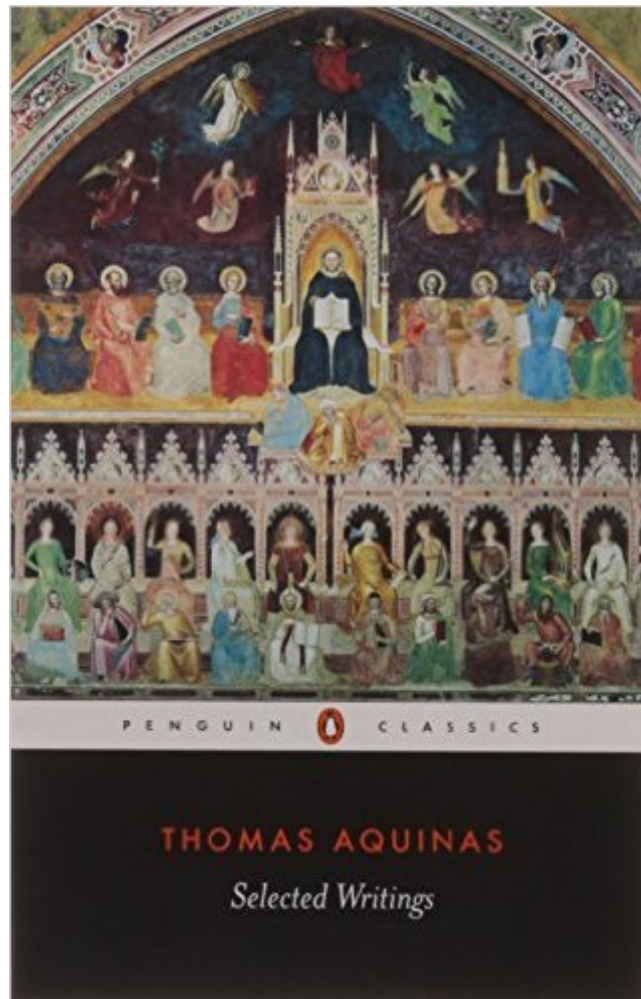


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Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

In his reflections on Christianity, Saint Thomas Aquinas forged a unique synthesis of ancient philosophy and medieval theology. Preoccupied with the relationship between faith and reason, he was influenced both by Aristotle's rational world view and by the powerful belief that wisdom and truth can ultimately only be reached through divine revelation. Thomas's writings, which contain highly influential statements of fundamental Christian doctrine, as well as observations on topics as diverse as political science, anti-Semitism and heresy, demonstrate the great range of his intellect and place him firmly among the greatest medieval philosophers. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Ralph McInerny's edition of St. Thomas Aquinas' thought is a good introduction for anyone who is interesting in one of the great Catholic and Christian thinkers. Mr. McInerny has good comments on Aquinas' life and intellectual foundations. These selections provide good coverage of Aquinas' views on several important issues such as the nature of God and the nature of Man. Some of McInerny's selections of Aquinas' work includes selections from Aquinas' SUMMA THEOLOGICA and his

SUMMA CONTRA GENTILES. These selections give the reader a good introduction before one tackles the entire corpus of these works. Another useful feature of McInerny's edition are the selections of Aquinas' views on "ultimate values and questions." For example, Aquinas' view on Man as God's creation is representative of Aquinas' concern for the dignity men. This selection is a good antidote to the argument of predestination. In fact, based on McInerny's selection, Aquinas thought more of men and gave men more dignity than any 19th or 20th political leader ever has. The mass destruction of people during the 20th century may remind that Aquinas' ideas are important. One question that Aquinas dealt with was the Nature of God. Aquinas handled this issue with precision and care. McInerny's inclusion of this section is good in that it shows Aquinas as a serious thinker who was not arrogant. In other words, Aquinas never claimed more than he could prove, and he was honest enough to admit this. For those who are devout Catholics, McInerny included a sermon Aquinas delivered a thoughtful sermon on the Ave Maria and the status of the Virgin Mary. Aquinas justifies the Catholic belief and devotion to St. Mary based on his careful knowledge of the Bible.

This edition of Thomas Aquinas's works provides an acceptable representation of his whole corpus, from his earliest inaugural sermons to his Summa, and the selections cover the majority of Thomas's dominant concerns--the nature of God, the nature of being, natural law, angels, ethics, among others. The introduction is informative, focusing on placing Thomas within his medieval context and sketching his strong but complicated debt to Aristotle. There are other helpful sections, such as a chronology of Thomas's life and works, as well as a brief glossary of important names, though there is no glossary of philosophical terms used by Thomas. I selected this volume as a textbook for a great-books course, and while I expected my students to struggle with the content, this volume intensified that struggle in ways it should not have. First, as has been mentioned in other reviews, the selections leave out a few crucial elements of Thomas's corpus. The five proofs of God's existence and the argument on just war are missing. These are arguably some of the most influential questions Aquinas addresses, and to leave them out is a travesty. (The book also omits all of his hymns.) It is in the nature of a "selected works" volume that somebody's favorite passage will be omitted, but the editor/translator might have exercised a bit more prudence in his selections. Secondly, and I think more importantly, the selections in this volume do not always represent Thomas at his best, and the editor/translator seems to have made selections too much on the basis of demonstrating Thomas's "development" as a thinker.

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