

# THE MODERN SCHOOLMAN

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## ST. THOMAS THE TEACHER

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ONE who wishes to learn what the philosophy of teaching of St. Thomas was will find it most completely worked out in *QQ. Disp. de Veritate*, q. xi, *De Magistro*, or more briefly in the *Summa Theologica*, i, q. 117, aa. 1, 2.<sup>1</sup> And for an interpretation of that philosophy in the light of modern educational thought he may consult with profit *The Philosophy of Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas* by Mary Helen Mayer, A. M.<sup>2</sup>

But it is one thing to learn what a man's professed philosophy is in any subject, and quite another thing to seek to discover how he has reduced that philosophy to practice. And the second task is in this case far the more difficult of the two.

Still the results of modern research will help us to make an imaginary reconstruction of a thirteenth century lecture room with its crowd of students on their rush mats, listening, and making notes on the lecture without seeming too much concerned about when it would end. For it seems that there was no limit fixed to the length of the lecture

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also *Contra Gentiles*, ii, 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Marquette Monographs on Education*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company. 1929.

except what the fluency of the lecturer or the endurance of the listeners would set.<sup>3</sup> And dominating the assembly from his position in the high pulpit is Master Friar Thomas. He is a large man, of upright carriage, to correspond, says William de Toco, to the uprightness of his soul. He has a large head and is slightly bald.<sup>4</sup> The evidence of his written works would not entitle us to say that he drew or held his large audiences by his eloquence, unless simplicity and directness and absolute lucidity of thought and expression should be called eloquence. It must have been the recognized worth of his teaching that held them, though in attracting them we must not exclude the influence of a certain element of curiosity in regard to what was new and unusual in the matter and the method

<sup>3</sup> One who is curious about the lack of seating accommodation in the lecture rooms of the time will find something pertinent to the subject in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, iii, p. 149, No. 1319, and p. 445, No. 1537.

<sup>4</sup> *Fuit magnus in corpore et rectae staturae, quae rectitudini animi respondet, . . . magnum habens caput, . . . aliquantum calvus. Gulielmus de Toco: Vita*, vii, 39B. In *Acta Sanctorum*, tom. i. Martii.