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# Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795580703129419

## Introduction: The Enduring Legacy of the Summa Theologica

For centuries, scholars, theologians, and philosophers have turned to one monumental work to understand the synthesis of faith and reason: the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**. Written by the 13th-century Dominican friar Thomas Aquinas, the *Summa Theologica* (or *Summa Theologiae*) stands as one of the most ambitious and influential works in Western intellectual history. It is not merely a theological textbook; it is a systematic attempt to answer the deepest questions about God, humanity, morality, and the universe. Even today, more than 700 years after its composition, this masterpiece continues to shape Catholic doctrine, inspire philosophical debate, and provide a framework for understanding the relationship between divine revelation and human reason. This article explores the structure, key themes, historical context, and lasting significance of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**, offering a comprehensive guide for anyone seeking to understand this monumental achievement.

## Who Was Saint Thomas Aquinas?

To fully appreciate the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**, one must first understand the man behind it. Born in 1225 in Roccasecca, Italy, Thomas Aquinas was a member of the Aquino family, a noble lineage with ties to the Holy Roman Emperor. Despite his family's expectations for him to pursue a traditional ecclesiastical career with political influence, Thomas felt a calling to the Dominican Order, a mendicant order dedicated to preaching and teaching. His family famously imprisoned him for a year to dissuade him, but Thomas remained steadfast.

Aquinas studied under the great scholar Albertus Magnus in Cologne and later taught at the University of Paris. He was a prolific writer, producing commentaries on Aristotle, the Bible, and Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, as well as several theological and philosophical treatises. However, his magnum opus is undoubtedly the *Summa Theologica*, which he began in 1265 and worked on until his death in 1274. Thomas was canonized as a saint in 1323, and in 1880, he was declared the patron saint of universities and schools. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, recommended the study of Thomas Aquinas as the foundation for a sound Catholic education, solidifying his place as the preeminent theologian of the Catholic Church. The **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**, therefore, is not just a historical artifact; it is a living document that continues to inform Church teaching and intellectual inquiry.

## Why Was the Summa Theologica Written?

The **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** was born out of a specific pedagogical need. Aquinas observed that many theological works of his time were either too complex for beginners or lacked a coherent, systematic structure. He wanted to create a *summa* (a comprehensive summary) that would present Christian theology in a clear, logical, and accessible way for students who were just beginning their theological studies. In the

Summa Aquinas writes that his purpose is to present the sacred doctrine "briefly and clearly," avoiding unnecessary repetitions and digressions. The intended audience was not advanced theologians but rather novice students, making the work both rigorous and approachable.

This pedagogical motivation is crucial to understanding the structure and style of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**. Aquinas employs the scholastic method, a dialectical approach common in medieval universities. Each article of the *Summa* follows a precise format:

- Question: A specific question is posed (e.g., "Does God exist?").
- Objections: Several arguments against the proposed answer are listed.
- Sed contra: A counter-argument, often citing Scripture or an authoritative source, is presented.
- Respondeo: Aquinas provides his own detailed answer, synthesizing reason and revelation.
- Replies: Aquinas responds to each of the initial objections, showing where they are mistaken or incomplete.

This format encourages critical thinking and demonstrates that faith is not blind but can be examined and understood through reason. The **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** is, therefore, a model of intellectual honesty and rigorous inquiry.

## The Structure of the Summa Theologica

The *Summa Theologica* is a vast work, divided into three main parts (known as *Partes*), with a supplement completed after Aquinas's death using his earlier writings. Understanding this structure helps readers navigate the text and grasp its overarching vision.

### Prima Pars (Part I): God and Creation

The first part of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** deals with God and His creation. It is divided into three main sections:

- The Nature of God: Aquinas explores the existence of God, His attributes (such as simplicity, perfection, goodness, infinity, and immutability), and the mystery of the Trinity. This section includes the famous Five Ways (Quinque Viae), five rational arguments for the existence of God based on motion, causation, contingency, gradation of being, and teleology.
- The Creation: Aquinas discusses the act of creation itself, the nature of angels, the physical universe, and the concept of time.
- The Human Being: The final section of Part I focuses on the creation of human beings, the nature of the soul, and the faculties of intellect and will. Aquinas argues that the human soul is immortal and that it is the form of the body, a position that integrates Aristotelian philosophy with Christian doctrine.

### Prima Secundae (Part I of Part II): The General Principles of Morality

The second part of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** is the most extensive and is itself divided into two sub-parts. The *Prima Secundae* lays the foundation for moral theology by examining the general principles of human action. Key topics include:

- The Ultimate End: Aquinas argues that the ultimate goal of human life is happiness, which is found in the vision of God.
- Human Acts: He analyzes the nature of voluntary actions, the role of intention and choice, and the passions of the soul.
- Virtue, Law, and Grace: Aquinas discusses the nature of virtue (both intellectual and moral), the different kinds of law (eternal, natural, human, and divine), and the necessity of grace for salvation. This section is especially important for understanding the concept of natural law, which has had a profound impact on Catholic moral teaching and Western legal theory.

Secunda Secundae (Part II of Part II): Virtues and Vices in Detail

The *Secunda Secundae* applies the general principles of the *Prima Secundae* to specific virtues and vices. This part of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** is a detailed examination of the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance). Aquinas also examines the corresponding vices, such as pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust. He provides practical guidance on how to cultivate a virtuous life and avoid sin. This section is particularly valuable for understanding the richness of Aquinas's moral psychology.

### Tertia Pars (Part III): Christ and the Sacraments

The third part of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** focuses on Jesus Christ and the sacraments. It covers:

- The Incarnation: Aquinas explains why God became man, the nature of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, and the mysteries of Christ's life (his birth, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension).
- The Sacraments: Aquinas provides a detailed theology of the seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony). He explains how each sacrament confers grace and its role in the Christian life.

The *Summa* was left unfinished due to Aquinas's death. The *Supplementum*, compiled from his earlier writings, covers topics such as penance, extreme unction, purgatory, and the general resurrection.

## Key Themes in the Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica

Several central themes run throughout the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**, giving coherence to its vast scope.

### The Harmony of Faith and Reason

Perhaps the most famous aspect of Aquinas's thought is his insistence on the harmony between faith and reason. He believed that reason, when used properly, can arrive at truths about God and the moral order. However, reason also has its limits. Some truths, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, are known only through divine revelation. For Aquinas, there is no conflict between faith and reason because both come from God, the source of all truth. In the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**, this principle is demonstrated on every page, as Aquinas uses philosophical arguments from Aristotle and others to illuminate the truths of Christian faith.

### Natural Law and Ethics

Aquinas's theory of natural law is one of his most influential contributions. In the *Prima Secundae*, he argues that natural law is the participation of the rational creature in the eternal law of God. It is a universal moral law, accessible to all people through the use of reason, that prescribes the basic principles of good and evil. The natural law is the foundation for human law, and any human law that contradicts the natural law is unjust and not binding in conscience. This concept has had a profound influence on Catholic social teaching and Western jurisprudence.

### The Role of Grace

While Aquinas emphasizes the role of reason and human effort in moral life, he is equally clear that grace is necessary for salvation. Grace perfects nature; it does not destroy it. In the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica**, Aquinas explains that grace is a supernatural gift that heals the wounds of sin and elevates human beings to participate in the divine nature. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are infused by God into the soul, enabling believers to act in a way that leads to eternal life.

### The Centrality of Christ

Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica is oriented toward Christ. The *Tertia Pars* is the culmination of the entire work, showing how God's plan of salvation is fulfilled in the Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sacraments, which are the means of grace, flow from Christ's work of redemption. For Aquinas, Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and all of theology leads to Him.

## The Influence and Legacy of the Summa Theologica

The influence of the **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** can hardly be overstated. It has shaped Catholic theology for centuries and has been a major source for the Church's official teaching. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) cited Aquinas extensively, and the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) recommended his thought as a perennial model for theological study. Popes from Leo XIII to John Paul II have praised Aquinas and encouraged the study of his works.

Beyond the Catholic Church, Aquinas's thought has influenced a wide range of philosophers and thinkers, including the rationalists of the 17th century, such as Descartes and Leibniz, who engaged with his arguments. In the 20th century, the Thomistic revival led by scholars like Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain brought Aquinas's work into dialogue with modern philosophy. The **Santo Tomas Aquino Suma Teologica** has also had a significant impact on Protestant theology, with thinkers like Karl Barth and Alister McGrath engaging with Aquinas's ideas.

In addition to its intellectual influence, the

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