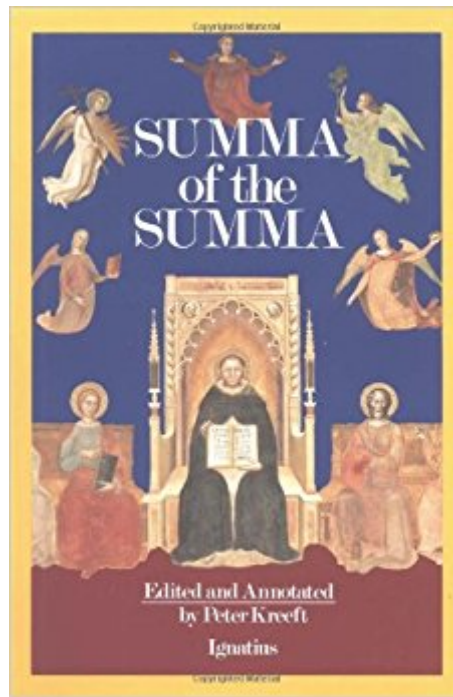


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A Summa Of The Summa



Synopsis

Saint Thomas Aquinas is universally recognized as one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived. His writings combine the two fundamental ideals of philosophical writing: clarity and profundity. He is a master of metaphysics and technical terminology, yet so full of both theoretical and practical wisdom. He is the master of common sense. His major work, the *Summa Theologica*, is timeless, but particularly important today because of his synthesis of faith and reason, revelation and philosophy, and the Biblical and the classical Greco-Roman heritages. This unique book combines selected essential philosophical passages from Thomas' *Summa* with footnotes and explanations by Kreeft, a popular Thomist teacher and writer. Kreeft selected those passages from Thomas that are intrinsically important, non-technical enough to be intelligible to modern readers, and most likely to be used in a class or by independent readers who want to study the *Summa* on their own. Kreeft's detailed footnotes explain difficult or technical passages and call attention to points of particular significance for the modern reader. This book is the most intelligent, clear, and useful access to Saint Thomas in print. Includes a glossary and an index.

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Customer Reviews

You have to hand it to Kreeft for taking some of the greatest ratiocination ever, and translating it into commonspeak. Thomas Aquinas is one of the greatest minds ever to grace God's green earth, but too often--probably due to his religion--he has been marginalized. Generally, we just read his "Five Ways" that prove God's existence. However, this is much more to Thomism than this one

philosophical derringer. For those unaware, Thomas Aquinas was the Catholic scholar who produces two L*A*R*G*E, multi-volume books on Catholic theology: "Summa Contra Gentiles" and "Summa Theologica," the latter being a summation of Catholic theology. This book is a summation of "Summa Theologica," and serves as a handbook and thumbnail for both Catholic Theology and Philosophy and Christian philosophy in general. Aquinas has a sharp mind and can both divide the word and divide a question in a way that few others can. I am not Catholic, but stand in deep admiration for Aquinas's work and mind, and more especially because he minded his work by working his mind. The Book: Kreeft has selected the essential texts and questions that illuminate aspects of Thomistic philosophy/theology. He has the text with explanatory notes in footnotes, which is unusual since we are not reading a summary or rephrasing of Aquinas, but actually reading his words and ideas, unfiltered and undistorted. His chapter divisions follow closely the divisions used in the whole "Summa Theologica," and focus primarily on the first part of part one, and the second part of part two of the "Summa Theologica," and doesn't deal with the latter books that deal with the church and the nature of sacraments. This summation, therefore, would not be offensive to any Christian.

Summa of the Summa (hereafter SS) is a simply wonderful abridgment of Aquinas' Summa Theologica (hereafter ST). Professor Kreeft has done a superlative job of assembling those parts of ST that will be of most interest to readers new to Aquinas' thought. The text is drawn from the Dominican Benzinger Brothers translation of ST, still the most faithful to Aquinas original language and still the most widely available complete edition of ST in English. Kreeft includes a fine glossary of technical terms in ST likely to be unfamiliar to most readers, and a short, readable introductory essay that gives an interesting discussion of the structure of ST. Rather than include a lengthy introductory commentary on the classic text as do many editors, Kreeft includes his comments in footnotes, which appear frequently and are quite extensive. To give one example, to accompany Aquinas' famous "five ways" to prove the existence of God on pp. 57-70, Kreeft provides approximately eight pages worth of footnotes. The footnotes that discuss Aquinas only are nearly always illuminating, and will prove invaluable to readers as they study the primary text. I believe readers of SS will be able to progress more smoothly to the complete ST if they so choose than they could with any other abridgment of ST or other anthology of Aquinas' writings now in print. At the same time, SS is a fine, self-contained introduction to Aquinas' thought. The only disappointing aspect of SS is its discussion of philosophical positions that are at variance with Aquinas. Like many philosophers working in Roman Catholic institutions, Kreeft has a tendency to present false

straw-man interpretations of philosophers whose conclusions he disagrees with, and then to "refute" these philosophers by kicking down the straw men.

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