

## Hommage au Père Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, OP The Significance of His Work

ROMANUS CESSARIO, O.P.

*St. John's Seminary  
Brighton, Massachusetts*

Reverend Fathers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman:

IT IS CUSTOMARY for speakers in my position to express their gratitude to those who invited them. I must acquit myself of a double obligation. First, to Father Michael Sherwin and Professor Craig Titus, who graciously arranged this tribute in honor of Father Pinckaers, and to the Dominican Fathers at the Albertinum, and its other Swiss sponsors, whose customary largesse has made this celebratory gathering possible. In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to the aforementioned persons, both individual and corporate, because their generosity affords me an occasion to return to my alma mater. Since October 1976, when as a young priest I came here to study, Fribourg, the place and the school—they are difficult to distinguish for those who love both—has done admirably what one expects “dear mothers” to do, namely, to shape a man’s life in significant ways.<sup>1</sup> And so I say, simply, “Thank you!”

Who in my position, I now ask you, would not recollect what Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, affirms—admittedly to explain its inadequacy as the ultimate good for man—about honor: “Honor depends more on those who confer than on him who receives it.”<sup>2</sup> The person whose merits we recognize today deserves great honor, and to be candid, I consider myself unequal to the task of conferring it. So this evening, I stand before you as a spokesman—a stand-in, if you will—for the many

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see my “Theology at Fribourg,” *The Thomist* 51 (1987): 325–66.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk 1, ch. 5, 1095b25, trans. J. A. K. Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), 30.

persons throughout the Catholic world and beyond who, better than I am able, would fittingly confer honor on this university professor and Dominican priest, Servais Pinckaers. During this weekend, his work, *son travail*, gladly will occupy our attentions.<sup>3</sup>

I am sure that our honoree, who elucidates and exemplifies both the Christian virtue and gift of piety, will pose no objection to my expressing his appreciation to each of you, and especially to the Dominicans at Fribourg. Since Father Pinckaers's arrival here in 1973, his Dominican brothers have supplied the spiritual and temporal support that have enabled him to complete the better part of the labors for which we do rightly honor him under the sign of Ephesians 1:10, "Making all things new in Christ."<sup>4</sup> The Roman historian and stylist Livy wrote, "Favor and honor sometimes fall more fitly on those who do not desire them."<sup>5</sup> To whom does this classical adage better apply than to our dear friend, Servais Théodore Pinckaers, revered theologian, holy priest, and exemplary Friar Preacher?

### Friar Preacher

The Dominicans first arrived at Fribourg during a particularly stressful period in their modern history: the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The order's numbers were in decline such that from 4,562 in 1844, membership fell to 3,474 in 1876, the lowest it had been since the thirteenth century. Is it not paradoxical that after twenty-two years of reform-minded leadership inspired by Henri-Dominic Lacordaire, the Dominican Master Alexandre-Vincent Jandel (1850–1855–1872) left an almost extinct order well-organized and vigorous.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the situation in Europe made Dominican governance difficult to conduct until, in 1879, Joseph M. Larroca (1879–91) was chosen by mail-in balloting to lead the order.<sup>7</sup> He

<sup>3</sup> Webster's *New Dictionary of Synonyms* reports on the English cognate: "Travail carries a stronger implication of painful effort or exertion than does *labor*; that connotation is often so strong that the term tends to denote suffering rather than labor."

<sup>4</sup> See Eph 1:10: "In dispensationem plenitudinis temporum instaurare omnia in Christo quae in caelis et quae in terra sunt in ipso."

<sup>5</sup> Titus Livius, *The History of Rome*, Bk. 4, 57.

<sup>6</sup> See William A. Hinnebusch, OP, *The Dominicans: A Short History* (New York: Alba House, 1975), ch. 10. In 1850, Father Jandel was named vicar general of the order directly by Pope Pius IX, and then in 1855, master general of the order. See *Catholicisme*, vol. 6, 310.

<sup>7</sup> Dominican historian Guy Bedouelle observes in a private communication with the author: "[C]e n'est pas l'élection de Larroca qui a rendu le gouvernement de l'ordre plus facile. C'est le fait que Pie IX a aboli en 1872 la bulle de 1804 qui soustrayait les provinces espagnoles de la juridiction du Maître de l'Ordre, à la suite de quoi Jandel a choisi Larroca comme socius, puis est venue l'élection de Larroca, comme espagnol, ce qui a en effet stabilisé l'unité de l'ordre."

was the first master general since before the French Revolution to be elected by all of the Dominican provinces. It was under his leadership that the Dominican general chapter of Louvain in 1885 launched the École Biblique in Jerusalem and accepted the request of the government of Fribourg to staff the theology faculty of its new university. Today, it is gratifying to discover mention, on the faculty of theology's Web site, of the international reputation of alma mater Fribourg that Dominicans since 1890 have helped to build.<sup>8</sup> This weekend, we will discover additional warrant for this claim as scholars from Switzerland and abroad describe the contribution to this "rayonnement international" made by one of our contemporaries, a certain Dominican from Belgium.

### Belgium

The Dominicans were established in Ghent as early as 1228. It should come as no surprise to learn that Flanders and Wallonia enjoy prominence in the history of the Dominican Order. And not only for Flemings and Walloons. In 1658, the English Dominican Philip Thomas Howard (who in 1675 became "Cardinal of Norfolk") acquired the Convent of the Holy Cross at Bornhem, a Flemish town situated a few miles southwest of Antwerp. He took this initiative for the purpose of giving new life to the English province, which in the 1650s, the period of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate governments in England (1649–60), had come perilously close to extinction.<sup>9</sup> This Bornhem cloister originally built for, but never inhabited by, Franciscans would serve for 167 years the needs of expatriate English Dominicans.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> University of Fribourg Web site, Faculty of Theology, "L'Université de Fribourg—Bref aperçu historique," [www.unifr.ch/theo/presentation/index.html](http://www.unifr.ch/theo/presentation/index.html).

<sup>9</sup> The English Commonwealth and Protectorate were republican governments of England introduced after the English Civil War during the Interregnum (1649–60). The Commonwealth (1649–53) was founded on the execution of Charles I in 1649, and was followed by the two Protectorates of Oliver Cromwell (1653–58), and his son Richard Cromwell (1658–59). The Commonwealth was briefly revived (1659–60), before the restoration of the monarchy in the person of Charles II in May 1660. For more information on this work of Father Thomas Howard, see C. F. Raymund Palmer, *The Life of Philip Thomas Howard, OP, Cardinal of Norfolk, Grand Almoner to Catherine of Braganza, Queen-Consort of King Charles II., and Restorer of the English Province of Friar-Preachers or Dominicans. Compiled from Original Manuscripts, with a Sketch of the Rise, Missions, and Influence of the Dominican Order, and of Its Early History in England* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1867), 98–107.

<sup>10</sup> For a good account of the English College at Bornhem, see Raymund Palmer, OP, "Bygone Colleges: Bornhem and Carshalton," *Merry England* 12 (1889): 310–24; *ibid.*, *Merry England* 12 (1889): 370–97. This article appears in this literary journal

One of these expatriates was Thomas Williams, a native of Monmouthshire.<sup>11</sup> This young Englishman made his way in 1685 to East Flanders, and there when he was only seventeen took the Dominican habit at Bornhem. In 1740, he died a bishop, having been consecrated by the Dominican Pope Benedict XIII (1724–30) to serve as vicar-apostolic of the northern district of England, a posting that reflects the gradualness of the restoration that the Catholic hierarchy underwent in the British Isles. Since the appointment of Thomas Williams involved Catholic affairs in England, the Holy See sought to obtain the pleasure of the Old Pretender, James Edward Stuart (1688–1766), who was recognized in Rome as James III. This same James Stuart, it is said, lodged on his southward journey from France to Rome in the structure that today houses the Albertinum. The significance of this event is left to the professional historians to decipher, especially in light of the evolution of European politics that required this Stuart prince to leave France after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

During the eighteenth century, the English Dominicans set up a study house in Louvain, the “College of St. Thomas Aquinas of the English Friar-Preachers,” located on the Krakenstraat. As a young priest, Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire arrived there from Rome, where he had been sent for studies, to organize the new project. While at Louvain, he wrote and printed three scholastic theses: the first on God (1701), the second on the Trinity and the Incarnation (1703), and the third, in 1705, on a subject that occupies the energies of all intellectually alert Dominicans, especially after a papal cease-fire order in 1607 returned to theologians the discussion of issues left unsettled during the *Congregatio de Auxiliis*: “Thomismus ex Thomistis assertus & contra Novos ejus impugnatores vindicatus, seu Theses Theologicæ de Scientiâ, Voluntate et Providentiâ Dei, Juxta inconcussa tutissimaque dogmata Angelici & Quinti Ecclesiae Doctoris D. Thomae Aquinatis.”<sup>12</sup> We find ourselves face-to-face with the Thomism of the Late Baroque, an age that in Flanders falls

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under the rubric, “The Collegian.” Also see, Godfrey Anstruther, OP, *A Hundred Homeless Years: English Dominicans 1558–1658* (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1958).

<sup>11</sup> Information on Thomas Williams is drawn from another article by Raymund Palmer, OP, “A Consecrated Life,” *Merry England* 10 (1887): 411–28; *ibid.*, *Merry England* 10 (1888): 480–95.

<sup>12</sup> The inscription continues: “Quas Præsides F. Dominico Williams, S. Theologiae Præsente, necnon Collegii et Studii FF. Prædicat. Anglorum Rectore, Defendit F. Ambrosius Burgis, eiusd. Ord. Lovanii in Conventu Majori Ord. FF. Prædicatorum, die 12 Maii, horâ 9 ante merid. Lovanii, apud Ægidium Dènique. Anno 1705. In 4to, 18, num.”

under the artistic shadow of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) and his successors, including Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641), whose painting, *Charles I Dismounted*, displays the ill-fated English king (1600–49) in a posture of self-assurance that in retrospect evokes the political and religious instability that compelled English and Irish Catholics to seek a safe haven in Flanders.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire illustrates what English and other Dominicans were doing in Flanders at the start of the eighteenth century. They made the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas available to the many who were prepared themselves to receive it. This apostolic work continued in one way or another until the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed upon the papal suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, the Belgic-Austrian authorities prevailed on the English Dominicans to take charge of the two colleges conducted by the English Jesuits in Bruges—the former Jesuit teachers themselves being led off as prisoners. When the Dominicans demurred pleading scarcity of men in their ranks, down came an imperial edict from Maria Theresa (d. 1780), Dowager Empress of the Austrian Netherlands: “Vénérable, Cher, et Bien Aimé, . . . Nous vous ordonnons. . . .”<sup>14</sup> Her English guests acceded, of course. Friends of the Jesuits, meanwhile, acted to facilitate the withdrawal from the “Great College” of students who protested with unruliness its change of directors and, within a few days, the Dominicans were absolved of responsibility for it. One Bornhem Dominican, however, Father Augustine Noel, did take charge of the “Little College” where younger boys studied. Within a few months, however, these students also dwindled in number, and Father Noel returned to teaching theology at Louvain, remaining there until 1792 when he moved back to Bornhem.<sup>15</sup> Shortly thereafter, forces other than and hostile toward Thomism became startlingly active in Flanders.

In 1794, French revolutionary troops invaded the Antwerp region, and eventually spread out into the countryside. Most English Dominicans were forced to flee Bornhem and to seek passage across the English Channel, where no commodious welcome was assured them. Among those who remained to guard the college and convent buildings was a young American from St. Mary’s County, Maryland (a colony named after the queen consort of Charles I, the French princess Henrietta Maria

<sup>13</sup> This oil on canvas, which dates from about 1635, now hangs in the Louvre in Paris. For an account of the precarious status of the Dominicans in England from the death of Queen Mary I in 1558 until the execution of Charles I in 1649, see Palmer, *The Life of Philip Thomas Howard*, 70–78.

<sup>14</sup> Palmer, “Bygone Colleges,” 375.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 374–77.

[1609–69]), who had been ordained a priest the year before.<sup>16</sup> Although briefly imprisoned by the French revolutionary forces, Father Fenwick was released, I am happy to report, when he protested that he was a bona fide citizen of the United States of America. Edward Fenwick (1768–1832) left his native land when he was only sixteen and joined the Dominicans in 1790 at Bornhem, just as Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire had done a century before. Like Williams, who took the name Dominic at his religious profession, Edward Dominic Fenwick also died a bishop, the first of Cincinnati in the state of Ohio.<sup>17</sup> This missionary priest is recognized as the founder of the Dominicans in the United States, specifically of the province of St. Joseph, which celebrates its two-hundredth anniversary this year [2005]. (Only Dominicans in California claim another beginning.) Father Fenwick's departure from England for the United States in 1804 preceded the sale of the English College at Bornhem in 1825, which never recovered from the political disruptions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup>

### The United States

The province that Edward Dominic Fenwick founded eventually sent members back to both Belgium and Fribourg. One of them, the Louvain-trained Daniel Joseph Kennedy (d. 1930), formed part of the early professorial corps at Fribourg. He did not remain long, however, having taken exception to the policy that stipulates his salary belongs to the Albertinum instead of his home province.<sup>19</sup> To the present day, other Dominicans from the United States have come to study and to teach at alma mater Fribourg. They also returned to Belgium. In the 1950s, American Dominicans (unlike the French we have no adjectival form for the United States) returned to study theology at the *studium*, Notre Dame de la Sarte, which since 1929 had been the location of a house of philosophy, and since 1941, of a faculty of theology for the Belgian province.<sup>20</sup> It was here at La Sarte, close to Huy, that two years after his ordination our honoree began in 1953 his teaching of “moral theology in its entirety,”

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>17</sup> For a recent presentation of his life, see Loretta Petit, OP, *Friar in the Wilderness, Edward Dominic Fenwick*, OP (Chicago, IL: Project OPUS, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> The buildings fell into the possession of Cistercian monks, who turned them into a parish school. For further information, see Benedictus van Doninck, *Het voormalig Engelsch Klooster te Bornhem* (Leuven: Peeters, 1904, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> See Reginald M. Coffey, OP, *The American Dominicans* (New York: Saint Martin de Porres Guild, 1970), 510–11.

<sup>20</sup> For information on this place of pilgrimage, see Corneille Antoine Halfants, *Histoire de Notre Dame de la Sarte lez-Huy* (Liège: H. Dessain, 1864).

as he recounts in an interview given in the year 2000.<sup>21</sup> When, to respect linguistic differences in Belgium, the Province of St. Thomas in Belgium was established in 1958, the study house at La Sarte was recognized as a *studium generale*, a designation then with special significance in the Dominican Order. The suspension of theological teaching at La Sarte in 1964 providentially opened the way for Father Pinckaers's arrival at Fribourg in 1973.

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Last month, *The Tablet* of London published Alasdair MacIntyre's review of a posthumous book by the English Dominican Herbert McCabe (1926–2001) titled *The Good Life: Ethics and the Pursuit of Happiness*.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the review, Professor MacIntyre observes that “this introduction to philosophical ethics points us towards a theological ethics, in which the narrative of our lives is understood in relation to the narrative of God's self-giving.”<sup>23</sup> He further describes McCabe's vision of theological ethics as follows: “The life of friendship with others, a life of concern for their and our flourishing through growth in the virtues needed for human happiness, becomes through grace a life in which God shares his friendship with us.”<sup>24</sup> There are very strong reasons to suppose that Alasdair MacIntyre would not have composed such an appreciation of Herbert McCabe and his English brand of Thomism—one, I should add, that careful analysis would show to exhibit the same theological underpinnings as those Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire defended three hundred years ago at Louvain in 1705—unless the distinguished Scottish philosopher had been introduced to and had come to appreciate deeply the moral theology of Father Pinckaers. One recent piece of evidence that favors this opinion comes from what Alasdair MacIntyre wrote in his preface to Father Michael Sherwin's “impressive” translation of *La morale catholique* published in 2001 as *Morality: The Catholic View*.<sup>25</sup> “Father Servais Pinckaers, op, is an extraordinary author, and this is an extraordinary book. The extraordinariness lies in Father Pinckaers's rare

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Carlo Leget, “Aquinas, a Revolutionary in Morality?” *Newspage* (2000), the Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, [www.thomasinstituut.org/thomasinstituut/scripts/nws\\_show.php?id=35](http://www.thomasinstituut.org/thomasinstituut/scripts/nws_show.php?id=35).

<sup>22</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, “Fully Alive, Informed by Virtue,” *Tablet* (September 10, 2005): 22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The original French edition was published by Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1991 and the English edition by Saint Augustine's Press, South Bend, IN, 2001, with a preface by Alasdair MacIntyre, vii–viii.

ability to know precisely what needs to be said and when and how and to whom to say it.”<sup>26</sup> As you may be aware, Professor MacIntyre is not given to glibness.

Whence comes this extraordinariness? In July 1999, Father Pinckaers was invited to the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and there he gave an interview that later was published in the American edition of *Communio* under the title “My Sources.”<sup>27</sup> The man we honor tonight tells us of two principal influences on his theological work: The Blessed Eucharist and the Bible as the Word of God.

### The Eucharist

Father Pinckaers offers testimony plain and straightforward: “I have felt the attraction of the Eucharistic presence since my infancy.”<sup>28</sup> He in part attributes this grace to the mediation of the thirteenth-century Blessed Juliana of Mont-Cornillon (1192–1258) and thus to his native city, Liège on the Meuse. It is, furthermore, to the city of Liège that historians trace the origins of the Feast of Corpus Christi. This pious and liturgical observance arose about the time St. Thomas Aquinas was living close by in Cologne (1248–52), a student under St. Albert the Great.<sup>29</sup> What is more significant, the young Dominicans of Liège, so Father Pinckaers assures us, rallied to the cause of introducing a special liturgical commemoration in honor of the Blessed Eucharist, which the Prince-Bishop of Liège authorized to be celebrated in his ecclesiastical state as early as 1246. The practice became popular, and spread elsewhere. In 1264, Pope Urban IV extended the solemnity to the universal Church and promulgated the *Officium de festo Corporis Christi*, which, it is now agreed, Aquinas composed during his period of service to the papal court in Orvieto (1261–65).<sup>30</sup>

### The Bible

His discovery of the Bible as the Word of God, Father Pinckaers identifies with the mediation of another religious person, Dom Olivier Rousseau (1898–1984), Benedictine monk of Chevetogne, who in 1945 preached

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<sup>26</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, preface to Servais Pinckaers, OP, *Morality: The Catholic View*, trans. Michael Sherwin, OP (South Bend, IN: Saint Augustine’s Press, 2001), vii.

<sup>27</sup> Servais Pinckaers, OP, “My Sources,” *Communio* 26 (1999): 913–15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 913.

<sup>29</sup> For this dating see, Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1996), 24–35.

<sup>30</sup> Torrell, *Thomas Aquinas*, 357, and ch. 7.

the novitiate retreat to the young Servais, now Brother Théodore, Pinckaers. Again, his testimony is arresting for its simplicity: "The awareness that the Word of God is superior to any human word was for a time . . . so strong in me that I did not want to read anything other than the Bible."<sup>31</sup> Dom Olivier Rousseau belonged to an innovative experiment in monasticism. The monastery of Chevetogne was founded in 1925 by Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873–1960), who resigned in 1928 after the Holy See sounded a cautious note on ecumenical "enterprises."<sup>32</sup> The monks of Chevetogne are liturgically organized in two groups, one celebrating according to the Western tradition, the other according to the Eastern Byzantine tradition. This arrangement has been in place from the beginning of the monastery, the two rites having been adopted for ecumenical reasons, and in view of the reconciliation between the Christian East and West.<sup>33</sup> Within this setting, Dom Olivier Rousseau produced the *Sources chrétiennes* edition of Origen's homilies on the Song of Songs.<sup>34</sup> The early exposure to the theological accents of Chevetogne helps to explain why Father Pinckaers, following the practice of the Fathers of the Church, privileges the "spiritual" meaning of the Scriptures, one that develops out of a prayerful beholding of the Word of God.

The monastery at Chevetogne occupies a place in both the ecumenical and the liturgical movements that, along with biblical studies, dominated the work of theology during the period between the two world wars.<sup>35</sup> The then-Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, upon being received into

<sup>31</sup> Pinckaers, "My Sources," 913.

<sup>32</sup> Pope Pius XI's 1928 encyclical letter, *Mortalium Animos*, "On Religious Unity," was the occasion for this initiative; see especially, no. 8.

<sup>33</sup> See the Web site for the Monastère de Chevetogne at [www.monasterechevetogne.com](http://www.monasterechevetogne.com).

<sup>34</sup> Origène, *Homélies sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, 2nd ed., trans. Dom Olivier Rousseau, OSB (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966).

<sup>35</sup> The same year that Dom Olivier was giving his retreat to novice-brother Servais Théodore Pinckaers, this Benedictine monk also published *Histoire du mouvement liturgique; esquisse historique depuis la début du XIXe siècle jusqu'au pontificat de Pie X* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1945). An English translation appeared six years later: *The Progress of the Liturgy; an Historical Sketch from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the Pontificate of Pius X*, trans. Benedictines of Westminster Priory, Vancouver, B.C., (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1951). The work offers a point of view on the development of the liturgical movement until 1903 that is respectfully critical of the styles of worship fostered by the nineteenth-century Solesmes Benedictine, Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805–75). For a different view of the legacy of Dom Guéranger judged from the present moment of liturgical practices, see Jonathan Gaspar and Romanus Cessario, OP, "'Worthy of the Temple': Liturgical Music and Theological Faith," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 3

the Pontifical Academy of Sciences during its plenary session November 8–11, 2002, remarked: “I did my philosophical and theological studies immediately after the war, from 1946 to 1951. In this period, theological formation in the faculty of Munich was essentially determined by the biblical, liturgical and ecumenical movement of the time between the two world wars.”<sup>36</sup> Father Pinckaers, it is clear, finds himself formed within the same theological currents as those that shaped the current Roman Pontiff. At the same time, whereas Pope Benedict XVI devoted his early intellectual labors to the Franciscan tradition, our young Dominican from Belgium took up the intellectual tradition of his order, which had flourished in the region of Liège since 1232. I refer of course to Thomism, and to the distinctively Dominican mandate to make the doctrine of Aquinas available to the many.

### Thomas Aquinas

From the references to Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire, one easily could take away the impression that Thomism in Belgium awaited the arrival of expatriate Englishmen to make a foothold there. On the contrary. Think of Dominic of Flanders (d. 1479) and Peter Crockaert of Brussels (d. 1514), to cite examples from the early modern period. In the eighteenth century, European Dominicans in Belgium who published scholarly texts explaining the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas numbered seventeen.<sup>37</sup> Among them is the celebrated theologian and apologist, Charles René Billuart (1685–1757), whose *Le thomisme vengé* was published in Brussels in 1720. Father Pinckaers inserted himself into a tradition that, despite the diversity of interpretation on specific topics that it comprises, remains capable of creating a fellowship of common discourse that still sustains Dominican and Catholic intellectual life.<sup>38</sup> (Dominicans who eschew Thomist fellowship in favor of here-today-gone-tomorrow intellectual fads miss out on the graces that make them reliable witnesses in

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(2005): 673–88. For some general observations on the present-day outcomes of the modern liturgical movement, see my forthcoming article, “The Sacraments of the Church in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> For the complete text of his remarks, see Pontifical Academy of Sciences, *The Cultural Values of Science* (Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Scientiarum, 2003), 50–52.

<sup>37</sup> See Leonard A. Kennedy, CSB, *A Catalogue of Thomists, 1270–1900* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1987), 133–34.

<sup>38</sup> For further explanation, see my *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

the Church.) Father Pinckaers expresses it best: “St. Thomas was my principal initiator in theology during my formation as a Dominican and especially later as I prepared courses based upon the texts of the *Summa*.”<sup>39</sup> He claims as his own the style of historical Thomism that had been inherited by the *studium* at La Sarte from professors at Louvain. Those teachers who transmitted the thought of Aquinas to Father Pinckaers include his Dominican confreres: dogma professor (later cardinal of the Holy Roman Church [1985]) Jean Jérôme Hamer (1916–96), the Saulchoir-trained moralist Bernard Maximillian Olivier (1920–), and, at least indirectly, a founding figure of the *studium* at La Sarte, Louis Charlier. (The latter’s 1938 *L’Essai sur le problème théologique* found its way onto the “Index” because of certain untoward remarks on theological method, with the result that Father Charlier was affected for a period of time by the Roman sanctions of 1942.)<sup>40</sup> Whoever may be tempted to conclude that Thomism imposes a monochromatic view of reality, natural or supernatural, should read more of the mainline Thomists.

To announce that Servais Pinckaers brings luster to the Thomism practiced in the Order of St. Dominic is to do something that is obviously superfluous. It is like carrying coals to Newcastle, to borrow a British expression. (Newcastle is a city in northeast England where coal is mined.) Still, no commemoration of Servais Pinckaers would be complete without mentioning the retrieval of St. Thomas’s moral theology that this Belgian Dominican undertook in the period after the Second Vatican Council. His early essays published in the collection, *Sein und Ethos* in 1963, and, the next year, his first book, *Le renouveau de la morale*, demonstrate that he had escaped “from the prison of Kantian rationality”—“Thanks to Saint Thomas,” adds Father Pinckaers almost forty years later.<sup>41</sup> St. Thomas also helped Servais Pinckaers escape from a prison whose bars, by the mid-1960s, were soon to be sundered in any event. Today, hardly a well-trained theology student in the United States does not realize that the four-hundred-year reign of textbook casuistry came to an abrupt end about 1965, and that the only credible replacement for this mode of moral argument unfolds from the moral theology

<sup>39</sup> Pinckaers, “My Sources,” 914.

<sup>40</sup> For a brief commentary, see Roger Aubert, “La théologie catholique. A. Durant la première moitié du XXe,” in *Bilan de la Théologie du XXe Siècle*, eds. R. V. Gucht and Herbert Vorgrimler, vol. 1 (Paris: Casterman, 1969), 443. For a more extended treatment, see R. Guelluy, “Les antécédents de l’encyclique ‘*Humani generis*’ dans les sanctions romaines de 1942: Chenu, Charlier, Draguet,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 81 (1986): 421–97.

<sup>41</sup> Pinckaers, “My Sources.”

of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>42</sup> They learned this historical lesson from reading Father Pinckaers, who himself best explains his program for renewal:

The theology of St. Thomas and that of the manuals constitute two different moral systems, both of which have their own inner logic. Consequently, the way to renew moral theology is by returning to St. Thomas, as one who represents the best of the tradition nourished by the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church.<sup>43</sup>

We sense the shadow of Dom Olivier Rousseau. No wonder Alasdair MacIntyre considers the work of Servais Pinckaers “extraordinary.”

It would be difficult to estimate the influence that Father Pinckaers has exercised on the renewal of moral theology in the Catholic Church. One thinks of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and of the 1993 encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor* that followed the initial publication in December 1992 of the *Catechism*. Those who have studied with Father Pinckaers, or have read carefully his works, recognize that these magisterial documents bear indisputably the stamp of his moral theological outlook. The same documents also set about to redress widespread errors in moral theology that gained ascendancy in the immediate aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, especially after the equally widespread negative reaction to the 1968 encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae*, and which perdured thereafter for a quarter century. Before I left Boston for Zurich, I inquired of Father Pinckaers’s American publisher, Dr. David McGonagle at Catholic University of America Press, about the cumulative sales of *The Sources of Christian Ethics*.<sup>44</sup> He replied that since its publication in 1995, the book, which is a translation of the 1993 third French edition, has sold more than 6,500 copies. “It remains,” wrote the publisher, “one of our best-selling books each year.”<sup>45</sup> At this juncture, it would be remiss of me not to mention the work of Sister Mary Thomas Noble, Dominican nun of the Buffalo Monastery. More than any other person, Sister Mary Thomas has labored selflessly to make Father Pinckaers’s work

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<sup>42</sup> The manuals of the Flemish Dominican Benedict Merkelbach (1871–1942) represent this tradition, although they are thought to differ in important respects, for example, by placing an emphasis on virtue, from the prevailing casuist paradigms of the first half of the twentieth century.

<sup>43</sup> Pinckaers, “My Sources,” 914.

<sup>44</sup> Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, OP, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> Private communication of October 3, 2005, from Mrs. Elizabeth Benevides to the author.

available to the English-speaking world.<sup>46</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre deems her translation of *Les sources* “excellent.”<sup>47</sup>

For all his knowledge of and love for the Catholic tradition, Servais Pinckaers is not a theological antiquarian. His is not the project of restorationist theology that occupies the energies of some of our contemporaries, and that others are tempted to think provides the only way out of the impasse that Catholic theology at the start of the twenty-first century arguably finds itself bogged down in. Father Pinckaers supplies commentary on *Fides et Ratio* as much as on *Veritatis Splendor*. His own testimony speaks for itself: “Firm in my faith [from Eucharist, Bible, Aquinas], I was able to undertake the study of ancient and modern philosophers . . . a study that is necessary if one desires to be enriched by experience and to acquire a mind that is open to all that is human.”<sup>48</sup> His broad reading in philosophy strengthened his practice of Thomism. “The engagement with modern and contemporary authors,” he attests, “is necessary in order to render the teaching of St. Thomas current for our own time.”<sup>49</sup> If due allowance is made for rhetorical differences, this counsel displays a form of spiritual communion with Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire: “Thomismus ex Thomistis assertus & contra Novos ejus impugnatores vindicatus.”

In 1993 Father Pinckaers published an essay in the *Revue Thomiste* which that indefatigable contemplative Dominican, Sister Mary Thomas Noble, translated for *The Pinckaers Reader*, itself a work of piety by professors John Berkman and Craig Titus. “Dominican Moral Theology in the 20th Century” reports mainly on the moral theology taught in the European French-speaking Dominican Houses of Study and at Fribourg.<sup>50</sup> In this article, Father Pinckaers situates himself within the company of men who contributed to the making of moral theology during the preceding century. He tells his own story, as it were. The present encomium aims to locate Father Pinckaers within the big picture of Catholic and Dominican intellectual life. It is clearly impossible to acknowledge every figure

<sup>46</sup> In addition to numerous articles that Sister Mary Thomas has translated, she also is responsible for Father Pinckaers’s *The Pursuit of Happiness—God’s Way. Living the Beatitudes* (New York: Alba House, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> MacIntyre, preface to Pinckaers, *Morality*, viii.

<sup>48</sup> Pinckaers, “My Sources,” 915.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 915.

<sup>50</sup> Originally published as “L’Enseignement de la théologie morale à Fribourg” *Revue Thomiste* 93 (1993): 430–42; the English translation appears in Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, eds. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 73–89.

in this long tradition—although you will allow me, for personal reasons, to mention the exquisite contribution to moral theology made by the Provençal Dominican Michel Labourdette. So I have constructed, citing the historical warrants, a spiritual genealogy for Father Pinckaers that favors my own linguistic background. Jingoism does not dictate taking this tack. Rather I cite the huge success that Father Pinckaers has enjoyed in the English-speaking world, and in particular the United States. I leave it to other of his admirers to plot the course of his intellectual bilander as it glides along the coasts of other regions, linguistic and national.

No easy way presents itself to bring to a conclusion this tribute to a man whose accomplishments are so rich and diverse. I have said nothing specific of Father Pinckaers's regular contributions to journals such as *Nova et Vetera*, *Sources*, and *Kerit*, nor of his preaching in Liège (1964–73) and retreats given to laity and religious, nor indeed of his many other priestly ministrations over more than half a century. I am persuaded, however, that the man who has done so much to remind us of the telic perfection that befalls those who await “our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13) does not mind. Measured against this divine Beatitude that, please God, will meet us all, what significance do human words possess?

This Sunday marks Father Pinckaers's eightieth birthday, October 30, 1925–2005. The best expression of our gratitude that we can offer him will be effected around the altar of the Eucharist and the proclamation of the Word of God. The graces that set Servais Pinckaers on his way to scholarship and blessedness and which have sustained him over these four score years are also the pledge of his reward for service to Christ's Church. Bible and sacraments express in a human mode the plan of divine predestination that works itself out inexorably in the world. By a double birthright from Dominic Guzman and Thomas Aquinas, Dominicans commit themselves to upholding the priority of this divine initiative in the drama of salvation. To my mind, all that Father Pinckaers has taught us supplies a contemporary commentary on what Aquinas teaches about the knowledge, the will, and the providence of God. What matters in the Christian life above all, is that the believer comes to rely on the intrinsic efficacy of divine grace. When this first principle of the moral life is compromised (as Dominicans believe to happen in theories that emphasize divine foreknowledge and human freedom), Christian life loses its sweetness and all is lost. The doctrine of predestination is not easy for students of theology to master. Happily, Father Pinckaers helps us to learn about divine prevenient love from the bottom up, so to speak. His return again and again to Beatitude lulls us into sound Thomist teaching

on predestination. That is why I chose Thomas Williams of Monmouthshire as a figure for this *laudatio*. In Louvain 300 years ago, this expatriate Englishman taught the right theses. So today, does our brother Servais Théodore Pinckaers. And I am willing to wager that our Belgian friend does it better. *Ad multos annos*, dear Father Pinckaers!<sup>51</sup> N.V

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<sup>51</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge his gratitude to Rev. Msgr. Laurence W. McGrath, Rev. Dominic Langevin, OP, and Brother Thomas Joseph White, OP, for reading a draft of this essay and offering many helpful corrections and suggestions.