



THE APOTHEOSIS OF ST. THOMAS

(Zurbaran-Seville Museum)

'NON NOVA, SED NOVITER'

Seven hundred years ago a desperate plea from a friar on the Islamic missions in Spain was heard by a friar in the Dominican studium in Paris. And St. Thomas in his cell between lectures began the work which has come down to us as the *Summa Contra Gentiles: On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*.

Perhaps in no other work does St. Thomas stand forth so sharply as the Christian apologist alert to the call of his own time. That the intervening years have not subtracted from its enduring value is clear in 1958. The evidence is in the rack of pocket books in the local drug store where the *Summa Contra Gentiles* may be found—as well as Mickey Spillane and Ellery Queen.

St. Thomas and his master St. Albert had met with violent assaults at the University of Paris. On the left, so to speak, followers of the Arabian philosopher Averroes sought to force his interpretation of Aristotle on the Church. And on the right the purists still resisted the astounding “innovation” of the Dominicans which adapted the pagan Aristotle to the service of the faith. Was the same battle to be waged all over again in Spain? We know the answer. The *Contra Gentiles* was the weapon fashioned by St. Thomas for use in the thick of the fight for mens' souls against the teachers of Averroes in that Arab-ridden land. And yet in marshalling his forces he remained patient, reasoning, calm. Seeking to win mens' hearts for Christ through their minds, he would provoke as little distraction as possible from their unruly emotions.

These three key notes of Christian apologetic tradition—truth, contemporaneousness and an understanding charity—stand out characteristically in this work of St. Thomas. And no pontiffs have shown themselves more keenly alive to this flexibility-in-immutability than the great teaching popes of the past century. St. Paul had proclaimed: “What Jesus Christ was yesterday, and is today He remains forever” (Heb. 13:8). Pope Benedict XV had declared: “*Nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est*” (Encyc. *Ad Beatissimi*). It remained for Pope Pius XII to graphically summarize the manner in which the Church

reintroduces the eternal truths to each new age: "*Non nova, sed noviter*" (Address, May 31, 1954). The objective in Christian apologetics is not new truths, only "those which have been handed down" from the beginning—but ever more articulately expressed and sharply applied, in modes and by weapons adapted to the times.

With this objective in focus, *Dominicana* presents this issue. We look at some of the manifold problems which face Holy Mother Church today. First from factors which transcend organized religion—in philosophy (*Vision of Order*) and in science (*Science Redeemed*). Then we consider those who join with Her in worshipping the One God, but do not receive His Son (*Islam on the March, Abraham and His Seed Forever*); and at those whose protracted severance from Her is sadly mourned (*Ecumenical Quest for Unity, Rome Looks to the East.*) Finally we turn to the Church Herself and to those special helpers Divine Providence has given Her in the last hundred years (*Century Since Lourdes, Saints in Our Day*).



"It is in the province of the one science to pursue one of two contraries and to oppose the other; just as medicine strives to produce health and eliminate sickness. Hence, just as it is proper to the wise man to meditate on the truth—especially insofar as this is concerned with the first principle—and to teach it to others, it is likewise his duty to fight against the contrary falsehood.

"This two-fold office of the wise man is nicely manifested from the mouth of Holy Wisdom (Prov. 8:7): that is, to proclaim the divine truth (which is truth in the most proper sense of the word) after having himself meditated on it; and this is touched upon by the words, 'My mouth shall meditate truth.' And secondly, to attack the error contrary to this truth, which is signified by the words, 'and my lips shall hate wickedness.' For 'wickedness' designates that falsehood which is contrary to divine truth, which in turn is called "piety;" thus the contrary falsehood receives the name of "impiety." *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 1.

NEW DOMINICANA SCHEDULE

With this issue *Dominicana* will be published in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter issues, rather than in March, June, September and December as heretofore.