

"DOMINI CANES"

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HE New Year is a time for reflecting. As the Dominican family looks back over the months that are fled, it notes with a strangely tranquil sense of bereavement that three of its most illustrious lights have been extinguished. Father Mandonnet, Father Pegues and Father Sales no more shall wield the torch of truth in the domains of history, theology and scripture. But fortunately they have left behind monuments of learning and piety that will not soon perish. Each of these men was a specially gifted preacher and teacher; each took practical means to place his talents at the disposal of the many; most happily of all, none of them was unduly influenced by the exigencies of his time. It is one of the glories of these men that as brothers of Saint Thomas Aquinas, they understood the true relation of faith and reason, and far from depreciating the dignity of the latter, made use of its every legitimate resource, so that that human reason which already was holy as coming from God, was "sanctified still" in the service of His Church.

I

Francis Felix Mandonnet was born in 1858 in central France. While at the Christian Brothers' school at Clermont-Ferrand, where from 1870 to 1877 he pursued his studies, he discovered and read the works of Lacordaire, whose name and fame were already something of a legend in France. Straightway he became a Dominican by desire. Obstacles however presented themselves, and after completing his college education, he entered in 1878 the diocesan seminary. Four years later, when he received the subdiaconate, at the counsel of his director he left the seminary for the Dominican novitiate. He received the habit and took the name of Peter. He pronounced his solemn vows, and in 1887 he was ordained priest.

Meanwhile he had fostered his attraction for history, especially the history of the Order. Often he related how this attraction was in great measure aroused by love for his Order. Perusing one day a famous work on the poetry of the Middle Ages, he found therein the assertion that the Dominicans had instigated the condemnation of

Siger of Brabant. He felt constrained to investigate the statement and his researches resulted in that exposé which radically altered the view usually taken of the scholastic contour of the thirteenth century, and established his renown as one of the world's first medievalists.

After receiving the lectorate in sacred theology in 1889, Father Mandonnet spent two years teaching history in the Studium at Corbara. Then in 1891 a theological faculty became part of the University of Fribourg and to him was confided the chair of ecclesiastical history. Thus began that career of twenty-seven years, in the course of which his renown became world-wide.

The young professor immediately showed himself a master. Here was something new in the genus of historian. Here was no simple compiler, though summer after summer he ransacked the libraries of Europe in search of hidden treasures. Here was no mere artist with a genius for dressing up the conclusions of his predecessors with pleasing novelty or interesting freshness. Rather, here was a philosopher among historians—an intense philosopher with an Aristotelian passion for rational order and architectonic proportion in things. Not that he was a cold and heartless man, ever preoccupied and calculating. False or gratuitous assertions begotten of indifference or malice annoyed him, it is true, but hosts of his students are only too happy to tell how easy of access he was, how prodigal with his time, how sincerely interested and helpfully suggestive in their work. All he had was theirs—even unpublished manuscripts. And the people of Fribourg even today are ready to vouch for his kindly spirit and apostolic soul. But—most revealing touch of all—we read that he was even *un peu malicieux* with the novices with whom he spent his declining years.

Those were full years at Fribourg, and in 1918 failing health made it necessary for him to withdraw to Paris. It was while there that he founded the *Bulletin Thomiste*, which in the course of every three years allocates and evaluates all that is written on things Thomistic. After eight years at Paris, he retired to the Studium at Saulchoir, where, until a year before he departed this life on January fourth last, he taught the novices the history of the Order and historical method.

Any recital of Father Mandonnet's literary activity must be incomplete. We can only mention his innumerable articles in all the great periodicals of Europe, especially in the *Revue Thomiste*, of which he was one of the founders. As we have seen, it was especially Dominican history that interested him. But because Dominican history is so much the essence of medieval history, his fame is not there-

fore confined to his brethren. We have already referred to his *Siger of Brabant*. This great work really rewrote in great part the history of the intellectual revival of the thirteenth century, and once for all always established its true perspective. Being such it naturally dealt in part with the majestic figure of Saint Thomas, and now that he had determined the Angelic Doctor's background, he applied the scalpel of historical criticism to his works. Fearlessly he set to work; and from his conviction that truth is no two-headed monster and that truth alone can endure, came forth that series of essays afterwards united in his *Authentic Writings of Saint Thomas*. Then he applied the same exactions of criticism to the Saint's life. In all this work and in his work on the Third Order of Saint Dominic, he was treading the lonely and thankless path of the pioneer, and if others who came after have improved or emended his work, his name for all that is none the less glorious.

Finally we must mention his little work on Saint Dominic. This is a golden book, the only thing of its kind in Dominican hagiography. It is Saint Dominic's heart and mind and zeal interpreted by a master, in the light of that century which few understood so well as he. By it he recalled to his brethren the true sense of their grandeur, that of being the "practical and glorious realization of the canons of the Fourth Council of the Lateran," and even to-day it bids us "attend to the rock from which we have been hewn."

II

Thomas Pegues was born in 1886 in southern France. His early schooling over, God called him to the seminary at Rodez, where he first manifested the extraordinary mental gifts that were his dowry. In time he became affiliated with the Dominican Fathers of the Province of Toulouse, and there devoted himself to the building up of that spiritual and intellectual edifice which for forty years to come was to be the inspiration and admiration of countless students and congregations. There he first showed that love for the regular life, for silence and for prayer, which edified his brethren in life and which they now recall with pleasure. There too he acquired a profound understanding and love of Saint Thomas and his doctrine that colored all his days, and conceived an irrepressible desire to hand down to others the treasures of wisdom and understanding that Saint Thomas had enshrined so luminously and reverently in the *Summa Theologica*.

Father Pegues did not have long to wait in realizing this praiseworthy aspiration. His training completed, he was straightway assigned to teach. He delivered his first lectures at the Studium of his

own Province, and then spent two years at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse. When Father Cormier opened the Collegio Angelico in Rome, Father Pegues was chosen as one of the professorial staff. At Rome he spent those golden and fruitful years of his life from 1909-1921 in expounding the moral part of the *Summa*. Then he returned to his own Province and for many years was regent of studies in the Studium at Saint-Maximin. Even yet, however, his work was not done, and finally we find him explaining the *Summa* in the Studium of the Roman Province at Pistoia. In 1935 he proceeded to the Minerva at Rome and began, though now in his seventieth year, what he hoped to be only the first of an annual series of conferences on the *Summa*.

To this recital of Father Pegues' teaching activity must be added a word on his literary efforts. It is these undoubtedly that will endure when the remembrance of his preaching and teaching have passed away. Among his earliest achievements are a series of remarkable articles contributed to the *Revue Thomiste*, and a life of our Lord which amounts to a commentary on the Gospel. In his early days too, he collaborated with Father Paban in editing the works of Capreolus, and was one of the first to point out the errors of the unfortunate Abbé Loisy. But even in this realm his main theme was Saint Thomas and his doctrine. In keeping with the wishes of Leo XIII, he venerated Saint Thomas not simply as a master, but likewise as a saint and patron; so it is that we owe to him the French translation of the life of Saint Thomas by William of Tocco, and that of the testimonies in the process of his canonization. But his greatest work is his *Commentary on the Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas*. Its thirty-one volumes contain a French translation of the *Summa* and commentary on the whole of it, the text being explained for the most part by extracts from other works of Saint Thomas. Almost needless to say, it is invaluable to those for whom poor knowledge of Latin or the bulk of Saint Thomas' works is a stumbling-block to acquaintance with his teaching. It is an outstanding contribution to the Thomistic revival to which French minds have applied themselves so generously. Mention must also be made of his *Catechism of the Summa*, which is used to-day in many of our American colleges.

During all this time, Father Pegues was also preaching. In this field, too, the source of his inspiration, after Holy Scripture, was the doctrine of Saint Thomas. He had a rare gift for adapting the abstruse doctrines of our faith to the minds and hearts of the faithful. This, together with his genuine piety, made his preaching much de-

sired. Significantly enough, it was while preaching a retreat at Dax that the Lord took him to Himself on the twenty-eighth of April of the past year.

Father Garrigou-Lagrange writes of him: "He liked to say that the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas was his homeland. He read it daily and always derived from it a happiness that made him forget the many trials and tribulations that were his lot. This superior happiness dominated all else and was for him like a foretaste of eternal beatitude."

III

Andreas Sales was born in 1887 in northern Italy. On the completion of his elementary studies, he traveled to Chieri for his further education, and there came in contact with the Friars Preachers. Gradually he felt called to their life of prayer and study, and eventually sought admission among their number. He received the habit in 1892, taking the name of Mark. The following year, when but sixteen years of age, he made profession, and from then on devoted himself with so much fervor and zeal to mental and spiritual progress that he stood out among his fellow students.

All these efforts were crowned with success in 1900, when he was ordained priest and obtained *summa cum laude* the lectorate in Sacred Theology. Immediately his piety and learning were put at the disposal of the student-brethren in the Studium of his Province. There for almost ten years he taught at one time or another, philosophy, theology, Sacred Scripture, oriental languages, patrology, sociology and eloquence. Truly he was a man of great intellectual vigor. He is remembered too as an incomparable teacher, and we read that even after many years of teaching he was wont to prepare his every lecture in writing, at least to the extent of a very full outline.

Father Sales, to be sure, was proficient in all the sacred sciences, but biblical studies were his special love. Hence few were surprised when he was assigned to the newly opened Collegio Angelico as a professor of Sacred Scripture. After lecturing two years he was appointed professor of dogmatic theology in the University of Fribourg. To this new task he devoted himself for fifteen years, endeavoring himself to the minds and hearts of the students and the many gifted masters who graced the halls of Fribourg.

It was upon a man of such stature that the choice of Pius XI fell, when it came time in 1926 to appoint a successor to Father Lepidi as Master of the Sacred Palace. Accordingly Father Sales returned to Rome once again and took up his duties as the Pope's theo-

logian and as consultor in the Roman Congregations. He was Saint Dominic's eighty-second successor in this office. Everywhere he left behind him the memory of an indefatigable associate, prudent and profound in his judgments, sweet and affable in temperament, with a smiling and joyous countenance that won the sympathy and love of all who met him.

Amid all his work, Father Sales retained a great love for the apostolate. A sonorous and powerful voice added to his learning and piety made him a fervid and forceful preacher. Turin, Chieri and other cities of Piedmont marveled at his eloquence and went so far as to proclaim him another Savonarola. Even at Rome he frequently preached retreats and sermons, and on any Sunday could be found hearing confessions until well-nigh noon in a parish church. While at Fribourg during the war, so invaluable an intermediary was he between captives and their families that later on the Italian government conferred on him the Cross of Knight of the Italian Crown.

We have said that Father Sales was especially attached to biblical studies. Hence it is that all his published works are of a biblical nature. We mention only one, his *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. He was unable to complete this great work, but before death's summons came, he had published all the New Testament and the Books of the Old Testament up to the Prophets. It is the special virtue of these commentaries that for all their accurate and critical scholarship, they remain clear and simple and reverent, so that they are as inspiring and helpful to the ordinary faithful as they are valuable to the scholar.

It was amidst the many cares of his office as Master of the Sacred Palace that he completed his last and best work, his *Commentary on the Psalms*. It involved an immense amount of labor, and, since his health had already begun to fail, it hastened his approaching end. He died on June the seventh.

Referring to this latest book of his, the Master General wrote: "It was as a swan song which better than anything else reveals to us the vast learning and deep piety of this erudite and holy son of Saint Dominic, who found in study and learning stanch nourishment for the living faith and fervent charity which characterized his whole life."