

STUDY IN THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

FLAVIAN MORRY, O.P.



IN COMBAT the errors and the evil in the 13th century Holy Mother Church took up the newest weapon which Divine Providence had forged for Her. Her arm of defense was the preaching and the teaching of divine truth with an heroic vigor! The warriors who were to wield this weapon were Her loyal son Dominic and his Friars Preachers. To him was committed the task of leading and training learned and valiant defenders of the Faith. To that end Dominic gave to the Order of Preachers the distinctive character of devotion to study. That St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church's own theologian, was a Dominican may tend to place upon his shoulders the responsibility for Dominican dedication to study. But it was St. Dominic himself who canonized study in the Order. In the plan of Divine Providence, the most favorable setting for the full development of the Angelic Doctor's genius was provided by the Order of Preachers because St. Dominic had woven into the very fibre of his Order an unflagging fidelity to learning.

Although the 12th century is credited with giant strides in scholarship, the lack of proper instruction is only too perceptible; the need for preaching only too evident. In an attempt to remedy this situation to meet the need of instruction in both clergy and faithful the Third Lateran Council (1179) issued a memorable canon (18) on education. In this it was laid down that the prelates should provide schools and masters to teach *gratis* the clerics and also the poor students whose parents were unable to provide a suitable education for their children. In actual practice this decree received a poor response, for the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) notes the failure and confirms the decree of the Third Lateran Council. It stated clearly that there was to be for the clergy a theologian who was to teach them whatever especially pertains to the care of souls. The impending disaster of heresy overwhelming the faithful served to emphasize the need of an educated clergy. This, then, was unmistakably the great need of that age—teachers for both the clergy and the people. God raised up a Saint with an Order to meet and fulfill the need.

THE ASSIDUOUS STUDY OF SACRED TRUTH

There was nothing new in the aim of the Order of St. Dominic. All Orders in the Church are of their very nature ever striving for the salvation of souls. But the means which the holy Patriarch Dominic proposed were strikingly new and shocked the self-assured clergy of the day. As appears from the prologue to the *Liber Consuetudinum* St. Dominic founded his Order for the purpose of preaching and the salvation of souls, and to this end he enjoined upon the Friars the obligation to study so that they might be of use for the souls of their neighbors. Henceforth under the impulse of the pope and Dominic the warfare for the salvation of souls took on a universal aspect in the one Order. The Friars Preachers were truly to be all things to all men. The Church was to make use of a militia which could boast of the striking power of the heaviest artillery and the speed and decisiveness of a panzer division. These troops were to be a picked lot. Their training was to be intense and precise to the most minute detail. Monasticism was coming not only out of the desert, out of the country, but the occupants of the convents were issuing forth to do battle with the most bitter enemy of the Church—heresy.

In imitation of his Divine Master Dominic could not leave his disciples orphaned, marooned in the trials and difficulties of the age without sufficient and sure means of fending off the possible danger which threatened from the very note of duality in his institution, the active and the contemplative. From the very beginning it was ordained, that the means to be made use of in pursuing and attaining the end of the Order were to be, in addition to the vows, the regular life with monastic observances, the solemn recitation of the Divine Office, and the assiduous study of sacred truth. It was this final means which was the innovation among religious Orders. For the Friars Preachers it was not to be a mere preparatory course to be used as a guide but a driving force intimately correlated with the entire life of the Friar in his cell, in choir, and in the pulpit. If the sons of Dominic were to give to the faithful the fruits of their contemplation it was necessary that these fruits be the produce of good soil. Love was to spread itself with most generous abandon, but that there be love it is necessary that there first be truth in which it might take root, that truth gleaned from the assiduous study of sacred doctrine, which would bear fruit in love. Thus the concept of his Order. For this reason study was to hold a very important place in the Order. Indeed, it was to be the very balance-wheel of the entire organization, preparing and fostering the way to contemplation

on the one hand, and restraining and directing on the other side the preaching activity of the Friar; overemphasis of either could destroy the very concept of the Order. Study was a means to the end, but so vital and imperative a means that should any Friar neglect it or abuse it he would be failing in his vocation as a Friar Preacher. This Dominic indicated when he summed up simply the vocation of the brethren to be to study and to preach.

The mind of Dominic concerning study is clear from his own personal development, his relations with his first disciples, and, finally, explicitly in the constitutions of his Order. His own gifts of intellect were of the highest. To his academic knowledge was added that vast insight and clarity of vision which was broadened by extensive travel and diverse contacts in situations destined to bend a man one way or another. His companions, friends, confidants were the ignorant, the learned men, the heretics, the pious men, the lowly ones, the men of rank politically and ecclesiastically. Through them he came to know the times, Europe and the Church. Through them he caught a glimpse of an incipient abyss which threatened to divide the Church from the people, to relegate her to the position of an institution of primitive foundation which had now lost her utility in this age of awakening. His finger was on the pulse of that tremendous problem which threatened to split asunder the unity of the Church, and its tingling sensation excited the love of his great soul to burst forth and to run over into his scheme for preserving the unity of the Mystical body of his Divine Master. He determined that his disciples would be the instructors of the faithful. Thus in the early days of his planning, with the little band of seven, he betook himself to the school of the famous scholar of Toulouse, Alexander of Stavensby. Later in the dispersal of the first brethren the greatest number were sent to Paris to study, to preach, and to establish a convent. From the General Chapter at Bologna in 1221 he sent a dozen of the brethren to England where they located at Oxford, and founded the King Edward School. In so acting he gave indication of what he expected his preachers to be—learned men, full of divine truth.

ST. DOMINIC'S LAWS ON STUDY

The mind of the founder on this point is made even more evident from his legislation for the Order. In 1216 St. Dominic drew up the first part of the constitutions (*Consuetudines*). In 1220 at the first General Chapter of the Order held at Bologna Dominic and the brethren drew up the second part of the law. A careful scrutiny and

examination of these two parts of the Constitutions bring out the mind of the founder in regard to study in the legislation for the Order.

First to be considered are the novices. The type of novice he desired is seen in this that he located his convents in the large cities, close to the universities. To students from the universities Dominic opened wide the doors of his convents. Aspirants to the Order were placed under careful scrutiny before acceptance, for added to the fundamental moral requirements in any aspirant there was demanded a certain amount of intellectual progress already made. It was enjoined upon priors that they have special care lest they display any laxity in this regard. They should not receive novices who did not measure up to the science demanded. The novice must have already undertaken the labor and task of his own intellectual development.

Once admitted the novice was to be instructed in the end of the Order and the means to that end. It was to be impressed upon him that the attainment of the end was assured only by a careful and due regard for the means placed at his disposal. He must be brought to the realization that upon entering the Order he was in a very true fashion entering a university. The Friar Preacher was to be a student not for four, not for ten years, but for life. The well of truth from which he was to drink was the infinite abyss of Divine Wisdom, and in this there is no end—the limits being the individual's own intellectual capacity. This formation and instruction of the novice was left in the hands of the novice master whose grave duty it was to see that no misunderstanding or mistaken notion arose to turn aside the novice from the proper means to the end. He was to point out with what assiduity the novice ought to pursue study day or night, at home or abroad. He was to explain that the law of silence was prescribed to aid the spirit of study and contemplation; that certain penances were prescribed relative to those who were negligent in study, who failed to display a proper care for books, who fell asleep while studying. Having completed his term as a novice the young man then undertook what was to be for him the lifetime task of prayer and study in preparation for the apostolate.

With the genius of sanctity Dominic drew up this plan and design of his Order. He himself saw and worked out the details and specifications in this architectural gem which is his Order. The Constitutions, very much in the form in which they were confirmed by the Chapter of 1228, were completed before the end of his life and were very much his work. In 1220 the final note was added to the program of study: each convent was to have a lector, a master of stu-

dents, and a prior, all of whom were directed, under pain of penalty, to see to the development and progress in science of the students. The students were to pursue the study of theology most diligently of all and were not to be overly concerned with spending their time perusing secular and philosophical works. The learning of natural sciences and even the liberal arts was prohibited to them unless it was disposed otherwise by the Master of the Order or general chapter. Reasons for dispensation from choir, privileges and obligations of the students were likewise outlined in this chapter. With study ever before him as a means to be given every opportunity to flourish, Dominic set out to weed out the obstacles. He eliminated from his rule the practice of manual labor for the clerics and assigned it to lay-brothers. It was his intention also to free the brethren from every care of the material upkeep of the convent by entrusting it entirely to the lay-brothers, however, in this he was overruled by his brethren. He indicated that not even choral exercises should be such as to interfere unduly with study, thus the Office was to be chanted *breviter et succincte*. The celebration of chapters was to be postponed if this proved incompatible with the habits and customs of study prevailing. To secure his plan St. Dominic laid down the universal principle of dispensation, and as regards study: "Those engaged in studies may be dispensed by the prelate lest on account of some office they be impeded from study." Accordingly, as an aid to study it was laid down that everything in itself not essential to the spiritual formation of the brethren be subordinated to study. This principle of universal dispensation was to be made a practical aid in the spiritual development of the Friars Preachers and a helpmate to study. That succeeding chapters did nothing more than expand and make explicit what the holy founder had laid down in the section on study in his legislation is proof of the genius of St. Dominic in this regard.

POPES, CHAPTERS, MASTER GENERALS

This mark of devotion to study was clearly recognized and noted by the popes. Thus Honorius III (1216) wrote: "We, considering that the brethren of your Order will be the champions of the Faith and the true lights of the world (do confirm the Order). . . ." He confirmed the Order with the same understanding with which Dominic had founded it—an Order of learned man. Again in Bulls of 1220 and 1221 Honorius commends the Order for its work in combatting heresy and extirpating error, and points out that for this was the Order founded. Gregory IX speaks in much the same tenor in

Bulls of 1227. His immediate successors follow the same trend of thought. Celestine V expressed his confidence in the Order which had been instituted to be the bulwark and defense of the Faith. Boniface VIII added a splendid tribute to the development of the Order's ideal of "evangelical teachers." Dominic legislated for the attainment of the end of the Order; it was to be devoted to study. The Pontiffs understood the work of the Order in the same light. The subsequent history and development of the Order and its individual members are a crowning testimony to the Order's devotion to study from its very institution.

With almost a repetitious regularity Chapter after Chapter insisted on the correct carrying out of the constitutions on study. The Chapters laid down warnings, admonitions, and even prescribed penalties for the infraction of the rules concerning study or for any spirit of insubordination in this regard. There were to be no surprise-package novelties in doctrine; the traditional teachings of the Church were to be the guide to lectors as well as to students, and especially was this to be so in the study of Sacred Scriptures, which was pursued with such great zeal by the Friars. Those following a regular course of theology were excused from the customary lessons imparted in each convent. The Chapters explain and commend to the attention of priors the proper solicitude to be displayed in the matter of study as regards lectors and students, and the regulations of study pertaining to themselves. Thus neither priors, lectors, nor students were to absent themselves from the lessons, and upon the negligent penalties were to be imposed. Priors were to take care that the preachers they sent out were properly examined and sufficiently instructed. Those who made no progress were to give up the use of their cells and were to be engaged in other activities. A loud, clear note as to the place of study in the Order was struck at the General Chapter celebrated at London (1250) when it added to the Constitutions on study a provision that books neither of the Order nor the brethren were to be sold unless their price could be turned into other books or writings. To show the way in the matter of observance the General Chapter of Barcelona (1261) gave a striking and forceful example of the measures which would be taken to put down insubordination within the Order's academic organization. The culprit on this occasion was the *studium* at Oxford. The penalties inflicted were severe: the provincial was removed from office and assigned to Cologne, not to return without the permission of a general chapter, and further suitable penances were also imposed on him. The diffinitors and prior were removed and likewise given due penances to perform.

As if to add the reason for all this the General Chapter of Paris (1279) said it was "*quia ex profectu studii sequitur profectus ordinis et utilitas animarum*," ("for from progress in study follows the perfection of the Order and usefulness to souls").

To the superiors of the Order the obligation of its members to the means to be employed for the accomplishment of the end of the Order was quite evident. The Master Generals were themselves men of great learning—men such as Jordan of Saxony, St. Raymond of Pennafort, John the Teuton, Humbert of Romans, John of Vercelli. They gave expression to that duty which they felt incumbent upon themselves as Masters of the Order namely, the exhortation for continual devotion to assiduous study. We know the zeal with which Jordan sought out the university students as prospective members for the Order; we are well acquainted with the chapters which Humbert of Romans devoted to the problem of study in his *De vita regulari*; but the Masters of the Order did not stop with such personal efforts. They addressed their convictions and views to the entire Order in the encyclical letters which they issued upon different occasions. Thus we find John the Teuton exhorting the brethren that they follow the discipline as laid down by the early fathers of the Order—that they eagerly attend to study. John of Vercelli in a similar vein cautions that others may be illuminated by our studies so that: "from the quiver of the Scriptures themselves he (the Friar) may shoot sharp arrows to the hearts of the listeners, wounding them unto salvation." Stephen Bisuntinus traces in unmistakable outline the nature of the Order—that it was instituted for preaching and thus it behooves all to be especially solicitous in study. So spoke the Masters of the Order. They stated and reiterated the need and importance of study in the life of the Friar Preacher.

FRUITS OF ST. DOMINIC'S PLAN

The response of the early Friars is a source of great edification. It points clearly to the fact that the Order of its nature was devoted to study from its institution. Learning in the Order bore fruit in Sacred Scripture, in theology, in philosophy, in the liberal arts, and natural sciences, to which the eager and zealous Friars lent their energies of mind. In this way the Friars themselves understood and accepted this note of study characteristic of the Order. Accordingly we are not unduly surprised by the claims made for these Friars of the first century of the Order's existence. Père Mandonnet thus observes that the literary output of the Friars Preachers before the

middle of the 14th century approximated all of that which had been produced in the Latin Church between the time of the Fathers and the 13th century. Exact figures cannot be easily had but a patient and careful examination in the works produced will bear out the strength of the claim.

To attempt to list the numerous writers and their almost countless works would be a well-nigh impossible venture. The best we may hope to accomplish is to name a few of the more outstanding writers, indicating the far-flung diversity in the paths of knowledge followed by these early Preachers by listing some of the works produced in the first one hundred years of the Order. First and foremost are the philosophical, theological, and Biblical scholars. On the whole many of the names are already familiar and will strike a responsive chord of acclamation, names such as: Roland of Cremona (d.c. 1250), the Order's first Master in theology, Hugh of St. Cher (d.c. 1263), Peter of Tarentaise (Blessed Innocent V, d. 1276), St. Albert the Great (d. 1280), St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274)—all of whom held chairs at the University of Paris—Richard Fishacre (d.c. 1248), and Robert of Kilwardby (d. 1279) at Oxford, Moneta of Cremona (d.c. 1240) at the University of Bologna, John of Paris (d. 1306), William of Perault (d. 1250-75?), Richard Clapwell (d. 1290), Bonacursius (d.c. 1260), Ulric Engelberti (d. 1277?) of Argentine.

Roland of Cremona produced *Summae* of both philosophy and theology. Hugh of St. Cher, his pupil, outdid his master, composing, besides a compendium of theology and a commentary on the *Four Books of Sentences* of Peter Lombard, a revised and emended version of the Bible, a commentary on the entire Bible according to its four senses, and the first biblical concordance. Robert of Kilwardby added to this pattern the tremendous labors of commentaries on the works of Aristotle, Porphyry, and Boetius. The achievements of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Vincent of Beauvais (d. 1264?) are staggering. Albert's astounding labors touched almost every subject to which the human intellect had turned its attention. In principle the works of Thomas Aquinas attain to the same end. The *Speculum Maius*, which is an encyclopedic summary of the world's knowledge, was designed and woven by Vincent of Beauvais. Amongst them these three men held the knowledge of the world.

In addition to the labors of Hugh of St. Cher in biblical studies we find numerous commentaries and tractates by these early Friars. The concordance of Hugh was improved upon by that of Richard of Stavensby and Hugh of Croydon, composed under the direction of John of Darlington (c. 1252). Raymond Martin (d. 1284?) ex-

plored new avenues and achieved even greater glories in biblical studies, openly took issue with Judaism and showed an extensive knowledge of rabbinical literature in his *Pugio Fidei*.

From these accomplishments we may perceive indications of another branch of intellectual activity which developed in the Order, that of languages. General Chapters had urged the brethren to be solicitous in learning the language of the people to whom they were to preach. We have mentioned Raymond Martin, perhaps the most illustrious of this number, who could speak and write fluently Arabic, Chaldaic, and Hebrew. Against the doctrine of the Koran, Ricoldo of Monte Croce (d.c. 1320) drew up the *Propugnaculum Fidei* quoting directly from Arabic literature. William of Moerbeke (d. 1286) translated all of Aristotle into Latin as well as the works of Simplicius, Proclus, and Hippocrates. Thomas of Cantimpré (1272) likewise did a translation of the works of Aristotle.

Added to the languages which they would need to preach to strange peoples the Friars had need of manuals of doctrine to be used to put down errors and instruct the wayward in the truth. Foremost among such treatises in apologetics were the *Summa adversus Catharos et Valdenses* by Moneta of Cremona, and the *Summa contra Gentiles* of St. Thomas Aquinas. For use of the missionaries in Greece Bonacursius compiled the *Thesaurus veritatis fidei* in Greek and Latin. Another tractate against the errors of the Greeks was drawn up by the group of Friars at Constantinople (c. 1252).

Canon Law received tremendous impetus in the Order from the personal efforts of St. Raymond of Pennafort (d. 1275). William Durandus (d. 1296) continued this legalistic activity composing numerous works on ecclesiastical government; John of Paris (d. 1306) carried on this line with his tract on the royal and papal power.

Although the study of natural sciences had been early frowned upon in the Order its development was natural and normal within the sphere of the intellectual labors of the Friars. Certainly one of the greatest of scientific minds was possessed by Albert the Great who left behind him studies in astronomy, cosmology, botany, mineralogy, geography, and natural history. Later Theodoric of Freiburg (c. 1310) was to compose works on the generation and origin of light, on colors, and a brilliant exposition on the theory of the rainbow. Tracts on meteorology, botany, mineralogy, and natural history were produced by John of St. Germaine (c. 1314). Theodoric of Catalanus (c. 1276) drew up a *summa* on surgery; while for the exhaustive treatise *De Musica* we are indebted to Jerome of Moravia (d.c. 1260).

Other Friars labored in the field of history where they displayed a marvelous erudition and an overall knowledge in drawing up works in general, ecclesiastical, and profane history. Monumental works are connected with the names of Bernard Guidonis (d. 1331), Ptolemy of Lucca (d.c. 1327), Gerard de Fracheto, Martin of Poland (d.c. 1278), and Vincent of Beauvais.

We may add to this conspectus of literary production a number of tractates pertaining to education, reform of society, training of preachers (especially the work of Humbert of Romans, d. 1274), and a vast amount of devotional literature. We should mention the treatise of Guido of Menilum (d.c. 1290) on rules for merchants, the dictionary and the *Philobiblion* of Robert of Holcot (d. 1349), and the celebrated *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine (d.c. 1298). Books of reference, innumerable collections of matter for sermons, books on the lives of saints were produced by the untiring intellectual labors of the early Friars.

CONCLUSION

That the early Friars accomplished what they did was quite in line with the development of the Order. Such literary labors, such intellectual progress was assuredly not a development due to chance. As a son grows up in the likeness of his father so the sons of Dominic bear the impress of the genius of the holy Patriarch, that devotion to study to which Holy-Mother Church, under Divine guidance, has given Her approval. Answering the call of distress of the Councils, fulfilling the imperative need of the age—teachers for both the clergy and the laity—Dominic founded his Order in which study was to be an indispensable means to the end. Far from being a creature of its members the Order is truly the child of its Founder. That such a man as Dominic should have appeared on the scene in the 13th century with his concept of his Order is, of course, a manifestation of the provision which Divine Providence makes in such times of distress and need for the uninterrupted life of the Church. With the death of Dominic devotion to study did not diminish but thrived and grew, nourished and fostered by the ever hovering spirit of the Founder and the pointed explications of successive superiors and Chapters. The Church will always be the target of pernicious intellectual errors, and for that reason Dominic so conceived and constituted his Order that like him it has been "the light of the Church and the teacher of truth."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, (vol. I, 1220-1303), ed. Ben. M. Reichert, O.P., Rome, 1898.
- Analecta sacri Ordinis Fratru Praedicatorum*, vols. I, II, Rome, 1893, 1895.
- Bennett, R. F., *The Early Dominicans*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1937.
- Bullarium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vols. I, II, ed. F. T. Ripoll and A. Bremond, Rome, 1729.
- Constitutiones, Declarationes, et Ordinationes Capitulorum Generalium*, Ia pars, ed. V. Fontána, Rome, 1862.
- Douais, C., *Essai sur l'organisation des études dans l'ordre des Frères-Prêcheurs au treizième et au quatorzième siècle*, A. Picard, Paris, 1884.
- Galbraith, G. R., *The Constitution of the Dominican Order*, University Press, Manchester, 1925.
- Galvagni de la Flamma, *Cronica Ordinis Praedicatorum*, (1170-1333), ed. Ben. M. Reichert, O.P., *Monumenta ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, vol. II, Rome, 1897.
- Hughes, Philip, *A History of the Church*, vol. II, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1947.
- Humbert de Romans, *Opera de Vita Regulari*, vol. II, ed. J.J. Betthier, Rome, 1889.
- Litterae Encyclicae Magistrorum Generalium* (1233-1376), ed. Ben. M. Reichert, O.P., Rome, 1900.
- Mandonnet, Pierre, O.P., "La crise scolaire au debut du treizième siècle et la fondation de l'ordre des Frères-Prêcheurs," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique*, tome XV, 1914, C. Peeters, Louvain.
- Mandonnet, Pierre, O.P., *St. Dominique: l'idée, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, 2 vols. Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, Paris, 1937.
- Mandonnet, Pierre, O.P., *St. Dominic and His Work*, translated by Sister Mary Benedicta Larkin, O.P., B. Herder, St. Louis, Mo., 1945.
- O'Connor, John B., O.P., *Saint Dominic and the Order of Preachers*, 1916.
- Pignon, Laurentius, *Catalogi et Chronica*, ed. G. Meersseman, O.P., *Monumenta ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, vol. XVIII, Rome, 1936.
- Schroeder, H. J., O.P., *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils*, B. Herder, St. Louis, Mo., 1937.
- Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum* (vol. I) eds. Quetif and Echard, Paris, 1719.