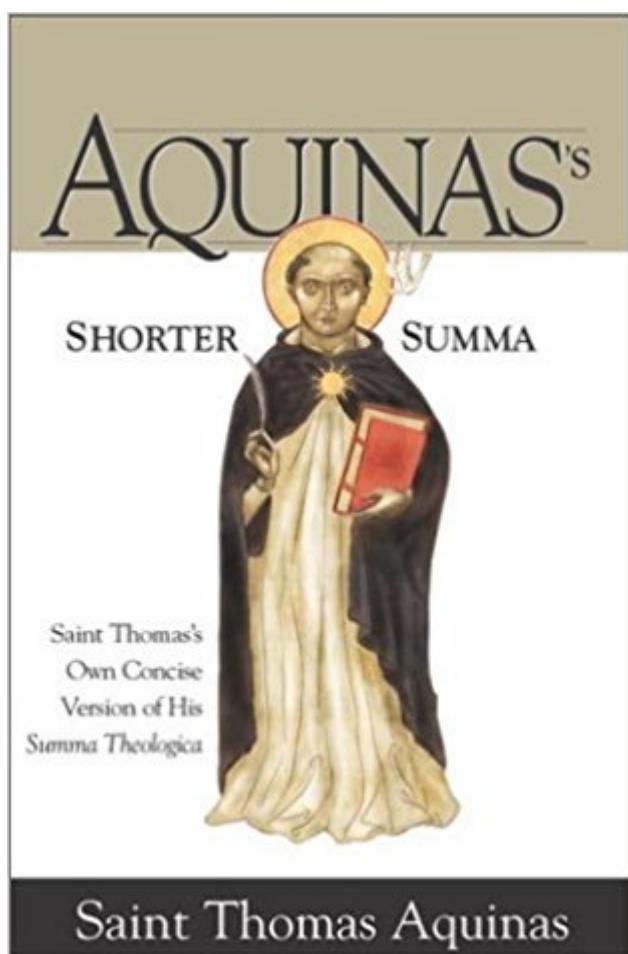


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Aquinas's Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas's Own Concise Version Of His Summa Theologica



Synopsis

Two years before he died, St. Thomas Aquinas probably the greatest teacher the Church has ever known was asked by his assistant, Brother Reginald, to write a simple summary of the Faith of the Catholic Church for those who lacked the time or the stamina to tackle his massive *Summa Theologica*. In response, the great saint quickly set down in language that non-scholars can understand his peerless insights into the major topics of theology: the Trinity, Divine Providence, the Incarnation of Christ, the Last Judgment, and much more. Here, then, is not only St. Thomas's concise statement of the key elements of his thought, but a handy reference source for the essential truths of the Catholic Faith. St. Thomas will show you: Why faith is reasonable, not blind Why evil can never be as powerful as good Solid arguments for Christ's Resurrection Powerful arguments for God's existence Why angels are necessary in creation How Adam's sin differed from Eve's Why Jesus descended into Hell Why we must suffer for Adam's sin Why the truths that you can know only through Revelation are nevertheless rational Startling details about God's forgiveness How a soul's damnation can be compatible with God's goodness What Christians should think about fate and chance What life after resurrection will be like Three ways in which God is in all things Eternal life: what it is; how to understand it How you can know God through reason Why God became man Why God allows evil How Jesus grew in wisdom How Christ can have existed for all eternity and yet be God's Son The Beatific Vision: what it really is Why God's knowledge of the future doesn't deny man's free will How the Holy Trinity is three distinct Persons, yet one God Much more that will help you know and love God with greater understanding!

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Peter Kreeft, author, *Summa of the Summa*"A gem, a precious pearl, a masterpiece!" Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York"An invaluable introduction to all of St. Thomas's wisdom and insight." Ralph McInerny, author, *First Glance at Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists*"Thomas Aquinas at his clearest and best. A treasure." --Personal Endorsements

Two years before he died, St. Thomas Aquinas probably the greatest teacher the Church has ever known was asked by his assistant, Brother Reginald, to write a simple summary of the Faith of the Catholic Church for those who lacked the time or the stamina to tackle his massive *Summa Theologica*. In response, the great saint quickly set down in language that non-scholars can understand his peerless insights into the major topics of theology: the Trinity, Divine Providence, the Incarnation of Christ, the Last Judgment, and much more. Here, then, is not only St. Thomas's concise statement of the key elements of his thought, but a handy reference source for the essential truths of the Catholic Faith.

I have read much about St. Thomas Aquinas. I know about his background, his travels and what he was trying to do in this master work, *The Summa Theologica*. But every version I read of the simplified or shorter *Summa* left me confused. Then I found this. It was actually written by Thomas as a way to help his students. It is the clearest thing I've read yet and I'm completely thrilled. I have one suggestion. If you have no philosophical background (I had very little and most that was from a course in university in 1968) you might buy Mortimer Adler's excellent *Aristotle for Everybody*. None of these books is a walk in the park. But with patience you will begin to get it. The trick is not to rush. Read Adler first and reread each of the short chapters until you get it. Then do the same with the *Summa*. There are a few Latin terms but easy enough to look up online.

"Aquinas' Shorter *Summa*" has been previously published as "The Compendium of Theology." You can find a complete, indexed version online, but I much prefer to settle in with a hard copy. The Shorter *Summa* was authored by St. Thomas Aquinas himself in response to a request that I believe was from his secretary to provide a distillation of the *Summa Theologica*. St. Thomas died (at age 50) only 10 chapters into Part II, "Hope." Part I, "Faith" is therefore the main theme of this work. There was to be a third part - you guessed correctly, "Charity." The unfinished nature, however, is by no means a reason to pass this by. After finishing it, I understand why it also goes by a third published name, "Light of Faith." Shortly after beginning I was tempted to stop and get some primers

on Aristotle, basic philosophy, and theology. Instead, I decided to web search the concepts and terms I didn't understand as I went along, and in short order I felt up to the challenge. I'm glad I persisted because it was a delight to have St. Thomas as my instructor. Each chapter builds on the teachings in previous chapters, so read them slowly. Re-read them, if need be, until the ideas crystallize, especially early on. Don't sell yourself short; it takes a bit of doing, but the reward is enormous. The teaching on the Trinity in chapters 37-50 was one of my favorite parts. Using the "light of reason" - a term itself you will understand better after St. Thomas - you will have new appreciation of why Jesus Christ is the Word of God. Among the great services St. Thomas does in his writing is to show us how Christianity is truly a philosophy of Reason. Modernists, rationalists, and atheists who claim that religion in general and Christianity in particular is not reasonable are in truth the ones at odds with Reason. The Thomistic view is predicated on the fact of existence; it accepts creation, and the fact that there is a real world that we can experience through our senses. It also, of course, explains that there is much more beyond what our senses can experience. The modern academic mind can't seem to get beyond "to be or not to be." Aquinas shouts to us the answer down through the centuries: "To be!" This edition is sprinkled with helpful footnotes to cited bible verses, Church Fathers (St. Augustine prominent among them), and philosophers (Aristotle of course very prominent among these.) Cyril Vollert's translation is in very easy to understand English, and for a paperback, this volume is pretty sturdy. This was a wonderful choice for my first foray into Scholasticism and my first encounter with the Angelic Doctor.

This is a wonderful book that explains the basic teachings of St Thomas in a simpler version than the full full work without necessarily lessening the persuasion of his arguments or the depth and insight of his theology. A great work to either read through or to have as a resource when questions of Catholic teaching arise. Written in a very accessible style and yet the content is still challenging and thought provoking. As both a religious and an historical document this is a truly valuable book to have available.

Great intro into St Aquinas, the 'Personhood of Jesus' treatment is great and something to be studied and memorized. Figured I'd start with the Short Summa before going to 'Free Google Books' (Out of Print, Free PDF versions) and printing out the large collection of the bigger, better 'Summa' piecemeal for study.

St. Thomas Aquinas set out to write his Shorter Summa at the request of his assistant Brother

Reginald. It was intended to be a summary of Aquinas' extensive *Summa Theologica*, yet produced in the language of laymen. It was also, therefore, intended to be a summary of the Faith of Christianity, accessible to all who could read. While it is still, at times, loftier than what many might easily grasp, the *Shorter Summa* is certainly shorter as well as comprehensible. St. Thomas conveys his plan for this work in his introduction, stating "I shall treat first of faith, then of hope, and lastly of charity. This is the Apostle's arrangement which, for that matter, right reason imposes. Love cannot be rightly ordered unless the proper goal of our hope is established; nor can there be any hope if knowledge of the truth is lacking. Therefore the first thing necessary is faith, by which you may come to a knowledge of the truth. Secondly, hope is necessary, that your intention may be fixed on the right end. Thirdly, love is necessary, that your affections may be perfectly put in order."

Unfortunately, Aquinas died prior to completing this work having really only begun the second part of the *Shorter Summa*, *Hope*. It would be difficult to call this work incomplete, however, as it is insightful from cover to cover. Indeed, the few chapters that Aquinas managed to complete on his section about hope might be an example of some of the most gracefully contemplative pieces of Christian theology ever written. The fact that this work is unfinished does not detract from it as it is; but only with respect to the idea of what it could have been. The *Shorter Summa* should be read by all Christians, regardless of denomination. As St. Thomas Aquinas is a scholar of St. Augustine, it might also be helpful to first read *Confessions* (Penguin Classics), *The City of God*, and any other work of Augustine's that is readily available. If you have any inkling to read this work, please do, as you will not be disappointed.

Great. Accessible shorter version of the full summa.

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