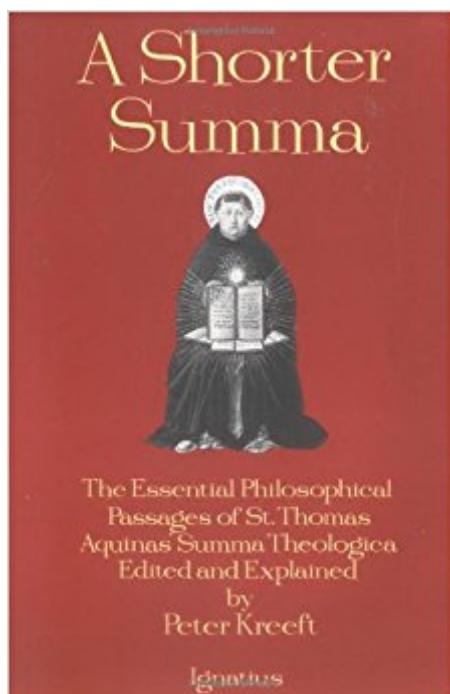


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A Shorter Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages Of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica



Synopsis

A shortened version of Kreeft's much larger Summa of the Summa, which in turn was a shortened version of the Summa Theologica. The reason for the double shortening is pretty obvious: the original runs some 4000 pages! (The Summa of the Summa was just over 500.) The Summa is certainly the greatest, most ambitious, most rational book of theology ever written. In it, there is also much philosophy, which is selected, excerpted, arranged, introduced, and explained in footnotes here by Kreeft, a popular Thomist teacher and writer. St. 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. 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 little book is designed for beginners, either for classroom use or individually. It contains the most famous and influential passages of St. Thomas' philosophy with copious aids to understanding them.

Book Information

Paperback: 165 pages

Publisher: Ignatius Press; a edition (April 1, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0898704383

ISBN-13: 978-0898704389

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 33 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #83,314 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #85 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Biographies > Saints #604 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Catholicism #1034 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects

Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Latin

Peter Kreeft, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy at Boston College, is one of the most widely read Christian authors of our time. His many bestselling books cover a vast array of topics in spirituality,

theology, and philosophy. They include How to Be Holy, Practical Theology, Back to Virtue, Because God Is Real, You Can Understand the Bible, Angels and Demons, Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing, and A Summa of the Summa.

St. Thomas Aquinas is arguably the smartest man to live after Aristotle and before Sir Isaac Newton (with the exception of Jesus Christ). "Summa Theologiae" (ST) by St. Thomas Aquinas has over 3,000 pages. Peter Kreeft's "Summa of the Summa" has 500 pages of excerpts from the ST. And Kreeft's "A Shorter Summa" has only 170 pages to introduce beginners to the ST. P 18: A diagram showing the parts of the ST are listed. The diagram is very useful because the parts of the ST are confusing to beginners. P 45 begins a summary of St. Thomas Aquinas's famous five proofs for the existence of God, beginning with the proof from motion that shows that there is one and only one unmoved first mover and "all men call that first mover God". P 48: A diagram of the three acts of the mind and a tree of logical possibilities. P 84: A footnote showing the difference between the human intellect and human will compared to God's intellect and God's will. This chart helps me to understand Boethius's explanation that God does not have "foreknowledge". God is outside of time and, as Einstein confirms, God created time. So just like the author of a book who knows the entire story, God knows all our choices and their effects in the "present". P 129: A diagram shows a fundamental error in modern philosophy. St. Thomas believes that an idea is that by which some objectively real thing is known. Starting with Locke and continuing with many others such as Kant, modern philosophers have fallen into the error of thinking that an idea is that which is known. If that were true, it would leave us trapped inside our minds with no way to judge whether an idea has any relationship to anything outside the mind. Read footnote 27 on p. 126. Mortimer J. Adler devotes the first chapter of his book "Ten Philosophical Mistakes" to a much longer explanation, history, and the consequences of this error. P 131: This Question with its eight articles shows seven ways that do not lead to happiness, beginning with money, and the only way that does lead to happiness. It is no accident that those first seven articles are parallel to the discussion of things that do not lead to happiness in the "Nicomachean Ethics" by Aristotle. Nor is it an accident that St. Thomas disagrees with the answer given by Aristotle who did not know Jesus Christ.

It's probably very good. Just way over my head!

A good introduction to the great multi-volume work.

Should you buy this book? Yes, if it is for you as a newbie Catholic, or if you have a child in a secular Junior High or High School. You may also be like Oswald Sobrino, who said, "Ironically, I was cheated at a Catholic university of exposure to Aquinas!" Cleary the victim of theological malpractice. You need to 'Know Your Religion,' and this book is a great place to start. Kreeft's plain English explanation of Catholic high Orthodoxy makes this book worth its weight in gold. The introductory essay on Aquinas alone justifies its publication, and the glossary for the technical terms Thomas uses is a gem. By all means, the Angelic Doctor is must for any Catholic. If you are not aggressively studying Catholicism from approved sources, then your faith will be at the mercy of Jack Fertig and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Or to negligent teachers, which is why Christ spoke of the Parable of the Lost Coin. If you are into philosophy, Law, History, Political Science, or some combination of the above, however, then I suggest getting the fuller version of the book—A Summa of the Summa. Both are summaries of the Summa, but the mid-sized version gets into more detail that college-level students would need. If you couple either summaries with Aquinas: Selected Writings (Penguin Classics), then you have all that is necessary for a Thomistic non-technician. However, do not confuse this book with Aquinas's Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas's Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica. This is Aquinas's own summary of his opus magnum. Since he died midway through writing his own summary, the book is not as helpful as we would like. As a non-Catholic, I'm surprised at how much I enjoy Thomas's writings. His mind is sharp, his logic sound, and he was blessed with a heavy does of both abstract thought and common sense. Even when he gets it wrong (from the point-of-view of The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ), we still love him for his effort.

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