



# Aquinas's Summa: Background, Structure, and Reception

*Jean-Pierre Torrell*

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In this concise new volume by the acclaimed author of the biography of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Jean-Pierre Torrell brings his expertise to bear on Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. Readers will turn to this book again and again for a brief and popular introduction to Aquinas's masterpiece—its content; its historical, literary, and doctrinal settings; and its lasting significance.

Torrell begins with an expert account of Aquinas's life and then turns his attention to the overall structures and specific content of the *Summa*. He considers the literary and doctrinal context of the *Summa*, situating the work within the overall literary corpus of the Angelic Doctor and examining Aquinas's Christian, Greek, Jewish, and Arab sources.

The second half of the book surveys the history of the *Summa's* influence from Aquinas's death in 1274 through the twentieth century. Torrell traces the fate of Aquinas's *Summa* from its slow start, through the eventual emergence of Thomism, and finally to its widespread acceptance. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the ultimate triumph of Aquinas's work with the encyclical *Aeternis patris* and, in the wake of Vatican II there has been renewed interest in its content and method.

This book is a masterpiece of concision and completeness. It will be of considerable interest to readers seeking to understand and appreciate the content, method, and impact of the *Summa* and the man who wrote it.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jean-Pierre Torrell is a Dominican priest of the Toulouse province and professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Fribourg. He is the author of the highly praised Saint Thomas Aquinas volumes published by CUA Press. Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B., professor of theology at Saint Anselm College, is author of *Christian Anthropology and Sexual Ethics*.

### PRAISE FOR THE BOOK:

"A tidy introduction to the masterwork of Thomas Aquinas written by the reigning expert on the life and work of St. Thomas. There is no other book like it."—Mark Johnson, Marquette University

"[This work reminds us that,] when situated with respect to its antecedents and its posterity, the *Summa* appears as a 'living' work, rich in its heritage and able to sustain new and creative appropriations in every age."—Gilles Emery, O.P., *Revue Thomiste*

*Aquinas's Summa* is a very helpful introduction not only to the structure and content of the *Summa Theologiae*, but also to the person and work of St. Thomas Aquinas himself. This little book is significant for its breadth, accessibility and clarity. . . . [It is an] important contribution to the corpus of secondary Thomistic literature." ? Christopher Cuddy, *Lay Witness*

"[S]tock questions are apt to surface in our minds, and more than once. Who? What? Where? When? And why? Who was Master Thomas, and what work did he set for himself? Where was he when he wrote it? And why, despite its enormous importance, was even this towering genius unable to finish it before his death, at the tender age of 49? Jean-Pierre Torrell accessibly and instructively answers all of these questions, and more.

The 'more' that he offers is a century-by-century account of the reception of Aquinas's *Summa*. Who read it and profited, who misread it and did not; who ignored it, and who elevated it to a canonical status." ? James Hanink, *New Oxford Review*

"This book is perfect for those beginning study in the work of St. Thomas. . . . It will also be useful as a quick reference guide and summary of Torrell's larger work." ? James L. Arinello, *Religious Studies Review*

"Although it is a thin volume, it contains a tremendous amount of information about the *Summa*. In addition it provides an important framework for understanding what one encounters in the *Summa*. Although this book fo

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