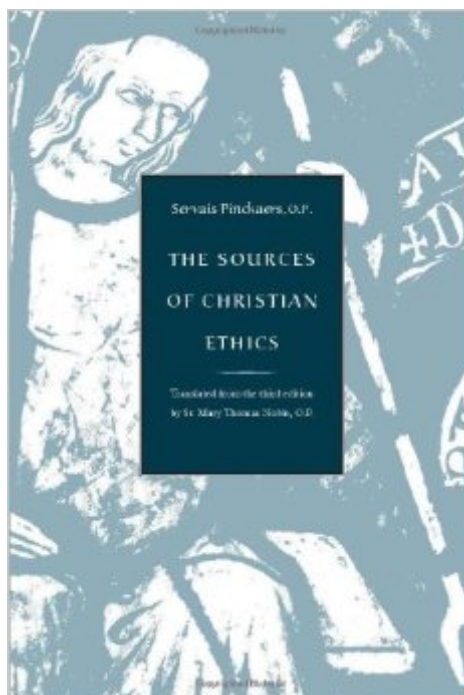


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# The Sources Of Christian Ethics, 3rd Edition



## Synopsis

First published in 1985 as *Les sources de la morale chrétienne* by University Press Fribourg, this work has been recognized by scholars worldwide as one of the most important books in the field of moral theology. Already its acclaim has warranted translations into Spanish, Italian, and Polish. Now it is available for the first time in an English translation, which includes a new preface. Writing in a tone that is reconciliatory rather than polemical, Servais Pinckaers returns Christian ethics to its sources, the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. After discussing the complementary domains of morality and the behavioral and natural sciences, he traces the scriptural themes—particularly in the Sermon on the Mount and the writings of St. Paul—that most influence moral instruction. He then examines in depth the history of moral theology from the patristic period to the present day. This history includes a discussion of the relation of Protestant and Catholic views of Christian ethics. The unique feature of Pinckaers's contemporary Thomistic view is its emphasis on the virtues, gifts, and evangelical Beatitudes as the heart of the Christian moral life. His approach to morality results in what he calls the freedom for excellence, a notion of freedom that he contrasts with the nominalist concept of the freedom of indifference, which has dominated moral theology since the fourteenth century. As a complete handbook of moral theology, this book will serve the needs of both beginning and advanced students in seminary and university courses in moral theology and ethics. For Catholic readers in particular, it will provide the background and perspective needed to achieve a fuller understanding of the moral teaching of the Catechism and of the encyclical *Veritatis splendor*. Servais Pinckaers, O.P., is professor of moral theology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. His most recent books include *L'Évangile et la Morale* (1989) and *La Morale Catholique* (1991).

• "Pinckaers' wonderful book is characterized by a return to the centrality of the virtues for how one thinks about the moral life. . . ." • "First Things" "This work provides a succinct overview of the history of moral theology, written with a sureness of touch developed by long years of research. . . . There is no comparable single work in English which explains what moral theology is and what it is about." • Brian V. Johnstone, C.Ss.R., Alphonsian Academy, Rome "A very readable translation of Pinckaers's award-winning work in foundational ethics...." • "Religious Studies Review"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Have you ever been to a class on Morality or Ethics at a Church or School, and you were basically told a bunch of "do's and don'ts?" Fr. Pinckaers finally revealed to me why so many leave the Church and why so many are bored with Morality. He traces for us a brief history of Ethics and Morality and shows how people like William of Ockham and Immanuel Kant destroyed morality by focusing on the Commandments of God instead of the Virtues of God. God is now viewed in modern society as a mere law giver, arbitrary and exacting; whereas in ancient and medieval times, climaxing with St. Thomas Aquinas, God was viewed as Father and Laws were regarded as Virtue builders loving instructions to His Children. This text is being used at one of the greatest universities in America, Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, in several classes. This is just to attest to its truth, beauty and goodness, which I discovered when reading it as a hobby. I'm 19 years old, I was 18 whenever I purchased it, and I can honestly say that this book will open your eyes to the truth, and you will love every minute of it. Do's and Don'ts melt away and become What More can I do for you Lord? Get this book now for a more Scriptural, more Scholastic, more Thomistic, more Catholic, more real view of Morality and Ethics, centered around the Sermon on the Mount.

Fr. Pinckaers' book is a wonderful overview of Christian ethics, calling for a renewal in the methodology of moral theologians. I've found it to be good, though laborious, spiritual reading. He gives an overview of Christian ethics, followed by a history of the study of moral theology from the age of the Patristics. He also covers Ockham's nominalism and how it destroyed the traditional Christian attitude towards morality. Finally, he studies the virtues, freedom and natural law in the tradition of the Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas. Not leisure reading, but good foundational reading for those who wish to study theology.

Fr. Pinckaers book presents a lifetime of research into Catholic Moral Theology from the Patristic era to the present, especially focusing on the atmosphere after Trent, and the problems posed by the Protestant Reformation, and Modern Philosophy. Pinckaers shows us that many manuals of moral theology, while presenting orthodox doctrine, present the wrong reasons for that doctrine. Many books while claiming to follow St. Thomas and his brilliant Virtue Theory, actually are closer to Kant imperative: that virtue is following the Law for the Law's own sake, rather than for the sake of virtue. As a result many books rely solely on the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) rather than look at them as part of a whole, in light of the Sermon on the Mount. Pinckaers makes a terrific contribution to Catholic Moral Theology, and examines in great detail the works of Scripture, St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the protestant reformers Luther and Calvin. The book is also not filled with overly technical language. It is written in such a way that an atheist who has never heard an iota about Catholic or Protestant Moral Theology could pick up the book and understand it. Pinckaers is the most eminent moral theologian of our day.

It has been 10 years since I read this book, but I remember being blown away by Fr. Pinckaer's approach. I was reading this in juxtaposition to some very legalistic approaches to ethics and Fr. Pinckaer's writing was fresh, free, and liberating. As someone else put in a review, Pinckaer's approach is one of freedom for excellence. The Beatitudes are the place he starts his reflection on the moral life of the Christian. This book is beautiful and an indispensable read for those who want to be familiar with the renewal of Christian moral theology.

A very important book - but not an easy read. This is a critical overview of Christian ethics, contrasting the modern ethics that emphasizes obligation and commandments to the ethical approach found in the Fathers of the Church and St. Thomas that started from the natural inclination to happiness, the importance of the Beatitudes, and the virtues. This book is a very good - though a little repetitive at times - analysis that opens up the way toward an ethics based first of all on the Sermon on the Mount and which is based in and fulfills our natural inclinations. The author is highly indebted to the work of St. Thomas Aquinas which is central to his understanding of ethics. This book demands effort and concentration but it is well worth it. I finished this book a day after finishing Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia*. Pinckaers helped me understand what is happening in the pope's apostolic exhortation. Most fascinating is the positive approach to sexuality that both Pinckaers and Pope Francis exhibit - based, I'm guessing, on a positive reading of Thomas Aquinas on sexuality.

Some tough dry reading to get through in the beginning but someone advised me to read the last hundred pages first then go back and start from beginning. Excellent grasp of what is different about Christian ethics.

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