

THE DOMINICAN STORY

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CHAPTER I: THE GOLDEN YEARS

It would be impossible to condense the 773 years of Dominican history into the short space we have. If you are interested in getting that kind of history Benedict Ashley's *The Dominicans* or William Hinnebusch's *The Dominicans: A Short History* are recommended. If you really want to go into full detail, including warts and all, Father Hinnebusch has a three volume work that will give you practically everything.

What we will try to do in these chapters is to give the highlights of our history, show the major trends and developments in the life of the Order over the centuries. This will, we hope, give you an appreciation of the glories of our Order, its contributions to the life of the Church and what we can expect from it in the future. The emphasis will be on the Friars although we will touch on developments in the other branches as they occur. It can be safely said that as the Friars go, so does the rest of the Order.

We will begin with what can aptly be called the Golden Years, a period of 82 years from the death of St. Dominic to 1303.

Jordan of Saxony

The Order was fortunate to have a series of great Masters all during most of that period. The first of these was Blessed Jordan of Saxony who was Master from 1221 to his death in 1237, a period of sixteen years. Jordan had only been a Dominican for two years when he was elected to succeed St. Dominic as Master of the Order, but he had so completely captured the ideals and spirit of Dominic that he was able to carry out the plans Dominic had in his mind at his death and make his dreams a reality. During Jordan's time as Master the Order grew tremendously in numbers. By 1250, there were 13,000 friars, 10,000 of them priests. At the time of Dominic's death, there were 8 provinces; by the time of Jordan's death there were twelve, one of them in the Holy Land, which at that time was under the rule of the Crusaders. When Dominic died, there were 15 priories; by 1227, there were 404. Each priory had a theological school attached to it under the direction of a lector as professor. All the friars had to attend his lectures. In addition, the Order was firmly established at all the major universities of Europe, including Paris, Oxford, and Bologna.

In 1237, Jordan was drowned in a shipwreck while returning from the Holy Land where he had gone on pilgrimage as well as to make a visitation of the Province there. But all was not lost. He was succeeded by St. Raymond of Pennafort.

Raymond of Pennafort

St. Raymond was one of our greatest Dominicans although not appreciated as he deserves to be. He was a Spaniard from Catalonia, born in 1175. He became an expert in Canon Law, being educated in Bologna, the greatest school of Canon Law in Europe. He became a professor there but later returned to Barcelona where he met St. Dominic on one of his journeys through there. That and the impression made by the Dominicans he knew in Bologna moved him to enter the Order in 1222. At that time, he was 47 years old and already recognized as the greatest canon lawyer in the Church. His entry into the Order understandably made a great impact on the academic community. The result was that many other academics were inspired to become Dominicans.

After his novitiate was over, he was called to Rome by Pope Gregory IX, the great friend of St. Dominic, to be his confessor. Since this was not, obviously, a full time job, he was set to work by the Pope to write the *Decretals*, an orderly codification of the laws of the Church which until that time had never been collected or organized, which, quite possibly, was the real reason Gregory called him to Rome. Raymond's decretals were to remain the basic law of the Church until 1918 when a new code of canon law was issued. When this massive work was completed Raymond was offered an archbishopric which he turned down only to be elected Master of the Order in 1238 to succeed Blessed Jordan of Saxony.

As Master, he revised the Order's Constitutions, putting them in strict canonical form. Various General Chapters had passed a great deal of legislation but it had never been put into a coherent body. The result was no one was completely sure of what the law of the Order was. Raymond's successors certainly appreciated his work. After this necessary task was completed, the saint resigned the office of Master in 1241 on the grounds of poor health and old age. He was 66 years old. He still had 34 years to live, dying at the age of 100.

During his "golden years" he became interested in converting the Moors and Jews in Spain and to that end he asked St. Thomas Aquinas write one of his greatest works, The *Summa Contra Gentes* which was a summary of arguments to be used against the teachings of the Muslims and Jewish rabbis who were especially learned in Spain. He also established schools to train Dominicans in the languages of the Near East, in addition to a number of other activities aimed at developing an apostolate to Islam.

Canon lawyers are generally thought of as being cold and legalistic. Raymond was not that at all. He was rather a kindly, compassionate and understanding confessor whose advice to his fellow confessors was most pastoral and gentle.

John the Teuton

He was succeeded in 1241 as Master by John the Teuton, who had great talents as a diplomat. He was first a priest and professor at the University of Bologna and received the habit of the Order from St. Dominic and made profession to him in 1219. At the time he was over 40 years

old. In 1227, he was made provincial of the Province of Hungary and then bishop of Hungary. It was a very difficult position requiring all his diplomatic talents. He acquitted himself with great success but finally the situation got so bad that he resigned as bishop and went back to the discipline of the Order. But he was still a bishop because bishops are bishops forever. Nonetheless, he was made the provincial of Lombardy, another hot bed of trouble where once again he was able to prevent a blow up between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope. He did so well, in fact, that he was elected Master of the Order to succeed Raymond. He was unique among our Masters for he was the only one to be a bishop at the same time.

John continued the policies of his predecessors in regard to study, regular observance, liturgy and preaching. He also carried on the work of St. Raymond of Pennafort with the Muslims, supervising the foundation of the schools for instruction in the languages, customs and belief. In addition, he extended the work of the Order in the Middle East. He died in office in 1252.

Humbert of Romans

He was succeeded by one of the greatest Masters of the Order, Humbert of Romans. Despite his name he was a Frenchman and he got his name from the fact that he was born in the French town of Romans in the year 1193. In 1224, while he was a professor at the University of Paris he joined the Order. As a Dominican, he was transferred to the University of Lyons. He was elected Provincial of Lombardy. In 1244, he was Provincial of France. He was nearly elected Pope at the conclave that chose Gregory IX, St. Dominic's great friend. He succeeded John the Teuton as Master in 1252. Among his contributions to the life of the Order was his commentaries of the Constitutions and the Rule, a letter on the vows and instructions on the offices of the Order. His commentary of the Rule was still being used until recently. He was also responsible for our Dominican Liturgy that remained in use until the nineteen sixties.

John of Vercelli

In 1264, Humbert. resigned as Master of the Order. He was succeeded by Blessed John of Vercelli who had been the Provincial of Lombardy, which seems to have been the training ground for the early Masters of the Order. Blessed Jordan of Saxony had given him the habit of the Order in Paris where he was professor of canon law. When elected, he was in his sixties and was crippled. As Master he followed the example of his predecessors and walked all over Europe visiting houses of the Order. It was during his term that the relics of St. Dominic were transferred to the tomb that now holds them. When Pope Clement IV died, John was almost elected to succeed him, but he got out of town fast so that a friend of his was elected instead.

His greatest accomplishment was the acceptance for the Order of the commission given by the Council of Lyons to preach reverence for the Holy Name of Jesus --- they swore in those days too. From this came the Holy Name Society which has been the most powerful organization of men in the United States for many years. The Society is now engaged in a campaign to get Blessed John canonized as a saint. He also laid the cornerstone for the Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, commonly known as the Minerva, in Rome where St. Catherine and Blessed Fra Angelico are buried. He died in 1283.

Munio of Zamora

He was succeeded by Munio of Zamora, a Spaniard, who should be held in the greatest reverence by the Dominican Laity for it was he who recognized that the lay people who had associated themselves with the Order needed a rule to guide them which he issued in 1285. It was tacitly approved by Pope Honorius IV in 1286 and received explicit papal approval in 1404. Munio had been Provincial of Spain before he was elected Master but he was one of the most beleaguered Masters of the Order. His own brothers made unproved charges against him and even though the General Chapter of the Order exonerated him he was disposed from office by Pope Nicholas IV. He then retired to his native Spain where he was made bishop of Palencia where St. Dominic had done his university training. He continued to be assailed by his enemies in that position. He had had enough. He resigned and retired to Santa Sabina in Rome. He died in 1300 and is buried there in the middle of the church where you can see the mosaic on the marble slab that covers his grave to this day.

Etienne de Besançon **Nicholas Boscasini**

Then came Etienne de Besançon who was a famous preacher and theologian but he only lived for two years before he died. He was elected in 1292 but died in 1294. After him came Nicholas Boscasini who served less than two years before being made the Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia. In 1303 he was elected Pope with the name of Benedict XI. He was later beatified as Blessed Benedict XI.

Thus ended the golden age of the Order. Father William Hinnebusch, O.P. sums it up in these words:

The Order's first century (1215-1303) witnessed the flowering of its ministry, the formation of its school system, the eminence of its scholarship, and the leadership of an exceptional number of able masters general who gave every sign of listening to the Spirit. Under their fearless leadership friars developed apostolates as preachers, inquisitors, ambassadors, legates, mediators and arbitrators, attended general councils and worked for the union of the eastern and western churches. The holiness displayed by these early Dominicans illustrates that the tension caused by the Order's thrust towards both contemplation and ministry can be harmonized, and most perfectly so at the summit of excellence. It is an excellence resulting from conformity to Christ the Preacher; the poor, chaste, and obedient God-man who proclaimed the Good News of salvation. Dominican men and women, prayerfully pondering and experiencing the word of God, both Incarnate and written, become like Christ, contemplative apostles working for the Kingdom of God and the salvation of men. (The Dominicans: A Short History, page 44).

II. Dominican Contributions to the Intellectual Life of the Church

Over the 778 years of its existence the Dominican Order has made great contributions to the life of the Church. We can be proud of them, proud in the sense that we take pleasure and satisfaction in the accomplishments of our brothers and sisters. Its greatest contributions have been in the field of the intellectual life of the Church in the fields of theology, both dogmatic and moral, Scripture and Canon

Law.

This tendency to the intellectual life goes back to our roots. St. Dominic grasped right from the beginning that preachers of divine truth had to be well trained in theology if they were to be effective. He did not want any of his men to get into the pulpit without knowing what they were talking about. One of the first things he did when the Order was just in its infancy was to take himself and his first followers to attend the lectures of Alexander Stavensby, an eminent English theologian who lectured at the Cathedral School in Toulouse. Lecturing was the method of instruction used by medieval university professors.

In 1217, one year after the founding of the Order, St. Dominic sent seven friars to Paris where there was a major university. He preferred to send his men to university centers, cities such as Bologna, Palencia, Montpellier and Oxford. As we have seen, he recruited many professors and students from those universities, men such as Jordan of Saxony, Raymond of Pentafort and Reginald of Orleans. As it turned out, most of the early members of the Order were men of university background and training.

In each house a lector was instituted to give lectures at which all the members were obliged to attend. Since Pope Honorius III gave to all priests of the Order faculties to hear confessions anywhere in the Church, the major subject was moral theology. To assist the lectors and students a number of books of moral cases were written. The best of these, and the one most widely used was one by St. Raymond of Pennafort.

In 1223, a remarkable young German, small in stature but gigantic in brain power, was drawn to join the Order by Jordan of Saxony. He was St. Albert the Great, one of the most extraordinary geniuses of all time. He had attended the University of Padua, the greatest center for the study of the natural sciences. There he was in his glory, for he had, since his early years, an insatiable curiosity about the world about him. He poked into and tried his hand at just about everything. Sister Jean Dorcy, O.P., in her book *St. Dominic's Family*, says:

He wrote on botany, astronomy, chemistry, physics, biology, geography and meteorology; he made maps and charts and experimented with plants; he studied chemical reactions; designed instruments to help with navigation; and he made detailed studies of birds and animals. (page 87)

His greatest contribution to human knowledge, however, was to theology. Before his time, Christian theology was based on the philosophy of Plato or, following the leadership of St. Augustine, on Neo-Platonism. Strange to say, the philosophy of Aristotle had been forgotten and his works lost in Europe. They had been kept alive in Moslem countries, especially in Moorish Spain where many learned commentaries had been written on them. In the early twelve hundreds Aristotle's works were once again becoming known in Europe.

Albert saw in Aristotle's philosophy a better and stronger basis for Christian

theology and he hastened to take advantage of them. He utilized those translations from Greek into Latin that had already been made and commissioned the others from William of Moerbeke, a Dominican Greek scholar. He also produced a series of commentaries on most of the writings of Aristotle along with works of his own. During all this time he was founding a Dominican House of Studies in Cologne, serving as Provincial of the German Province and, later on, as the Bishop of Ratisbon, a position he resigned after two years to return to the discipline of the Order. St. Albert, incidentally, was canonized by a Moto Proprio of Pope Pius XI. who named him a Doctor of the Church and made him the patron of natural scientists.

In 1243, a bulky, lumbering giant of a young man received the habit of the Order. He was Thomas Aquinas, the one who was destined to bring Albert's pioneering work to its fruition. He had studied under St. Albert at Cologne and they had become fast friends. Using Aristotle's principles he was able to synthesize the Church's teaching and the writings of the Fathers of the Church into one magnificent whole --- the Summa Theologica. His towering genius made such incredible contributions to the life of the Church, not only in theology, but in other areas such as poetry. We still sing his hymns to the Eucharist in the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He is so well known that we need not go into greater detail about him.

Albert and Thomas so completely dominated this period that other outstanding theologians, such as Roland of Cremona who died in 1259, Robert Kilwardby who died in 1280, Hugh of St. Cher who died in 1263 and others of their caliber are almost forgotten.

This tradition continued on into the next century with men who are too numerous to mention, although none of them are shining lights in the intellectual history of Europe. For the most part, they based their work on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and kept his principles alive and basic to the proclaiming of divine Truth.

The towering figure of the fifteenth century was St. Antoninus, the Archbishop of Florence, who lived from 1389 to 1459. His is one of greatest names in moral theology. In his Summa Moralis, moral theology came of age. But there were many others who were deeply imbued with the theological spirit of the Order. Incidentally, it was during this century that Dominicans at the University of Salamanca developed the theories about the roundness of the earth that strongly influenced Columbus and it was a Dominican Archbishop that sponsored him at the court of Isabella and Ferdinand.

This same University of Salamanca produced a series of great Dominican theologians whose speciality was international law. The most outstanding of these was Francisco de Vitoria who is commonly recognized as the "Father of International Law." Associated with him was the distinguished scholar, Domingo Soto. Among their students were Melchior Cano and Domingo Banez, who is chiefly remembered as being the confessor and advisor to St. Teresa of Avila in her work of reforming the Carmelite Order. Their works also greatly influenced the

eloquent defense of the American Indians by Bartolome de Las Casas, one of the great names in Latin American history.

The giant of the century was Thomas de Vio Cajetan, born in 1468 and died in 1534. He was not only the greatest commentator on the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, but a cardinal of the Church and the spokesman for the Pope in the discussions with Martin Luther. He almost won Luther over and Luther admired and respected him for the rest of his life.

The tradition kept rolling on into the seventeenth century with John of St. Thomas, also a distinguished commentator on the works of St. Thomas. It opened with Cajetan as Master which insured that the emphasis would still be on the intellectual life. Dominicans had a great deal to do with the decrees of the Council of Trent and, of course, Pope St Pius V was the moving force behind the implementation of its work. He was the one who issued the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the Index of Forbidden Books and the revision of the Liturgy. He also declared St. Thomas a Doctor of the Church.

During this period, emphasis was more and more placed on the teaching of the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas in our Houses of Study. Dominican students for the priesthood to this very day study St. Thomas, pure and simple. We have seen in our own times a great number of distinguished Dominican theologians who have had a great influence on the thought of our day. Garrigou-Lagrange was the top theologian back in the twenties and thirties. In Moral Theology we studied Prummer and Merkelbach who were the authoritative moralists of the time -- and they are still good..

In more recent times we have produced men like Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar and Schillbecxk. Chenu and Congar especially made tremendous contributions to Vatican Council II. Just recently, Congar was elevated to the rank of Cardinal. Although he is now deceased, it was an honor that he richly deserved. At one time, he was silenced by the Holy See and could not publish or teach. He humbly accepted that and now he has been vindicated in wonderful way.

The tradition still continues. We still have our schools. The Angelicum in Rome is the finest theological institution in the world. Pope John Paul II got his doctorate there. Most provinces have their own houses of study, as our Western Dominican Province does --- The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology. It has become the best philosophical and theological faculty in the country.

At present, Dominican scholars are emerging who will some day take their places with the great men of the past. In our province, we have men like Augustine Thompson, Aquinas Schenck and Robert Christian who are gaining an international reputation. So the tradition begun by St. Dominic himself has continued on down through the centuries and is very much alive today.

III. Dominican Contributions to the Spiritual Life of the Church

Dominican contributions to the spiritual life and teaching of the Church have been tremendous from the beginning down to the present time. St. Albert the Great was the first to write on spiritual theology. He invoked the principle that theology is primarily a practical doctrine that pertains to the sanctification of the student, consisting basically in growth in charity. St. Thomas Aquinas held the same point of view and this has become a principle of Dominican spirituality.

The two differed in that St. Albert in developing his teaching used the writings of an unknown author known as the Pseudo-Dionysius as a starting point. In the Middle Ages the Pseudo-Dionysius was believed to be the Dionysius converted by St. Paul by his sermon of the Areopagus of Athens, as related by the Acts of the Apostles. It has since been proven that the author wrote much later. His writings were in the Neo-Platonic tradition of Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers who were Sts. Basil the Great and the two Gregorys of Naziansen and Nyssa, all of whom are Doctors of the Church. Their Neo-Platonism was in a much more radical form than that of St. Augustine.

St. Thomas was completely familiar with the Pseudo-Dionysian writings and used them when it suited his purpose but he rejected their Neo-Platonism.

Albert's stress on these writings was to have a great influence on what are known as the Rhineland mystics --- Dominicans such as Meister Eckhart, John Tauler and Blessed Henry Suso. Eckhart, who died in 1327, had known St. Albert when Albert was an old man. In their teaching, as far as mystical theology is concerned, the emphasis is on the divine darkness in which the soul is immersed and taken up into the existence of God. This leads to the conclusion that we are absorbed into God as drops in a bucket of water. For this reason, the teachings of Meister Eckhart have become popular with those who see that he has much in common with the Oriental philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism. Matthew Fox was among the more vocal proponents of this point of view.

St. Thomas, on the other hand, taught that the closer we come to God the more of an individual we become, which is borne out by the fact that saints, as they advance in sanctity, become more and more themselves, completely different from any other saint. All you have to do is to read the life of a saint and see how true that is. This is an extremely important principle of the Dominican spiritual life.

Another figure in the Rhineland School of Mysticism was Blessed Henry Suso who lived from 1295 to 1366. He gave many conferences to nuns of the area and was a great deal more Thomistic than Meister Eckhart. But he was a peculiar sort of man engaging in all sorts of ghastly penances until God told him to stop. His *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* is still considered to be a spiritual classic.

Another member of this school was John Tauler, born some time between 1300 and 1304 and died in 1361, who was basically a preacher who used to pack them into churches in the Rhineland. His sermons were simple, orthodox and generally Thomistic. He taught that the only way to God is through identification with the crucified Christ.

As these men demonstrate, the women of the Order were a powerful influence. By 1300 there were 141 monasteries of cloistered nuns, 74 in Germany alone. The Friars served as their chaplains and spiritual directors. This meant, of course, that they had to develop a spiritual doctrine to enable them to carry on their work with the nuns. By and large, except in the Rhineland of Germany, they relied on the teaching of St. Thomas.

The Third Order secular, or as they were quaintly, but accurately called in an early Rule, "The Brothers and Sisters of Penance Living At Home," were a factor in this. There was a broad spectrum of life styles for the Laity ranging from a requirement that the members dress simply without adornment, to those who wore a habit but lived at home, such as St. Catherine of Siena, to those who were more commonly known as Beguines. They wore a habit, lived in the same compound but did not live a common life outside of the Liturgy. I ran into a relic of this life style in San Miguel Allende, Mexico. I was puzzled because the building seemed to be put together in a rather higgly-piggly fashion. The reason for this became clear when it was explained to me that it was originally a community of Beguines. Whenever a new member moved in they added on another apartment wherever there was room. They had a common chapel, but the members lived in their own quarters, did their own cooking and supported themselves by sewing, painting or whatever. They took no public vows. They did wear the habit but were lay Dominicans only. Back in the twenties, the bishop told them they had to fish or cut bait, become Third Order Religious or disperse. They chose to become religious sisters and affiliated themselves with the Mission San Jose Dominican Sisters. It was shrewd move. The Mexican government was confiscating all religious property except that owned by Americans. This meant they would not be closed down. When I was there the first time, there were still two or three of the original Beguines alive. This, I believe, was the last house of Beguines in the Church.

Out of all these various manifestations of Dominican lay life developed the Third Order Religious. Blessed Emily Bicchieri founded the first group in 1256. They took vows, wore the habit and lived a common life. In contrast to the cloistered nuns they devoted themselves to good works, although liturgical prayer was not neglected. In time, of course, these good works grew in scope so that now Dominican Sisters are engaged in every kind of ministry from hospitals, schools and colleges to missionary and social work.

The greatest writer on the spiritual life of Middle Ages and of all time, was a lay Dominican, St. Catherine of Siena, whose doctrine was so exalted and orthodox that she has been made a Doctor of the Church, the only lay person to have that distinction. She definitely was on the Thomistic side and in sharp contrast to the teaching of Meister Eckhart some of whose teachings were condemned by the Church after his death. While he was alive, he consistently maintained his loyalty to the Church and his willingness to submit to her magisterium.

She stressed objectivity and universality contrary to his subjectivity and individuality. She looked outward to the salvation of the world and reform of the

Church and the Order. He looked intensely toward the interior life of the soul. Her spirituality was much more ecclesial and sacramental than his.

She was deeply influenced by the teaching of another Italian, Dominic Cavalca whose *Mirror of the Cross* was a popular work at the time. He had died in 1342 five years before her birth in 1347.

The next great figure in Spiritual Theology was Louis of Granada whose birth date is uncertain, but who died in 1588. Although he was a brilliant student under the greatest Dominican theologian of the time, Francisco de Vittoria, his main interest was in helping the average lay person to become holy. His best known work was *The Sinners Guide* which was translated into all the European languages and remains a classic today. He was the first in the Dominican Spanish school of spiritual theology.

During the last century there has been an explosion of a kind in the Dominican contribution to spirituality. The great breakthrough came in 1905 when Father Juan Gonzalez Arintero, who was born in 1860 and died in 1928, published his masterpiece, *The Mystical Evolution In The Development And Vitality Of The Church*. Building on the doctrine of St. Thomas of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the lives of the saints, he proposed that all Christians, lay people as well as religious, were called to the highest levels of the spiritual life and that the life of grace developed into contemplative prayer. This was a radical position and aroused much opposition.

His teaching, however, was taken up by a French Dominican, Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, who was considered to be the greatest theologian in the Church at the time. His two books, *Christian Perfection And Contemplation* and *The Three Stages Of The Spiritual Life* forever broke the back of the school that taught that there was a distinction between ascetic and mystical theology, that the highest levels of the spiritual life were only for a chosen few while the rest of us could only stand and look on in admiration. Since he taught at the Angelicum in Rome, his prestige was enormous and his books were translated into most modern languages. Father Arintero, on the other hand, was not teaching anywhere because he was stone deaf and lived at Salamanca in Spain which was then a kind of backwater theologically speaking. The teaching of the two carried the day and are at present the common teaching of theologians.

In France there was an exciting outpouring of books on the spiritual life aimed primarily at the laity, with names like Gardeil, Sertillanges, Froget, Bernadot and Regamey in the forefront. They were all translated into English and were very popular in this country. England also made its contribution in the persons of Bede Jarret, Vincent McNabb, Gerald Vann and Thomas Gilby.

A number of magazines devoted to the spiritual life began to be published. In 1919 the French publication *La Vie Spirituelle* began publication while the following year, Father Arintero began the Spanish magazine *La Vida Sobrenatural*. In the United States we have *Spirituality Today* which was originally called *Cross and*

Crown, edited by Leonard Callahan, O.P.

As a final note, perhaps the best-known name today as a writer on the spiritual life is an American Dominican from the Mid-West Province, Jordan Aumann. Who knows who will be the next? He could be from your province and you may know him.

IV. Dominican Contributions to Scripture Studies, Canon Law and Art

In this chapter we want to consider contributions Dominicans have made to several fields of the Church besides theology. The first of these is of Scripture studies. To preface our remarks we must first make a distinction. In these studies there are two areas. The first is called hermeneutics which is the effort to reconstruct the biblical text in such a way that it recreates the original as closely as possible. This also involves reconstructing the times, the culture and the customs of the writers. To do this, it uses the disciplines of archaeology, linguistics, paleography, philology and history and thus attempts to determine the sense of the author and find out what he intended to say.

The other area is exegesis which is the exposition or interpretation of a passage or book of the Bible. In other words, hermeneutics presents the exegete with an accurate text so that he can make his commentary or interpretation with some assurance that he is correctly interpreting the original author.

In the Middle Ages there was not much in the way of hermeneutics. The Latin Vulgate, done by St. Jerome in the fourth century, was the accepted text of the Scriptures, so all that an exegete had to do was to comment on the Vulgate. The only one to do anything resembling hermeneutics was a Dominican, Hugh of St. Cher, one of the towering figures of the thirteenth century. He was born somewhere around the year 1200 in the town of St. Cher, France, hence his name. In 1225, along with Humbert de Romans, who became the fifth Master of the Order, he entered the Dominicans. At that time he was already teaching at the University of Paris. In subsequent years he was to turn out a large number of theological works, serve as Provincial of France three times and as Vicar of the Order under St. Raymond of Pennafort. He was created a cardinal in 1244, the first Dominican to so honored. He died in 1263.

He too accepted the Vulgate but he recognized that the available texts varied greatly because of errors in copying by hand, as they had to do in those days, so it needed some scholarly scrutiny. In a work entitled the *Correctorium* he made the necessary corrections. This resulted in what was known as the Paris Bible or the Bible of St. Jacques, the name of the Dominican house in Paris. This was the text of used in the Gutenberg Bible, the first printed book.

He also prepared the first Concordance of the Bible and wrote another work which was a series of exegetical notes on every verse of the Bible both in its literal and

spiritual sense. This was in common use for the next three hundred years.

Hugh's corrected Bible was used by a number of his confreres to make copious commentaries on the Scriptures, among them St. Albert the Great, who wrote numerous ones on various books of the Bible. Peter of Tarentaise and Nicholas of Gorran were others. The greatest of them all was St. Thomas Aquinas who aimed at a clear, literal and theological exegesis. An extraordinary work of his was the *Catena Aurea* which was a continuous exposition of the four Gospels using the commentaries of 54 Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church. He dictated it quoting all of these Fathers from memory.

In the 16th. century the great Dominican theologian, Cardinal Thomas de Vio Cajetan carried on in the tradition of St. Thomas by writing commentaries on most of the books of the Bible, as did many others whose names are not as well-known.

In time, the increased knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, fostered in great part, as we have seen, by Dominicans, led to a desire to go back to the original text of the Old and New Testaments on which the Vulgate was based. Dominicans, unfortunately, were not involved in this movement.

In the 18th. century, it was taken over by liberal Protestants and rationalists, mostly German, who brought to their scholarship certain preconceived principles, such as a lack of belief in miracles, especially the impossibility of a virgin birth or a resurrection. This made it impossible for them to see the Scriptures as relating historical events that actually took place. They saw them as myths and accounts made up after the fact.

Re-enforcing this approach was the development of the sciences of archaeology, paleography and philology which, although they provided more tools for scholarly analysis and criticism, were in their crude early stages and often were misinterpreted and misunderstood.

The Church after the Reformation, had gone into a kind of siege mentality which took the position "stick to tradition, close your eyes to any new ideas or movements, hang in there and somehow it will all work out." This was exactly what was done as far as Scripture studies were concerned.

In 1893, a change began to take place with the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* issued by Pope Leo XIII who was to break ground for the Church in so many areas. He described the situation thusly:

[These rationalists] absolutely deny that there is such a thing as divine revelation or inspiration or Sacred Scripture and proclaim that these are nothing but human devices and inventions --- that we have, not true narratives of real events, but either inept fables or lying histories: not prophecies and divine oracles, but either predictions forged after the occurrences or presentiments conceived with natural powers: not miracles truly so called and manifestations of divine power, but certain marvelous events by no means transcending the forces of nature, or else mere

illusions and myths. The Gospels and the writing of the apostles, they say, must be attributed to quite different authors.

He went on to encourage Catholic Scripture scholars to make use of the truly scholarly findings of those who were undermining the orthodox faith of the Bible, but cautioned them to remain loyal to the magisterium of the Church and the teachings of the Fathers. In a later letter he said:

[Catholic Scripture scholars] will have to cultivate actively the study of philology and its attendant sciences, and foster their continuous progress. Since, in fact, it is through these sciences that attacks against the Holy Scriptures are generally being made, it is also in them that we must seek our weapons, so that there may be no inequality in the struggle between truth and falsehood.

This was a tremendous breakthrough for Catholic biblical scholars who had until then been on the outside looking in. The Dominicans, however, were a little ahead of the Pope. Ten years earlier, in 1883, they had recognized the talents of a young French friar, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, and had sent him to Vienna to study oriental languages. In 1890, he went to Jerusalem to assist in founding the Ecole Biblique. rather impressive sounding in French but rather prosaic in English, the Bible School. Before he got there other Dominicans who had the dream of opening a center for Scripture studies had bought the church and grounds on the site where St. Stephen had been martyred. Those men, however, were in bad health so that very quickly Father Lagrange became the leader of the school. Pope Leo XIII had already had given his warm approval to the project.

Lagrange converted a former slaughterhouse on the grounds into a center for biblical research which has become pre-eminent in its field. It is not a degree giving institution, but a center to which scholars of all persuasions, Catholics, Protestants and non-Christians go to reflect, study and share their own insights and ideas with others. It was originally French but now it is international in its permanent staff. Associated with it has been such eminent scholars as Vincent, Abel, DeVaux and Benoit, and now men like Jerome Murphy-O'Connor and Benedict Viviano, an American, are a part of the staff.

For many years, the Ecole met with fierce opposition in Catholic circles. Father Lagrange was branded "dangerous radical." He was silenced by Pope St. Pius X but was later vindicated. He accepted this with complete obedience and thus laid down a principle for all Catholic Scripture scholars --- submit your work in biblical studies to the teaching authority of the Church so that its dogma and the Scriptures will always be in harmony.

There are numerous other distinguished Dominican Scripture scholars in other places, Noteworthy among them is Wilfred Harrington, an Irishman, Samuel Parsons of the Western Dominican Province and many others.

With the exception of St. Raymond of Pennafort, Dominicans have not distinguished themselves in the field of Canon Law until recently. The Maltese are

now outstanding, especially a Father Said who was mainly responsible for the new code of Canon Law.

In the field of Christian art, Blessed Fra Angelico who was born in 1386 and died in 1455, is, of course, one of the great figures. We are all familiar with his work such as the beautiful murals he painted in the Convent of San Marco in Florence. Contemporary with him was Fra Bartolomeo della Porta, who lived from 1472 to 1517, also a Florentine at San Marco, who began as a somewhat pornographic painter but was converted by Savonarola and became a deeply devout Christian artist. Blessed Andrew Abellon, who was born in 1375 and died in 1470, was a noted illuminator of manuscripts, a high art in those days. Blessed James of Ulm, who even though he was born in Germany in 1407 did most of his work in Bologna. His contribution to art was in the field of stained glass windows. He was never a priest but remained a brother all his life. Two of his windows are still in existence. One is in the Cathedral of Bologna. He died in 1491.

In our own time, Father McGlynn of the Eastern Province, a sculptor, was distinguished. His best known work is the statue of Our Lady of Fatima which stands in the facade of the Basilica of Fatima.

The Dominican Laity, however, have been the greatest artists of the Order. The most notable name has been Michelangelo, whose first work was two of the angels that hold up the tomb of St. Dominic in Bologna. His brother was a Dominican and he joined him in the Order as a lay man. One of his most touching indications of his Dominicanism was a scene in the Last Judgement on the back wall of the Sistine Chapel in which a few of those who were falling into Hell had caught on to a Rosary held out by some of those being saved and were being drawn up into Heaven.

In modern times, the eccentric Eric Gill, who was one of the the greatest typographers and who has developed fonts for printing that are commonly used today, has also made great contributions to art in sculpture, woodcuts, calligraphy and printing. A convert, he founded a guild of artisans which communely joined the Dominican Laity.

Father Guy Bedouelle, O.P. in his book, *In The Image Of Saint Dominic*, has this comment on the work of these artists:

These placed their talent at the service of proclaiming the Word Incarnate, which Word, in their hands, becomes again enfleshed. In the way of Fra Angelico, the Dominican vocation should lead us to discern the invisible through the visible. For our life includes the dimension of beauty to be discovered or fashioned in all that we do, in all that we sing, and in all that we preach. (p. 82)

One could go on and on but this is enough to show how greatly Dominicans have contributed to the life of the Church in a great many areas.

V. The Order of Preachers

Section I: Pulpit Preaching

As we have seen, St. Dominic was completely devoted to preaching the Word of God and preached whenever and wherever he could, once he had begun his active life in southern France. He was anxious to have Pope Honorius describe the members of his Order as "preachers" and was exultant when in the third bull of confirmation the Pope used that very expression, which meant that now his projected order of preaching brethren had papal approval. His first followers engaged in it with equal fervor and zeal, men like Blessed Jordan of Saxony and Blessed Reginald of Orleans, whose preaching drew in great numbers of recruits to the new Order. This dedication to proclaiming divine Truth became a hallmark of the Dominican spirit from the beginning and has continued down to the present time.

Early Dominicans took it for granted that no matter what else they did, they were expected to get into the pulpit and proclaim the Good News. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, did so on a regular basis even though he carried a heavy work load of teaching and writing. We have copies of his sermons on the Creed, the Our Father and Hail Mary, which are masterpieces of profundity in doctrine put in simple, understandable language.

Our own Father Augustine Thompson, a professor at the University of Oregon, has recently put out a book, published by the Oxford University Press, which shows how the Dominicans of Bologna in 1233 brought about a revival of the faith in the area around the city by their preaching. This was known as the Alleluia. Something similar happened throughout Europe. The preaching of peace and justice was an important part of the Dominican message. We read of men like William Peyrault and Stephen of Bourbon, who went around from one town to another preaching and hearing confessions year after year. The Order instituted the office of Preacher General to which only men of solid theological learning and a willingness to preach often and under any circumstances were so honored. That office still continues, although it is not as common as it once was.

These early Dominican preachers also provided another great service to other preachers. They prepared preaching aids, gathering anecdotes, sermon outlines and other materials to help priests to put together solid sermons. This material was not available until Dominicans put them out. We still do some of that but much less than in the old days.

An adjunct to preaching was that after their sermons the preachers would go into the confessional to hear the confessions of those who had been moved to penance by the sermon. Our home missionaries still do this. In fact, it is an important part of their ministry. Another aspect of Dominican preaching was that it emphasized the love of God. We were not among those who preached hell fire and damnation and that is still true.

That term "home missionary" reminds us that going from parish to parish and

preaching missions and giving novenas is still a most important part of our Dominican mission. It is a great ministry but a most difficult one. It involves living out of a suitcase month after month and driving tens of thousands of miles every year. There are many of us who cannot handle it, but there are some who love it and God bless them for it.

One of the methods the early Dominicans used in their preaching was to promote their Third Order, found confraternities such as that of the Rosary, Holy Name, the Blessed Sacrament. These drew people to their churches. But there were the sermons. Dominicans preached often, up to 240 to 250 a year. They preached morning and evening, on Sundays and feast days and on all special occasions. We preach even more often nowadays --- at every Mass, which adds up to a great number of sermons preached throughout the year.

As we go down through the history of the Order we meet such great preachers as St. Vincent Ferrer who lived from 1350 to 1419. Another great preacher of penance and conversion of life was Girolamo Savonarola, who lived from 1452 to 1488. Active at the same time was a preacher whose approach was quite different and that was Alan de la Roche who was a most zealous preacher of the Rosary. He was so popular that legends were built around him. He promoted the Confraternity of the Rosary which still exists. Its headquarters for our Province is in Portland, Oregon under the leadership of Father Aquinas Duffner and Cecilia Hosely, the Prioress of the Portland Chapter of the Dominican Laity.

The next outstanding preacher was Henri Lacordaire, who lived from 1802 to 1861, the greatest France has ever produced. He would fill Notre Dame de Paris every time he preached even in a time of rationalists and sceptics. He was an extraordinary man in many ways. It was he who re-established the Dominican Order in France after it been suppressed during the French revolution. He was a major figure in the revival of the Order, one of his disciples being Vincent Jandel, one of the great Masters of the Order.

Lacordaire seemed to open a golden age of preaching among Dominicans in France. There was Monsabre, Janvier, and Didon who succeeded him as the Lenten preacher at Notre Dame. All of these men could fill that vast cathedral when they were scheduled to preach.

They were not the only top preachers of that time. Ireland produced Tom Burke, who lived from 1830 to 1863. He preached extensively in this country and once again, churches were crowded and the same is true of Bede Jarret from England. Of course, in those times there were no televisions, no radios and no movies so a good preacher could draw crowds. Besides Jarret, England also produced Vincent McNabb, who was actually an Irishman by birth but belonged to the English Province. He was a genuine, outrageous eccentric whose main pulpit was a soap-box in Hyde Park in London. With Frank Sheed and Mazie Ward he was a founder of the Catholic Evidence Guild that brought the Gospel into the marketplace.

In our own country, Charles Hyacinth McKenna built the Holy Name Society into

the the most powerful lay organization in the Church. He could pull tens of thousands of men to one of his rallies. Following him was the greatest, Ignatius Smith, who was also a great Holy Name preacher. When Life magazine chose the ten greatest American preachers he was the only Catholic on the list.

In mentioning these men's names we do not want to give the impression that they were the only Dominican preachers of their time. If we were to start off listing just a few of them you would be bored to tears. What we want to leave with you is the idea that Dominicans have been and still are among the outstanding preachers in the Church.

Section II: Missionary Activity

Another form of Dominican preaching has been its missionary activity. As we know, St. Dominic yearned to be a missionary to the Cuman Tatars who were out where the border of Russia would be today. At that time, Eastern Europe and on clear over to the Pacific Ocean was inhabited by barbarian tribes that kept pushing one another by invasion so that the situation was always chaotic. But it was a great field for missionary activity. St. Dominic's desire to a certain extent was partially realized when he received the Polish brothers, St. Hyacinth and Blessed Celaus, into the Order. Poland was on the frontier of the Faith, not completely Christianized itself but it would become a base of operations for further missionary work to the north and the east.

Blessed Jordan of Saxony, Dominic's successor, would set up the Province of the Holy Land as well as the Province of Greece. There was also the extraordinary group called the Pilgrim Friars which was a vicariate of the Order that sent Dominicans out into that vast region of Central Asia. Records have been lost so we know little about the details of the works done by these itinerant Friars. This all came to an end in 1453 when the Turks captured Constantinople and became the masters of the Near East.

In 1492, Columbus opened up a whole new mission field in the New World. Dominicans, especially the Spanish, poured into it to bring the Good News to the natives. Their biggest enemies were their own countrymen. Bartolome de las Casas was the most eloquent and powerful voice for the Indians. Another great Dominican missionary was St. Louis Bertrand who converted tens of thousands of Indians. But there were innumerable other Dominicans working in these missions. We must mention just in passing the Dominican missions in Baja California.

The Portuguese had already opened up the Far East to missionary activity and Dominicans were there from the beginning. The Province of the Holy Rosary was founded in Spain to man these missions. The proto-martyrs of Vietnam, China, Japan and Formosa were members of that Province. They also founded the largest Catholic University in the world in Manila, Santo Tomas.

Unfortunately we do not have time to go into the missionary activity of the Order in

detail but it is glorious and we can be proud of it. Father Francis Weber, the eminent historian of the Church in the western United States, sums up very well our missionary work in the Americas:

Since its founding in 1215 by Domingo de Guzman, the Order of Preachers has diligently sought to make the world its cell and the ocean its cloister. Entering the New World in 1510, the Dominicans, as they are known, settled on Espaniola, a small island in the Caribbean Sea, to begin an unparalleled humanitarian campaign on behalf of the region's native peoples. Pedro de Cordova, Antonio de Montesinos, Bartolome de Las Casas and Luis Cancer are only a few who threw themselves wholeheartedly into the task of advancing the spiritual and material welfare of the Indian population.

In practically every corner of the two American continents penetrated by Spain, the Order of Preachers labored with distinction. As early as 1526, they moved from the Caribbean islands to preach the Gospel within the present borders of the continental United States, possibly with Ponce de Leon in 1513 and assuredly with Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon in 1526.

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