Pauline Shaw tells the story of the origins of Franciscan journalism, which contains much to fascinate the readers (and editors) of franciscan.

Elizabeth Hayes was born in Guernsey in 1823 and left the island about 20 years later. As a child she had read widely under the tutelage of her clergyman father. Clearly she was a very gifted young woman who found her way to Wantage where she rapidly established herself and was instrumental in starting the three schools in the village before falling out with the vicar-founder, William Butler, in 1856. She then moved to London and eventually to the Church of Rome.

The Oxford Movement was in full flood and Sister Elizabeth's story features all the great names including that of Henry (later Cardinal) Manning, her spiritual director. The narrative becomes hard to follow as the heroine moves rapidly, as a religious, from one missionary endeavour to the next. She crossed the Atlantic many times, and lived in France and then in Germany at the time of the Franco-Prussian war. In 1873 she founded a mission at Belle Prairie, Minnesota, and it was here that she set up a printing works and embarked upon the Apostolate of the Press. She launched the 'Annals of Our Lady of the Angels' in January, 1874.

This date marks the birth of Franciscan journalism, and Elizabeth spent the rest of her life nurturing, editing, managing, promoting this monthly whose purpose was the evangelisation and education of a wide readership in Christian and Franciscan truth for whom 'magazines' before the days of radio and TV were a lifeline. This is not to say that Elizabeth settled down in Belle Prairie - she lived much of the time in Rome as Mother General of her Franciscan Third Order Regular Institute, and died there in 1894.

Shaw's book contains much else on the subject of nineteenth century journalism which is not of such immediate interest to the non specialist, but there is much here to make us aware that this venture in Anglican Franciscan literature (franciscan) has roots deeper even than the Floweret of the 1920’s from Hilfield.

Anselm SSF