a magazine of the same nature edited at New York. Also in Cairo, about the year, 1934, the *Cahiers du Cercle Thomiste*, and in France, beside the energetic *Revue des Jeunes*, now the best known and most widely read of all the reviews of culture, the *Vie Intellectuelle* founded in 1929.

I have already mentioned, in passing, the *Blackfriars* of our English Fathers of which Father Jarrett was the learned and zealous inspirer, and which at present is reaching all classes of English people. The Flemish review, *Kultuurleven*, edited at Antwerp, is a very well managed and scholarly publication and, indeed, a fitting example to all those Provinces which do not as yet possess a magazine of this nature. In addition to this long list there is the *Memorie Domenicane*, originally a simple Rosary review established at Florence in 1884. In recent years under the management of Père Zucchi, from whom local history can keep no secret, it has taken a new lease on life and publishes, with an eye to the general history of the Order, excellent monographs on our convents. *Russie et Chretienté* deals with Russian affairs and is developing into an important and copious review of studies and information.

For lack of time I shall pass over our reviews of popular culture. If such unassuming work ought to be brought to light I should make it my duty and pleasure to point out at least the principal ones, such as *The Holy Name Journal* of New York, the review of the same type published in Australia, the *Miltia Christi* of Malta, the *Credo* of Budapest, and journals such as *Waareid*, *Sept*, and *de Ster*.

It remains only to give you some idea of our spiritual reviews, beginning with those of a general character. The first in point of time and unquestionably the most important one is the *Vie Spirituelle*, founded in 1919. It enjoys the merit, among many others, of having prompted imitations. We shall name the rest in the order of their origin: *La Vida Sobrenatural*, founded in Spain in 1921; *Schola Christiana* of Poland, founded in 1925; *Na Blubinu* of Bohemia,

founded in 1926; *Vita Christiana* of St. Mark's in Florence, founded in 1929; likewise, *Duhvoni zivot*, founded at Zagreb in the same year. All those reviews are very capably managed and the Order can rejoice in possessing a group so homogeneous and perhaps so unique in spirituality.

After the general spiritual publications we must mention those devoted to our Tertiaries. Twelve have been displayed here this year. Not to mention the *Analecta*, which is the official organ of the Order, one may assert without flattery that the magazines for our Tertiaries are well edited, as, for instance, *The Dominican Annuals*, founded at Edinburgh in 1920; *Militia Christi*, founded the same year at Ghent by a Flemish Father; then, its much older French sister, *l'Annee Dominicaine*, established in 1860; *Bullettino del Terziario Domenicano*, founded at Florence in 1913; *die Gottesweihe*, founded in Germany in 1927, and *St. Dominicus' Derde Orde*, established at Nijmegen in 1931. One may assert that these magazines are well edited, but nothing shall prevent me from saying that they could still be very much better. I shall say as much of our Mission publications in France, Italy, Spain, Holland, Germany and Peru. They are fine; yet they, too, can be improved. The same applies to our Marian publications or magazines devoted to the Rosary.

But what shall I say of the Bulletins of all our convents, colleges, etc., twenty-six of which have had the honor of appearing at the Exposition? I have the impression of a galaxy of reviews scattered over the Dominican heavens, but unable to claim there the rôle of stars of the first magnitude even in the dark night of today's religious ignorance. That is not bad, to be sure. But is it good? Is it the last word of the Order of Saint Dominic in this matter? No, a hundred times no.

We shall ask the General Chapter of 1938 to consider the question of our spiritual reviews and of reviews for the Tertiaries; to consider them especially in relation to the reforms imposed on the Third Order, so as to make it one of the most efficient organs of Catholic Action. That is why I shall now refrain from expressing my mind on this subject. This would risk being misunderstood or misinterpreted. Know that I am very proud of that which already exists in the Order, for example, our scientific reviews and those devoted to general culture and to spirituality. But I love our Order too much, and I believe it too capable of resuming its traditional apostolic mission in the Church, not to think that the way has been but opened through which it can and must strive to give to the Press all that lies in its power.

For this it will not do to disperse our forces nor to scatter them. Rather, it will be necessary to concentrate them so as to reach a great and lasting goal. On the day when, in each Province of our Order all the Fathers who are capable will, at the order of the Provincial, unite under the leadership of a competent director of reviews, assisted by suitable counsellors, to work together according to their means in the publication of scientific, spiritual and cultural reviews, keeping in mind, meanwhile, the Dominican apostolate of giving to others the fruit of our contemplation—on that day, I say, all the dead leaves (I mean printed leaves) will fall of their own accord, will detach themselves from the trees of Saint Dominic; and that tree, like the venerable orange tree, will shoot forth numerous new branches, strong and fertile, which will cover the entire face of the earth and will produce savory spiritual fruits capable of nourishing all the souls who thirst to know the Truth, to live in, and to spread it around them. On that day all our Tertiaries will become more aware of their special mission both within the Order and within the Church and will eagerly place themselves at the disposition of the Fathers, to extend still further into the world their apostolate, in accordance with the spirit and intention of our Father, St. Dominic.