

DOMINICANA

Vol. XXXVII

MARCH, 1952

No. 1

SAINT THOMAS, THE SCIENTIST

"Every teacher trained in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a family, who brings out from his storehouse new things and old." Matt. 13, 52 (Fr. Spencer's Version).



ALTHOUGH the words of Our Lord are usually applied to the office of the preacher, after studying St. Thomas' teaching on the scientific nature of theology, it seems that they have a unique application to the function of the theologian. In the very first question of the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas explains that Sacred Doctrine is truly a science inasmuch as it deduces conclusions from principles known through Divine Revelation; moreover it is the highest type of science—wisdom—since it understands and directs all things through the highest cause, Almighty God. The whole of Revelation—Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the *Magisterium* of the Church—is a storehouse of truth and beauty from which the theologian, who is thoroughly familiar with its contents, can bring forth new truths, and new insights into older truths.

St. Thomas, the theologian of theologians, is therefore the paragon of scientists. It is particularly in his rôle as scientist that he is pictured on the opposite page. Behind the Angelic Doctor are three volumes, representing the Scriptures, the works of St. Augustine, the purest of Christian Tradition, and the works of Aristotle, the greatest achievement of unaided human reason. These were the Common Doctor's theological storehouse.

In his hands is his best known work, the *Summa Theologiae*, which is divided into three parts treating first of God Himself, then of man in relation to God, and lastly of Christ, the bridge between

the human and the Divine: hence the words, *de Deo, homine, et Christo*. The result of St. Thomas' scientific investigations into Revelation are represented by the stack of manuscripts on his left. They are hardly an indication of the actual size of his complete works. One of the compact modern editions of the *Omnia Opera* fills thirty-four large volumes.

The eyes of St. Thomas must have been as clear and intense as the light of his intellect; and his mouth, as rigid as his logic. In this painting, the Angelic Doctor's face mirrors his mind, magnificent in its clarity and orderliness. Here lies the beauty of St. Thomas.

The work of the theologian is long and arduous. It is sustained only by the aid of Our Lord, who is in Himself the incarnation of theological truth and the unique model of theologians. Profoundly aware of Christ's proper place in the mind and heart of the "teacher instructed in the kingdom of heaven," St. Thomas had strong devotion to his Redeemer. The crucifix, turned toward him and drawn as close as possible, is the symbol of that devotion.

St. Thomas, the scientific theologian, was ever conscious of the needs of the human family as was the householder spoken of by Jesus. He attempted to satisfy these needs by using his intellectual powers to draw out of the larder of Divine Revelation in scientific mode those truths for which the mind of man yearns.

PAUL HAAS, O.P.

Ope Doctoris caelici tota gaudet Ecclesia:

Fulget Ordo Dominici peculiari gloria.

Dominican Breviary