

Blackfriars: I-500

THE MIND OF THE FOUNDER

The five-hundredth issue of **BLACKFRIARS**, like the priory of that name in Oxford which was its birthplace, represents one of the lasting tributes to the memory of Father Bede Jarrett, whose influence upon the English Dominican Province was profound and whose impact upon English Catholicism is still felt. He was a man of vision, backed by a broad culture and a keen appreciation of what was happening in the modern world. He was convinced, not without reason, that the Dominican Order to which he belonged had a specific contribution to make in the formation of the public mind, not only in the strictly religious sphere but in the application of basic religious principles to the whole range of human living. As a consequence he looked in every direction for means to give expression to this magnanimity, which he took for granted as a normal Dominican characteristic, and he found what he hoped would be an effective one in introducing a new review which he called **BLACKFRIARS**.

To appreciate the importance and scope of this periodical in the mind of its founder, it is important to recognize that the very name he chose for it had for him a clear and definite connotation. Amongst his many other gifts, he was a notable historian, interested not least of all in the history of his own Order, whether in its conception in the mind and intention of St Dominic or in the practical development of that generous conception throughout the centuries. In particular the name **BLACKFRIARS** signified for Father Bede the wide scope of that original conception as applied to England and its splendid development in this country, especially during the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. It was then that the name 'Black Friars' was early applied to the Dominicans by the local people, nor could the symbolism of truth in the sharply outlined black cloak and hood over the white tunic and scapular be missed by the thoughtful observer. In this context it is significant that the founding of **BLACKFRIARS** followed so closely upon the return of the Dominicans to Oxford and the foundation by Father Bede of the present priory to which also he gave that ancient name. It was his purpose to do all in his power to restore the living spirit of the past to its earliest English home, and this review was to be an important

medium for that 'preaching' which gave to St Dominic's thirteenth century innovation its official name of 'Order of Preachers' and its motto *Veritas*.

As in the mind of St Dominic, so inevitably in Father Bede's mind, this 'preaching' was to be understood in no exclusively 'pulpit' sense. It was to embrace the spread of divine truth in all its multiple facets, natural as well as supernatural, philosophical as well as theological, cultural as well as moral, social as well as ecclesiastical. It was to cover the widest range of human interest and to use as its medium the written as well as the spoken word in a universal apostolate of the Incarnate Truth who himself said: 'Behold I make all things new . . . I will draw all things to myself'. It was for this reason that one of the primary requirements laid down from the outset for the Friar Preacher was that of comprehensive study, so that his preaching should be the fruit of a well-formed and well-informed mind. He must be firmly grounded first in the eternal verities, but then also in the wisdom and culture of the ages, in order to be fitted to make a solid contribution to the live questions and pressing problems of his own day in the light of the Incarnation.

Providentially, from the earliest years of the Order, the Friars Preachers had given to them in the person of St Thomas Aquinas a master whose searching wisdom would vivify and permeate the whole of that comprehensive study and would safeguard the truth of their preaching even in its widest sense. Father Bede himself, both in his spoken word and his written works, was a notable exponent of this Thomist approach to universal truth and it was in order to provide a suitable medium for its written exposition under the aegis of like-minded English Dominicans that he founded BLACKFRIARS. He did not think merely to add yet another to the existing periodicals, still less to supplant them. His purpose was rather to introduce one with a new orientation particularly designed to help meet a current need in a society that was already opening to a wider, more catholic and more integrated culture. Thomism was already making a fresh appeal to thinking men.

The subsequent appearance of other similar Dominican reviews is itself a tribute to Father Bede's clear-sighted initiative. Moreover, as he foresaw, BLACKFRIARS has proved to be the parent stem of important offshoots of a more specialist character in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT and (temporarily suspended through financial difficulties) DOMINICAN STUDIES, as well as of Blackfriars Publications in general. No doubt in this age

of specialization specialist literature is called for. Yet, by the same token, there is all the more need for a continued expression of the wide yet integrated outlook for which BLACKFRIARS was designed. In the years that have passed since its first number those of us who have had the honour and responsibility of its editorship have been concerned, in our various ways, to pursue the enlightened policy outlined for BLACKFRIARS by its founder. The measure of our success is for others to estimate. But at any rate, notwithstanding the material difficulties of wartime and the post-war years, the Review has happily survived to a still vigorous five-hundredth issue.

HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

BETWEEN THE WARS

Hopes that had been confident in the twenties were tuned to the different mood of the thirties, and between the lines of BLACKFRIARS you can see that the English Dominicans shared in the change of the times. The early death of Fr Bede Jarrett deprived the rising generation of support and encouragement. Moreover the lot of a monthly review was becoming more difficult. In the effort to maintain and increase circulation our numbers became plumper, double the present size and a shilling a copy, and here we should acknowledge our debt to Sir Basil Blackwell. His generosity and tolerance were constant, and he was often missed during our later more freelance methods of production and distribution.

Some of the difficulties of the period were caused by the stirring of new life, or rather of fresh adaptations to environment of a venerable yet vital tradition; of a rational philosophy faithful to St Thomas but more lissom and vernacular than the textbooks, of a theology more sensitive to the echoes of Revelation in profane experience, more open to problems raised outside the schools, less juridical than many of the received authorities belonging to the Baroque, both high and low, and to the revival of the Gothic; of a social thinking which allowed for the respectability of the people in possession but was not over-impressed by it.

Two controversies were typical; it is now possible to look back on them with more humour and sense of proportion than one showed at the time. One concerned the insistence—now common form—that marriage was a sacramental companionship of persons and that procreation could be too primitively recommended. A piece of bad staff-work here, and a whole number was consigned to the central-heating