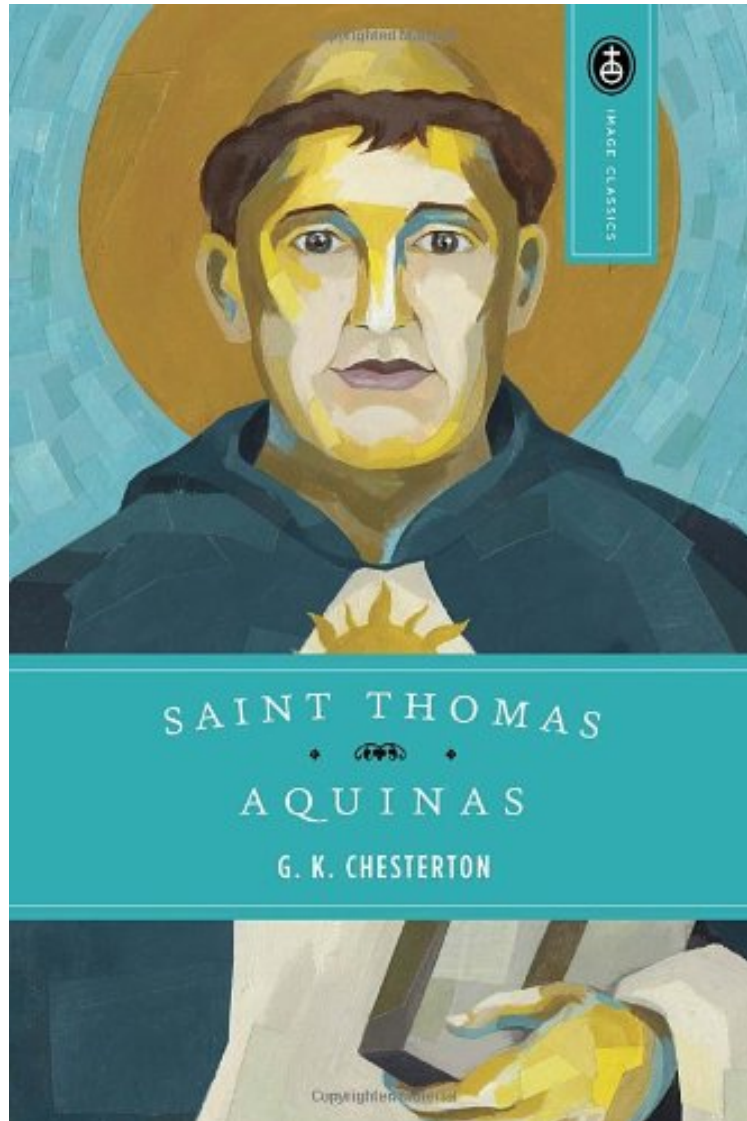


Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox

G. K. Chesterton

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G.K. Chesterton's brilliant sketch of the life and thought of Thomas Aquinas is as relevant today as when it was published in 1933. Then it earned the praise of such distinguished writers as Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, and Anton Pegis as the best book ever written on the great thirteenth-century Dominican. Today Chesterton's classic stands poised to reveal Thomas to a new generation. Chesterton's Aquinas is a man of mystery. Born into a noble Neapolitan family, Thomas chose the life of a mendicant friar. Lumbering and shy -- his classmates dubbed him "the Dumb Ox" -- he led a revolution in Christian thought. Possessed of the rarest brilliance, he found the highest truth in the humblest object. Having spent his life amid the vast intricacies of reason, he asked on his deathbed to have read aloud the Song of Songs, the most passionate book in the Bible. As Albert the Great, Thomas's teacher, predicted, the Dumb Ox has bellowed down the ages to our own day. Chesterton's book will enlighten those who would consign Thomas to the obscurity of medieval times. It will confound those who would use Thomas to bolster arid schemes of Christian rationalism. Rather, it will introduce the wondrous mystery of the man who, after a life of unparalleled genius, was seized by a vision of the Unknown and said, "I can write no more. I have seen things which make all my writings like straw."

.com It is known that when the great Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton began his book on Saint Thomas Aquinas (who is, quite possibly, the most influential of all Christian theologians), "his research for the project consisted of a very casual perusal of a few books on his subject." To say that Chesterton was no authority is an understatement. To say further that he has written a masterpiece of elucidation may also be an understatement. Etienne Gilson, the chief scholar of Aquinas in the 20th century, said flatly "I consider it as being without possible comparison the best book ever written on St. Thomas. Nothing short of genius can account for such an achievement.... Chesterton was one of the deepest thinkers who ever existed; he was deep because he was right; and he could not help being right; but he could not either help being modest and charitable, so he left it to those who could understand him to know that he was right, and deep." So how has he accomplished this feat? By simplifying, as his editor says, without oversimplifying. He turns his own lack of intimate knowledge to his advantage by concentrating on the core elements of Aquinas' thinking: his affirmation of the goodness of creation; his defense of common sense; and "the primacy of the doctrine of being." In this way he grasps--and helps us grasp--the importance of Aquinas for us today. As Raymond Dennehy has written, it's as if Chesterton is saying to us "the truths [Aquinas] was getting at--the basic principles of reality and reason--are in themselves really quite simple. Your basic intuitions were right all along." --Doug Thorpe "I consider it as being without possible exception the best book ever written on Saint Thomas. Nothing short of genius can account for such an achievement." --Etienne Gilson, philosopher and historian From the Publisher A trade paperback edition of the classic portrait of Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest of Christian philosophers, by one of the greatest of modern religious writers.