

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

A Summary of Christian Moral Principles

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and
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FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Preface

In 1983 Germain Grisez published the first volume of a projected comprehensive treatment of Catholic moral theology in four volumes: *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, volume one: *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press). Intended primarily, though not exclusively, as a textbook for students in Catholic seminaries, it is now in use in several such institutions in the United States and has reached a growing number of other readers.

That text is a work of nearly a thousand closely printed pages including detailed arguments supporting all its major positions, appendices on special questions, extensive footnotes, and other scholarly apparatus. While its purpose makes all this material necessary, the resulting length and density of the book limit its audience to the comparatively small number of persons willing and able to make the effort which its assimilation undoubtedly requires. Yet the work contains something interesting to a far wider audience: an original, contemporary treatment of moral theology which is faithful to received Catholic teaching and the magisterium of the Church. Thus, it seemed desirable to rework the main elements of its treatment into a more accessible form.

Hence the present volume: a summary of *Christian Moral Principles* from volume one of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*. Although not a substitute for the larger work, which covers more ground in greater detail and which remains the appropriate text for seminary students and for professionals in the field of moral theology, it mirrors volume one chapter for chapter, discusses the same major topics, and summarizes the main lines of its argument. So, while the chapters have been reorganized *internally*, teachers who use this volume and other readers who wish to dig more deeply

into a topic will find it easy to locate the corresponding treatment in the larger work.

To the extent that this book oversimplifies its source, that is an unavoidable result of the process of condensation itself; its intent nevertheless is faithfully to summarize the principal elements of the earlier work, presenting these as clearly and simply as possible. It is suitable for college-level courses in theology and for adult education; it should also be helpful to priests and counselors, religious educators, parents, and general readers who wish to know what the Catholic Church teaches about basic questions in moral theology and why.

Then too, the second volume of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* is nearing completion. That volume, *Living a Christian Life*, will treat the specific responsibilities of all or most Catholics—everything from religious duties to responsibilities concerning life and health, property, and sex and marriage. Those who study volume two will need a foundation in the principles, and the present work offers a comparatively easy way of obtaining it.

A: This Book Has Ten Distinct Sections

1. Chapter one, the introduction, stands by itself. It explains what moral theology is, why renewal is needed in it, and how that renewal should be carried out according to the plan of the Second Vatican Council.

2. Chapters two through four discuss the need for directive principles in moral theology. We need them to guide us in making judgments of conscience to direct our free choices. Directive moral principles are not intuitions nor are they rules laid down by the Church or some other authority. They are moral truths.

3. Chapters five through eight deal with the fundamental principles of morality. First we consider basic human goods as elements of our personhood: these “goods,” taken together, are what a human person is capable of being. At the present time, however, the moral theory called “proportionalism,” which maintains that it is sometimes right to choose and act against human goods, enjoys a certain vogue. We show why it is neither sound nor workable. Next we turn to natural law (a hallowed term, but one frequently misunderstood today), the first principle of morality (integral human fulfillment in human goods), and what are here

called “modes of responsibility” (intermediate principles which lie between the first principle and specific moral norms).

4. Chapters nine through twelve concern the application of principles to actions. We consider the various kinds of voluntariness and the different sorts of responsibility attaching to them; we also explain what commitments are. Moral norms in general are discussed, as is the moral authority of law (a topic treated here mainly because it has been customary to cover it in textbooks on morals). Finally, we take up different kinds of doubts and how they should be resolved.

5. Chapters thirteen through eighteen deal with sin—its nature and its consequences. After explaining what sin is in general, we examine original sin, including contemporary objections to, and accounts of, the dogma. We then go on to discuss distinctions among sins, sins of thought, the distinction between grave and light matter, various theories of fundamental option, sins of weakness, and the “way of sin” which ends in death. This treatment includes the question of hell.

6. Chapters nineteen through twenty-two present the large principles of Christian life in the context of God’s saving work in Christ. We consider human fulfillment in Jesus and the contribution which human acts in this life make to the fulfillment of God’s plan. This leads to consideration of the relationship between God and humankind and, specifically, revelation and faith. Next we discuss God’s redemptive work, especially the old and new covenants and the Incarnation. Finally, we examine the role which Jesus’ human life played in God’s redemptive work.

7. Chapters twenty-three through twenty-seven explain what Christian life is: how we are united with Jesus’ redemptive act, what it means to “follow” Jesus, the crucial role of personal vocation, and the relationship of conscience to the teaching of the Church. We then consider how Christians are God’s “children”—that is, our participation in divine life. This leads to examination of Christian love as the principle of Christian life, and to a discussion of the “modes of Christian response,” which parallel the modes of responsibility (discussed in chapter eight) but go beyond them. Finally in this section we explain what a life formed by the modes of Christian response is like.

8. Chapters twenty-eight through thirty-three discuss some of the principal elements of every Christian life. First we consider

the practicability of Christian morality, including the organizing role of personal vocation and the indispensable function of hope. We examine prayer, considered as the fundamental category of Christian action, and then take up the sacraments, which are its organizing principles.

9. Chapter thirty-four sums up what has gone before. It sets out our view of authentic humanism and explains how Christians should regard human goods in this life.

10. Chapters thirty-five and thirty-six are a kind of appendix presenting a theological clarification of certain ideas which are basic to this treatment of Christian moral principles. The first of these chapters deals with infallibility in general, the inerrancy of Scripture, the magisterium, the infallibility of moral teachings which are not "defined" doctrines, and the nature and obligation of religious assent to such teachings. The second chapter critiques radical theological dissent, showing the weaknesses of various arguments put forward to support it, and identifying the sources of such dissent and its implications.

B: Key to References in the Text

Because readers of this book can refer to the larger volume on which it is based in order to investigate the sources of various positions and arguments, footnotes have been kept to a minimum and usually only sources of direct quotations are supplied. But more generous references are given in the text itself to the chief sources: Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church, especially that contained in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Quotations from Scripture, except those within other quotations, are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. References are made by means of the following abbreviations:

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Col	Colossians
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Dn	Daniel
Dt	Deuteronomy
Eph	Ephesians
Ex	Exodus

Gal	Galatians
Gn	Genesis
Heb	Hebrews
Is	Isaiah
Jas	James
Jb	Job
Jer	Jeremiah
Jn	John (Gospel)
1 Jn	1 John (Epistle)
Jude	Jude
Lk	Luke
Lv	Leviticus
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
Prv	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
1 Pt	1 Peter
Rom	Romans
Rv	Revelation
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
1 Thes	1 Thessalonians
2 Thes	2 Thessalonians
1 Tm	1 Timothy
2 Tm	2 Timothy

Quotations from the Constitutions, Decrees, and Declarations of the Second Vatican Council, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M. Abbott, S.J., and Joseph Gallagher (New York: America Press, 1966). In some cases the Abbott-Gallagher translation has been amended to conform more exactly to the Council's Latin text, and when minor amendments proved inadequate, a fresh translation has been supplied. These facts are indicated with the reference. References to the Vatican II documents use the abbreviations derived from the initial letters of the Latin text of each document and then the numbers of the articles into which the documents were divided by the Council itself.

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> (Laity)
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> (Missions)

<i>DH</i>	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> (Religious Liberty)
<i>DV</i>	<i>Dei Verbum</i> (Divine Revelation)
<i>GS</i>	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (Church in the World)
<i>LG</i>	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> (On the Church)
<i>NA</i>	<i>Nostra Aetate</i> (Non-Christian Religions)
<i>OT</i>	<i>Optatam Totius</i> (Priestly Formation)
<i>PO</i>	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i> (Priestly Life)
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> (Liturgy)
<i>UR</i>	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> (Ecumenism)

Note that in the Abbott-Gallagher edition only the *italicized footnotes* are part of the Council documents. The notes in Roman type were added by the commentator on each document, whose name appears at the end of the essay introducing the document. Because of the added notes, in the Abbott edition the Council's own notes usually have numbers different from those in the official texts.

"DS" refers to Henricus Denzinger—Adolfus Schönmetzer, S.J., *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. 34 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1967). This volume, as its title indicates, is a collection of "creeds, definitions, and declarations on matters of faith and morals." Texts are in chronological order. Two sequences of numbers appear in the margins; both are indicated in references in the present text. The lower numbers are found in earlier editions of the handbook and in many publications which used it. Quotations from this collection, unless otherwise noted, are from: *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*, translated by J. F. Clarkson, S.J., J. H. Edwards, S.J., W. J. Kelly, S.J., and J. J. Welch, S.J. (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books, 1973). Texts in the translation are arranged topically rather than chronologically; a table (370–75) correlates with DS.

C: How This Volume Came to Be

This book is the product of a collaboration. As was explained above, it is essentially a condensation of volume one of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* by Germain Grisez, a moral theologian who teaches at Mount Saint Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Maryland. It was written by Russell Shaw, Director of Public Informa-

tion for the Knights of Columbus, who was one of several persons who helped Grisez in the writing of the earlier work. The co-authors have also collaborated on several other projects since the mid-1960s, including *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom*, a popular introduction to Grisez's ethical theory (first published by the University of Notre Dame Press in 1974 and currently in its third, revised edition).

In preparing the manuscript, Shaw used both volume one of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* and transcripts of Grisez's class lectures based on volume one. Grisez reviewed and revised Shaw's text, and Shaw then made further improvements in the text as revised by Grisez. While the book thus embodies distinct contributions by the co-authors, readers should be aware that the substantive content reflects Grisez's research and theological reflection, as condensed and restated by Shaw. At the same time, the authors acknowledge shared responsibility for this presentation of the material—both its strengths and its deficiencies—in its totality.

D: Acknowledgments

The acknowledgments section of the “User's Guide and Preface” of the volume on which this book is based explains the origin and sponsorship of Grisez's moral theology project.

Dr. Robert J. Wickenheiser, President of Mount Saint Mary's College, has continued to encourage the work in every possible way.

Rev. Gabriel Brinkman, O.F.M., Managing Director of Franciscan Herald Press, kindly agreed to the publication of this condensed and popularized book based on *The Way of the Lord Jesus: Christian Moral Principles*. Franciscan Herald Press retains all rights to the major work and plans to keep it in print.

Joseph Casey, S.J., John Finnis, Janet Smith, and Michael Caragher, O.P., kindly read the manuscript and made many very helpful suggestions.

Jeannette Grisez carefully did all the necessary secretarial work on this volume.

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