

Where Should We Place the Treatise on Conscience in Moral Theology?

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Translator’s Introduction

THE TOPIC of conscience has been at the center of many ecclesial discussions of late.¹ Much is to be said positively about the desire to

¹ At the original time of the drafting of this translation and introduction, many of the debates surrounding *Amoris Laetitia* were much more heated. It seems that the world of ecclesiastical discussions moves at a speed nearly as quick as does the popular media, replacing one topic with another quite rapidly. Although I share in worries that have been expressed concerning the creeping inexactness of ecclesiastical language in these matters, I am in agreement with the reading of the exhortation in question provided in Matthew Levering, *The Indissolubility of Marriage: Amoris Laetitia in Context* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019).

With that being said, this article has been translated as part a broader research project of mine, being undertaken in the hope of doing some small part, alongside others of greater erudition and culture than myself, to articulate a Thomist account of conscience drawing upon the wisdom of the Thomist school historically as providing guiding light for a more robust articulation of conscience than what is readily fashioned if one draws solely upon the several questions devoted to conscience *ex professo* in Aquinas (e.g., *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 79, a. 13; I-II, q. 19, aa. 5 and 6; *De veritate*, q. 17; *In II sent.*, d. 24, q. 2, a. 4; d. 39, q. 3, a. 1, ad 1; d. 39, q. 3, a. 2; *Quodlibet* III, q. 12). For recent discussions drawn from a different, though faithfully Catholic, hermeneutic, see David L. Schindler, “Conscience and the Relation between Truth and Pastoral Practice: Moral Theology and the Problem of Modernity,” *Communio* 46, no. 2 (2019): 333–85.

emphasize the importance of the inner sanctuary in which moral judgment springs forth in our lives. To refer to the heavily-cited passage from *Gaudium et Spes* §16,² conscience does indeed represent a profound sanctuary in the heart of the human person. From its deepest roots in faith and synderesis,³ as well as in the gains added by moral culture, philosophy, and theology, all the way to the terminal judgment of prudence, our moral reasoning (when it is indeed right and certain) sets the human person upon the path of the personal moral and divine self-governance⁴ that “existentializes” the

² The text is cited in *Amoris laetitia*, §222. A stand-alone history could be written concerning the uses *and misuses* of these words during the past fifty-five years of Catholic history. An interesting study would compare this to the preconconciliar schema *De ordine morali christiano*, §§7–11 (“Draft of a Dogmatic Constitution on the Christian Moral Order,” trans. Fr. Joseph Komonchak, jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/on-the-christian-moral-order.pdf). There is much to be said for reading the final wording incorporated into *Gaudium et Spes* as being interpretable in line with the more conservative wording of the schema, despite the way that this text was taken up by those who wished to find discontinuity in the Council’s expressions.

³ Fr. Benedict Merkelbach has made interesting recommendations regarding the way that synderesis is illuminated in the supernatural order in order to declare the universal truths that motivate Christian conscience *qua Christiana and supernatural*, both in the order of the theological virtues as well as the infused moral virtues; see Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis*, 5th ed., vol. 1 of 3, *De principiis* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), pt. 3 (*De actibus humanis*—sub-treatise *De conscientia in generali*), q. 3 (*De conscientia Christiana prout est regula actuum supernaturalium*), nos. 216–19 (1:203–6). Merkelbach cites the work of Fr. Noble, *La conscience morale* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1923); also see this same point cited by Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange in *De beatitudine* (Turin, IT: Berruti, 1951), 347.

For a recent critique of this recommendation, see Paul Rambert, “Conscience et loi naturelle dans les manuels d’avant Vatican II,” *Revue thomiste* 119 (July–September 2019), 428–29. This article contains much of interest and use in the matters to be discussed at detail below in note 7. However, the reader should take care regarding the use of Dom Odo Lottin, whose systematic work is questionable in comparison to his historical erudition. Whatever might be the case, a *Thomist* position concerning moral principles *cannot* limit itself merely to synderesis as a natural moral norm, for not only will the entire domain of acts of faith, hope, and charity be left out of consideration but, moreover, the entire domain of the infused moral virtues will be unexplained (for natural synderesis will *never* declare a word concerning the ends of moral virtues proportioned to the supernatural ends given through grace).

⁴ This is an expression containing great power, used by Fr. Ambroise Gardeil in “La faculté de Gouvernement,” in *La vraie vie chrétienne* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1935), 101–89. This volume is expected to be published in translation by Catholic University of America Press in the relatively near future.

human conquest of freedom for the good.

Very often the term “conscience” is used somewhat loosely to refer to all of these aspects of moral reasoning. For Saint Thomas, it had a more specific sense, properly referring to the act of moral judgment applying moral knowledge to a particular case (see *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 79, a. 13). In the synthetic outlook presented in the *Summa theologiae*, conscience is not treated by itself as a subject set apart. However, soon after the thirteenth century, it became normal to discuss the nature of conscience somewhere in the neighborhood of the treatise on human acts (i.e., ST I-II, qq. 6–21), often swelling the discussion with later controversies and subtleties, especially those that arose in the context of the great debates over probabilism. The history became incredibly complex, and we find ourselves faced with a question: “Is this the best solution for synthetically treating the nature of conscience?”

This article is presented as providing one possible approach to answering this question, one that seems seemed quite respectable to the famed Thomist Father Garrigou-Lagrange.⁵ In the text presented here by *Nova et Vetera*, Father Benedict Merkelbach (the author of the erudite and lengthy *Summa theologiae moralis*⁶) presents the results of his own research concerning these matters, providing a historical outline of the problem of conscience in the tradition of Catholic moral theology, as well as his opinion that a significant portion of this discussion should be conducted explicitly within the context of the treatise on prudence. Merkelbach and Garrigou-Lagrange⁷ argued that if right and certain conscience is

⁵ See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Remarks Concerning the Metaphysical Character of St. Thomas’s Moral Theology, in Particular as It Is Related to Prudence and Conscience,” trans. Matthew K. Miner, *Nova et vetera* 17, no. 1 (2019): 245–70.

⁶ See Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis*.

⁷ But it is important to note that a significant vein of critique exists among Thomists on this very point. Some are concerned with this annexation of conscience to the virtue of prudence, and this concern is understandable. Thomas’s texts do at times emphasize the “speculative” character of conscience, to the point that some authors have seemed to hold that it is a purely speculative judgment and not a speculatively-practical judgment. On the meaning of this latter expression, coming from the later Thomist school, see my remarks in “Appendix 2: On the Speculatively-Practical, and the Practically-Practical,” in Garrigou-Lagrange, “Remarks Concerning the Metaphysical Character of St. Thomas’s Moral Theology,” 266–70.

In any case, to my eyes, the main dividing line seems to be drawn between those who would have conscience be *only* a kind of judgment of “moral science”—that is, reflective moral thought, a kind of casuistic judgment (in moral philosophy and

moral theology), not ordered *at all* to the direction of *one's own acts* but merely to the analysis of cases—and those who would say that conscience extends, also, beyond such scientific casuistry, to the domain of prudential (or imprudential) reasoning. Here, in the latter domain, the judgment of conscience no longer applies to any X whatsoever but, rather, to the acting subject himself or herself. It is important to remember that prudential reasoning does not *merely* pick up a judgment emanating from “moral science” in order to readily apply its not-fully-concretized judgment to the acting subject. Rather, this judgment would serve merely as a preliminary in the practical *discursus* involved in the prudential activity of deliberation. Much work remains to be done in order to arrive, then, at the terminal judgment of prudence, for a moral-scientific casuistical judgment remains still at a great remove from the full particularization of the act in question *for me, here and now, given my own character, faults, strengths, circumstances, etc.*

When I first translated this article two years ago, I was an unqualified adherent to Merkelbach's and Garrigou-Lagrange's language on this topic. However, it was the reading of an essay by Fr. Pius-Mary Noonan, O.S.B., that changed the strength of my claim here, finally realizing, for instance, what separated myself from the explanations given by thinkers like Fr. Cajetan Cuddy and Ralph McInerny, who distinguish conscience and prudence more cleanly than I generally do. I was (and still remain) wary of the fact that too often this position renders moral science too completely *speculative* and not *speculatively practical*. And on this head, I remain deeply indebted to what is found in Jacques Maritain, “Appendix VII: ‘Speculative’ and ‘Practical,’” in *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 481–89. However, even though Maritain himself seems to carefully distinguish conscience and prudence, he refers to concretized moral reasoning as “conscience” as well, even as included in prudential reasoning (perhaps in the order of deliberation, if not the terminal practico-practical judgment guiding the will's choice). See the insightful chapter “La rectitude du vouloir,” in Jacques Maritain, *Loi naturelle ou Loi non-écrite*, ed. Georges Brazzola (Fribourg: University Editions, 1986), 63–78; cf. Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1948), 52n3.

For two excellent histories and overviews on these two main veins of thought, see the following, superb studies: Reginald G. Doherty, *The Judgments of Conscience and Prudence* (River Forest, IL: Aquinas Libray, 1961); P- M. Noonan, “Auriga et Genetrix: Le rôle de la prudence dans le jugement de la conscience,” *Revue thomiste* 114 (2014): 355–77 and 531–68. For several others who voice similar concerns as those raised by Noonan, see: Michel Labourdette, *Les Actes Humains* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2016), 204–45; Labourdette, “Morales de la conscience et vertu de prudence,” *Revue thomiste* 50 (1950): 209–27; Cajetan Cuddy, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Conscience,” in *Christianity and the Laus of Conscience: An Introduction*, ed. Helen M. Alvaré and Jeffrey B. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Ralph McInerny, “Prudence and Conscience” *The Thomist* 38, no. 2 (1974): 291–305.

Nonetheless, I cannot help but feel that *contemporary language* discusses conscience in a way that applies not merely to *moral science* but also to *personal-ex-*

istentialized moral reasoning. We cannot bend terms to fit a vocabulary that is no longer in use among our contemporaries (or, truth be told, by ourselves). I think we Thomists lose the intellectual fight by hand-cuffing ourselves to a vocabulary that even Aquinas himself did not develop in detail. Here, as a matter of methodology, I am of like mind with the sage words expressed in John C. Cahalan, "On the Training of Thomists," in *The Future of Thomism*, ed. Deal W. Hudson and Dennis W. Moran (Notre Dame, IN: American Maritain Association, 1992): 133–47.

Hence, I think voices like Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's and Fr. Merkelbach's remain important in trying to craft a way forward in these matters. Moreover, Saint Thomas himself seems to talk about conscience *both* in relation to personal-prudential reasoning and in relation to "moral-scientific-casuistic" reasoning. The texts cited by Fr. Cajetan Cuddy show the latter clearly enough. However, merely to name one text testifying to the former bent, consider this portion of the body of Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 17, a. 1: "Now, we use the word, 'conscience,' for both of these modes of application. Indeed, *inasmuch as knowledge [scientia] is applied to an act as directive of that act*, conscience is said to prod, urge, or bind. However, *inasmuch as knowledge [scientia] is applied to an act by examining those things which have already been done* conscience is thus said to accuse or cause remorse, when what has been done is found to be out of harmony with the knowledge [scientia] in light of which it is examined, or to defend or excuse when what has been done is found to have proceeded in accord with due reasoning [*secundum formam scientiae*]."

Perhaps such directing belongs solely to the order of moral-scientific reasoning. The use of *scientia* here in this early-career text of Aquinas could mean "moral science" or could merely mean "discursive reasoning" broadly speaking, whether practical or speculative in its mode of resolution. Later in his career, he would attribute this kind of broad use to Augustine (see *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 4, ad 1). I admit, however, that later in his career, he does not use *conscientia* in the treatise on prudence. We are not here adjudicating whether this is of significance as regards his terminology and the development of his thought. I merely note this ambiguity, which is present throughout, for instance, the work of Beaudouin-Gardeil, bearing witness to an imprecision in the Angelic doctor's own vocabulary. However, lest I raise too much ire for making such a claim, I happily will accept the well-grounded findings of others if brought forth.

Nonetheless, if the aforementioned application is performed in relation to *my* act (hence prodding, urging, or binding *me*), then we find ourselves in the domain of prudential reasoning, for moral science is one thing and prudential reasoning another, even if they are closely interrelated. Here, for whatever differences I have voiced in the past (and feel in the present, especially concerning a slight overemphasis on the *speculative* in the speculatively-practical domain), I find myself in agreement with the main thrust of the argument made by Fr. Philip-Neri Reese in "The End of Ethics: A Thomistic Investigation," *New Blackfriars* 95 (May 2013): 285–94.

In the end, at least to my eyes, "conscience" in Aquinas himself seems to straddle both moral science and prudence, and therefore, the way forward is for Thomists to lay out a teaching that is concerned with the problem and not with solely textual studies.

the judgment declared as prudence's *dictamen*-judgment (in distinction from the *imperium* directing execution of the act), the only way to have a complete account of conscience is to discuss it in the company of the great host of virtues that are annexed to prudence, aiding in the lofty and difficult task of rectifying our natural and supernatural self-government in the moral and divine life. We thus come to see conscience as being centrally involved in the "conquest of the good" that is the task of prudence. Prudence provides the context within which further discussions can then take place: the necessity of the virtues for rectitude of will in relation to the *ends* of the acquired and infused moral virtues, the relationship of prudence to faith, synderesis, and "moral science" (as well as moral culture), the perfection of prudence by the Spirit's gift of counsel, the nature of practical truth as helping us understand the certitude involved in conscience, and so forth. Yet, before the specific details are considered, it is best to know the general terrain. Why not turn to a great master of a former age to consider this matter—especially when that master provides us with an erudite article like the one being presented here?

Therefore, the intention of this translation is not to provide a mere "throwback" to past thought on the matter of conscience. Rather, it is to provide the reader with arguably one of the sagest Thomistic accounts concerning conscience presented by one of the great pedagogues of preconciliar moral theology. We will not find in the past all of the answers to the questions pressing upon the Church today concerning this much-vexed topic. Nonetheless, in all such matters, I think that most of us find ourselves to be beginners and learners, and whatever may be the case for the reader, I know well the fruit I have personally drawn from listening to those sage words of Aristotle's *De sophisticis elenchis*, cited on occasion by Aquinas: *oportet addiscentem credere*, as the old Blackfriars translation expressed it so charmingly: "It behooves the learner to believe" (*ST* II-II, q. 2, a. 3). In order to make new progress on these topics, let us first turn to a master, ourselves forearmed with docility, that great tool in the exercise of all forms of prudence—even academic prudence! Well-armed in this manner, we can indeed be that wise scribe of whom our Lord said, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt. 13:52; RSV).

Fr. Merkelbach's Text

Through the course of the centuries, the theology of conscience has undergone notable development, above all from the time when Bartholomeo de Medina, O.P., systematized moderate probabilism (1577). Moreover, discussion surrounding this topic continued its development in the wake of

the controversies between the tutorists and the probabiliorists on the one hand and between the probabilists and the laxists on the other (ca. 1650).

Before this (above all, from the thirteenth century onward), conscience was principally discussed in the treatise on human acts. However, in that treatise, such discussions were limited solely to the establishment of the general principles involved: "What is conscience? Why is it the rule of our acts? How does it bind, accuse, or excuse? What are the qualities required of it, especially regarding truth and certitude?" In speculative moral theology, true conscience and erroneous conscience (considered both as invincibly and vincibly erroneous) were discussed.⁸ Sometimes (above all in specific questions addressed in the "moral summas" and "penitential cases"⁹) doubtful conscience was discussed.

Once this teaching began to undergo development, it quite naturally continued to be explicated in the context of human acts, adding to this discussion all the various questions which arise concerning conscience. Medina inaugurated this methodology, and it was taken up by all the principal commentators on Saint Thomas, as well as by all the great theologians of the age. In this vein, the theory of conscience continued to be part of the treatise on human acts. Besides Medina, we can find¹⁰ among the Dominicans [the following writers following this methodology]: Diego Alvarez (†1635); John of Saint Thomas (†1644); Labat (†1670), Contenson (†1674); Gonet (†1681); Grossi (†1704); Gotti (†1742); Billuart (†1757); and Gazzaniga (†1799). Among the Jesuits: Azor (†1603); Vasquez (†1604); Suarez (†1617); Becan (†1624); Pallavicini (†1667); Platel (†1678); the professors of Würzburg (1766–1771); and more recently Father Pesch. Among the Franciscans: Herinx (†1678); Reiffenstuel (†1704); and Henno (†1713). Finally, among the Belgian clergy: Wiggers (†1639) and Daelman (†1731), professors at Louvain; Sylvius (†1649), a theologian from Douai; and

⁸ See: Albert the Great, *Summa de creaturis*, pt. 2 (*de homine*), qq. 71–72; Saint Thomas, *ST I-II*, q. 19, aa. 3, 5, and 6; *De veritate*, q. 17, a. 4; *In II sent.*, d. 39, q. 3, a. 3; Saint Bonaventure, *In II sent.*, q. 39; Giles of Rome, *In II sent.*, d. 39; and Scotus's discussion of this distinction in the *Reportatio parisiensis*. [Tr. note: No indication is given as to which *reportatio* of Scotus's Parisian lectures is being referred to here.]

⁹ See Saint Thomas *Quodlibet VIII*, q. 6, aa. 3 and 5, and IX, q. 7, a. 2. See also: Albert the Great, *Summa de creaturis*, pt. 2 (*de homine*), q. 72; Scotus, *In I sent.*, prol., a. 2, no. 15; William of Paris [*Gul. Paris*], *De coll. Benef.*, a. 8; Jean Gerson, *De Praep. Ad mis.*, cons. 3.

¹⁰ We do not intend to furnish a complete classification. Even less is it our intention to undertake a full and continuous history of the treatise on conscience. Here, we will limit ourselves to citing the principal authors, above all those whom we have at hand.

Perin (†1724), a professor at the Seminary of Namur. This is even the case for J.-B. Du Hael (†1706), for Tournely (†1729) at the Sorbonne, and for Laloux (†1853).¹¹

The importance of this subject soon led many authors to compose a special treatise, separated from the treatise on human acts.¹² Neesen (†1679) and the Dominicans John Syrus de Uvadano (†1727) and Preingné (†1752) placed it between the treatise on human acts and the treatise on sin, setting all of these treatises before the treatise on law: Human Acts—Conscience—Sins—Laws. On the contrary, Henry of Saint Ignatius (†1720), Schmier (†1728) and Dens (†1775) followed the order: Human Acts—Sins—Conscience—Laws. In Boudart (†1707), we already find the layout that will be dear to many modern theologians: Human Acts—Conscience—Laws—Sins.¹³

Already before this, the subject had taken on such importance in other authors that it overtook the importance of the treatise on human acts and was placed at the head of these treatises. Inspiration in this direction was able to be drawn from Saint Antoninus, O.P. (†1459), who in his *summa* follows a wholly idiosyncratic plan, beginning with the soul and its faculties, studying conscience (an act of the mind) before speaking about the will and voluntary acts. In any case, Laymann, S.J. (†1635), adopted the order: Conscience—Human Acts—Sins—Laws. Sporer, O.F.M. (†1714), followed him, while suppressing the treatise on laws, whereas Roncaglia (†1733) ordered them: Conscience—Human Acts—Laws—Sins. Illsung, S.J. (†1695): Conscience—Laws—Human Acts—Sins. And in contrast, Cuniliati, O.P. (†1759): Conscience—Laws—Sins—Human Acts.

In his *Medulla*, Busenbaum, S.J. (†1668), completely suppressed the utterly essential and fundamental moral treatise,¹⁴ namely the treatise on

¹¹ Fr. de la Barre (in *La Morale d'après saint Thomas et les anciens scolastiques*) cites also Valentia, S.J. (†1603), Tanner, S.J. (†1632), Arriaga, S.J. (†1622), Ysambert (†1642), Arauxo, O.P. (†1664), and Salas, S.J. (†1612). However, we have not been able to verify his accuracy on this matter.

¹² Preparation for this change can be found in many theologians listed in the preceding category (such as Suarez and John of Saint Thomas), who, while continuing to study conscience in the treatise on human acts, made it into a distinct chapter, which they relegated to the end of the treatise.

¹³ He probably is not the first to do so. We have not discovered the origin of this ordering.

¹⁴ [Trans. note: The assertion is surprising, given that *the fundamental* treatise of moral theology is the treatise on beatitude. Hence, we have, for example, the lengthy five-volume commentary *De beatitudine* by Fr. Ramirez. And Fr. Merkelbach himself does not neglect this fact in his own *Summa theologiae moralis*. However, it seems that here he has perhaps slightly fallen prey to the spirit of the

human acts, probably on the pretext that students had acquired knowledge about it in their study of moral philosophy. He places the treatise on conscience at the head of his discussions, followed by the treatise on laws, relegating the treatise on sins to the more specific treatises on moral theology,¹⁵ after the study of the commandments of the Decalogue! This plan was followed by Mazzotta (†1746) and by those who commented on Busenbaum, like Lacroix (†1714) and Saint Alphonsus (†1787), who nonetheless interposed a small treatise on human acts before the treatise on sins.

Antoine, S.J. (†1743), no longer had a treatise on human acts. He presupposed it and followed the order Conscience—Laws—Sins, though without separating them by any interval. This plan prevailed in modern theologians who preceded it with the treatise on human acts, which they reintroduced (Human Acts—Conscience—Laws—Sins). This order can be found in Collet (†1770), Voit (†1780), Gousset, Gury, Scavini, Van der Velden, Haine, Raphaël of Saint Joseph, Pruner, Génicot, and others. Even among the Redemptorists, we find Konings and Aertnijs [following this order].¹⁶ Likewise, this order is found in Lehmkuhl, who, however, detaches the question on probabilism from the treatise on conscience in order to place it in the treatise on laws. Again, it is found in Ballerini, who comments on Busenbaum and who, in order to remedy his deficiencies, composed an outline *de actibus humanis*, which he placed, by way of commentary, at the head of his entire work.

In addition to these general methodologies, some authors followed their own, idiosyncratic approaches. Noël Alexander, O.P. (†1724), follows the plan of the Catechism of the Council of Trent and inserts the treatise on conscience into the treatise on sins. Bonacina (†1631) had already done the same before this. And the Salamanca Carmelite moralists (1665–1724) combined the sequence Human Acts—Conscience—Sins into a single treatise, *de principiis moralitatis*, though they completely separated it from the treatise on laws.

Patuzzi, O.P. (†1769), first discusses the rules of morality: laws and

moral theology of his age.]

¹⁵ [Trans. note: The traditional expressions “special moral theology” and “general moral theology” are a bit opaque in contemporary English. Roughly speaking, the division for Thomists was between the various treatises on the virtues found in the *Secunda secundae* and the more general principles discussed in the *Prima secundae*. It is rendered freely in this translation.]

¹⁶ Marc, on the contrary, retains Saint Alphonsus’s order, though he does so while bringing the treatises on human acts and sins back into the general treatises on moral theology, immediately after the treatise on conscience and the treatise on law.

conscience. Then he discusses the principles of morality: acts, virtues, and sins. Others still, like Müller and Bouquillon among contemporary authors, place the treatise on laws in the first place, then conscience, thus finishing with the treatise on human acts. This represents a confusion between the order of juridical science and the order of ethics. The former begins by studying the laws and envisions everything from their perspective. The latter has our actions as its proper and immediate object, given that it is the directive science of these acts. It studies other topics (i.e., laws, habits, virtues, faculties, motions, influences) only inasmuch as they are related to our acts. The theological works of Malines, Noldin, Tanqueray, and most recently Father Vermeersch mix together the two methodologies and adopt the plan: Human Acts—Laws—Conscience—Sins.

Others study conscience in a discussion set apart, which they do not integrate into the overall framework of ethics but, instead, place at its head.¹⁷ Among these latter, we can cite Mercurus, O.P. (†1669), Thyrsus Gonzales, S.J. (†1705), and Concina, O.P. (†1756), for the probabiliorists and Terillus, S.J., for the probabilists. The outlook is the same in De Brocard ([†]1726) who, in this introduction, combines the teaching concerning acts with that concerning conscience.¹⁸

Finally, quite recently, Father Sertillanges, in his *Philosophie morale de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, places conscience in the specific ethical treatises, after the study of all the particular virtues.

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How are we to orient ourselves in the midst of such chaos? Are we not forced to conclude that, in the end, it does not ultimately matter where one chooses to house the doctrine on conscience? Or, on the contrary, should we say that it ought to be assigned a determinate place? Should it be studied with human acts or, rather, should it depend on the study of laws? Does it belong to the general ethical treatises? Or, instead, should it be cut

¹⁷ [Trans. note: Arguably, in context “morale” should be translated “moral theology.” Yet for faithfulness and (in some cases readability) I will use the indifferent term “ethics.” Nonetheless, one should recall that moral theology is not a separate discipline from theology as such but, instead, is an integrating part of acquired theological wisdom. Fr. Merkelbach himself notes this point in his *Summa theologiae moralis*, vol. 1, nos. 1–6 (esp. 3). Also, Fr. Merkelbach himself is a little ambiguous at times, using expressions that are more appropriate for moral philosophy than moral theology. The reader should note this ambiguity, though his overall framework is arguably that of moral theology.]

¹⁸ This work figures in the *Cursus theologiae* of Migne.

up into several sections and connected to different parts of ethical science?

In recent days, this question has been raised in explicit terms. Already in 1884, the Carmelite, Raphaël of Saint Joseph, wrote:

According to right order, the treatise on conscience follows the treatise on human acts, both because it is the *proximate and formal* rule [of human acts] and also because in the treatise on human acts we discuss the human (or, moral) act *abstractly*, whereas in the treatise on conscience, we discuss the same act *concretely*. Indeed, as we said elsewhere, in *Quodlibet* III, q. 12, a. 2, Saint Thomas writes, “A human act is judged to be virtuous or vicious in accord with an apprehended good, toward which the will is moved, and not in accord with the act’s material object.”¹⁹

Fr. Reginald Beaudouin, O.P., is of the same opinion:

Saint Thomas discusses this argument briefly in *Summa theologiae* I-II,²⁰ q. 19, aa. 5 and 6, and in passing in other places. He holds that its proper location is found in the place where he treats of the human act inasmuch as it is moral [i.e., the treatise on human acts in I-II, qq. 18–21²¹], for properly speaking, the goodness of the will depends on its object. However, the will’s object is proposed to it by reason, for the understood good is the object proportioned to the will. . . . And therefore, the goodness of the will depends on reason in the same way that it depends upon its object (*ST* I-II, q. 19, a. 3).²²

This opinion did not find favor before the eyes of Father Leonard Lehu, O.P. (to whose side Father Dominic Prümmer, O.P., rallies),²³ who treats of conscience after sins, *habitus*, and laws:

Fr. Beaudouin thinks that the proper place [for discussions concern-

¹⁹ Raphaël of Saint Joseph, *Institutiones fundamentalis theologiae moralis* (Alosti: Vernimmen, 1884), tr. 2 (*De conscientia*), in proem.

²⁰ [Trans. note: Reading “II-II” as “I-II”]

²¹ [Trans. note: See: Leonard Lehu, “A quel point précis de la Somme théologique commence le Traité de la Moralité,” *Revue Thomiste* 33 (1928): 521–32; B.-H. Merkelbach, “Le traité des actions humaines dans la morale thomiste,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 15 (1926): 185–207.]

²² Reginald Beaudouin, *Tractatus de conscientia*, ed. Ambroise Gardeil (Paris: Gabalda, 1911), 4.

²³ See Dominic Prümmer, *Manuale theologiae moralis*, vol. 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1914), no. 141, note 1.

ing conscience] is found in the treatise on morality, following the example of Saint Thomas, who treats of conscience in *ST* I-II, q. 19, aa. 5 and 6. In response to this opinion, one can say that this was indeed the case in Saint Thomas's day, when the entire question on conscience was reduced to these two questions: "Does erroneous conscience bind? Does erroneous conscience excuse?" However, since the treatise on conscience nowadays finds itself to have been greatly amplified, it is fair to ask ourselves: "According to the logical order, which should come first, the treatise on laws or the treatise on conscience?"

Conclusion: According to the logical order, the treatise on laws must be placed first, with the treatise on conscience coming afterwards.

This can be proven in two ways. (1) It is the office of conscience to apply universal laws to particular cases. Now, "Nobody can suitably apply one thing to another unless he knows both, namely both that which is to be applied and that to which it is applied" (*ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 3). Therefore, knowledge of the laws is a prerequisite for the treatise on conscience.

(2) Modern treatises on conscience chiefly focus on the problem of probabilism, which is entirely concerned with the conflict between the rights of the law and rights of freedom. Whence, in such discussions, we often read, "The law is in possession [of its rights]. . . . Freedom is in possession [of its rights]." Now, in order to justly resolve a given quarrel, the prudent judge must know the rights of both contending parties. Therefore, the controversy concerning probabilism would be settled according to the wrong order of procedure were it exposed before the rights of the law.²⁴

Before this, Father Lehmkuhl, S.J., had certainly posed the question to himself and practically resolved it (in 1883) by dividing up the doctrine on conscience (as we saw in passing above). Considering this solution in its general outlines (and without approving all the details of applied morality that are encountered in Father Lehmkuhl), we believe that it could indeed be the most logical and best resolution of this matter because the doctrine of conscience, in its full breadth, contains a general part and a specific part.

The general part serves as a continuation of the theory of human acts. Indeed, it is even an integral part of this topic. Conscience is the proximate, formal, and intrinsic rule of our actions, and it is impossible to understand

²⁴ Leonard Lehu, *Philosophia moralis et socialis*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gabalda, 1914), no. 341.

the general principles of conscience without knowing why, how, and in what conditions it is their sure rule. Thus, with Saint Thomas, we must continue to exposit this portion in the treatise on human acts or must form it into a small treatise set apart, one which would follow the first part of the treatise on human acts. Indeed, logically, this part precedes the treatise on laws. In ethics, everything is studied on account of our acts, and in the study of the latter, the proximate and intrinsic rule (i.e., conscience) must logically precede the remote and extrinsic rule (i.e., law). It also precedes the study of *habitus* (i.e., virtues and vices). These latter can be the principles of human acts, but they are not a constitutive element of them.

This general part contains only the three following points: (1) conscience is the rule of our actions; (2) this rule must be practically true or right; (3) it must be certain.²⁵

However, this subject also includes a specific part. In the latter, we come to envision questions that are more practical in nature, being more determinate and more concrete, concerning the practical details involved in forming a true and certain conscience for oneself:

1. How does one acquire a right conscience?
2. How does one set aside an erroneous conscience?
3. When and how must a superior or confessor reform the erroneous conscience of his inferior or his penitent?

²⁵ If we were to divide the treatise on human acts and the treatise on *habitus* into three parts, respectively envisioning them according to their psychological, moral, or supernatural being, we could adopt the same division for the treatise on conscience in general:

I. On conscience according to *esse physicum* (or, psychological existence)—What is conscience? (See *ST I*, q. 79, a. 11.)

II. On conscience according to its *esse morale*:

1. It is the rule of human acts;
2. It must be right; is it a right rule when it is...
 - ... true conscience?
 - ... invincibly erroneous conscience?
 - ... vincibly erroneous conscience?
3. It must be certain.

III. On conscience according to its *esse supernaturale*

For this last part, inspiration could be drawn from the articles published by Fr. Noble in *Vie spirituelle*.

4. How does one educate one's conscience?
5. What kind of certitude does conscience require?
6. How does one form one's conscience in cases of negative or positive doubt?
7. When one can form only probable opinions aiming solely at the permissibility or soundness of our acts, what legitimate use may one make of probable opinions?
8. What is the species or gravity of the sin of the person who acts against his conscience or with an insufficiently formed conscience?
9. And so forth . . .

The eighth question obviously presupposes the treatise on sins. Most of the others presuppose the treatise on laws and the general principles concerning right which are explained there, such as: *the condition of the possessor is better; a doubtful law does not obligate; the fact is not presumed but must be proven; [in a doubt] one must stand for the value of the act; positive biases are to be broadened, offensive ones restricted* ["*Favores sunt ampliandi, odiosa restringenda*"]; *a commanding law does not obligate with a great inconvenience; in obscure matters, what is least [minimum] is to be held, etc.*

Therefore, the specific part [of the treatment of conscience] presupposes and applies the entire general theory of laws. Likewise, it presupposes the treatise on sins. Now, we are no longer in agreement with Father Lehmkühl when he places it at the beginning of the treatise on laws. We are even less in agreement when he places the study of lax conscience and of scrupulous conscience in the general part. We believe that these issues presuppose the general ethical treatises and belong to the specific ethical treatises.

Merely scanning the statement of some of the questions that we just noted and, even more so, when we read them in [treatises on conscience in works of] theology, we get the impression that we are reading treatises belonging to "special ethics" [i.e., those which treat of the various virtues], given the diversity of immediately practical applications set forth in such treatises on conscience. Indeed, this impression can only increase when the study of lax or scrupulous conscience is added to it, something that is usually addressed in the same treatise.

Therefore, we think that the treatise on conscience must be divided up. The first part must remain among the general ethical treatises. It envisions conscience in its most *general* aspects and establishes that it is the rule of all our actions, though on the condition of possessing the two qualities of truth and certitude. The second part, which is much more considerable in size, will emerge in the specific (or, applied) ethical treatises. It will exam-

ine each of the *particular states* or *species* of conscience (true, erroneous, doubting, probable, lax, scrupulous, and perplexed) in order to see whether each is a legitimate rule of action, then the practical ways to acquire, on these various hypotheses, a sufficiently true and certain conscience, and finally the different ways that one can sin in relation to conscience.

It will be objected that this breaks up the unity of moral teaching. We respond by saying that nothing prevents one from sacrificing a little bit of unity on a particular point, like that of conscience, in view of the unity of the entirety of moral science. The synthetic order of the whole obviously must hold primacy. He who would consider the subject of conscience all by itself could not divide it up. However, if he studies conscience from the perspective of human acts and that of the various circumstances of these acts, the general order can require him to separately consider certain parts that touch on each other so as to better connect them, respectively, to the great divisions of the whole.

Again, one may well object that it is useless for the same subject to be treated two times, for it will be necessary to repeat the general part when one addresses the specific part, on pain of not understanding the latter. In response, let us first of all note that this second objection completely destroys the first, since, by recalling and applying the principles explained in the general part, the unity of the whole doctrine will be placed in full light. However, the reproach of duplication is unmerited. One could register the same complaint against every other general ethical treatise. If the objection had some worth, one would need to refuse to divide the sciences into a general part and a specific part. The general principles that are concerned with laws are applied to all the commandments of God and of the Church. Nonetheless, one does not claim that the principles and commandments must be gathered together into a single whole. The principles of human acts have their own application and must be recalled throughout the whole of ethics. Must we conclude from this that we no longer need to study them separately, apart? The notion of sin is found in all the species of sins, and nonetheless the study of different sins does not enter into the treatise on sins in general. Thus, the study of *various states* of conscience must not enter into the treatise that considers conscience *in general*, although it presupposes the principles that are established in that treatise.

Therefore, just as we separately study, on the one hand, human acts, law, virtue, sin in general, and on the other hand, the different species of acts, of laws, of virtues, and of sins in particular, so too we must study conscience and its qualities in general in the general ethical treatises, coming to discuss, only later on, in applied ethics, the various species of conscience

and the means for acquiring a conscience having all the qualities required.

The fact that this latter part itself has a universal scope does not demonstrate that it must be incorporated into general morality. Legal justice, obedience, and charity (above all the order of charity) all likewise have their own general scopes. Nonetheless, the study of these particular virtues belongs to the specific ethical treatises. Likewise, the particular virtue of prudence and the way it must proceed in order to rightly form its act well (i.e., right conscience) do not cease to belong to the specific ethical treatises merely because those virtues govern all our actions and, for this reason, exercise a universal form of influence. The only things that belong to the general ethical treatises are the principles that are completely universal, governing human acts, conscience, law, virtue, or sin, all envisioned in general.

* * * * *

If the doctrine on conscience predominantly belongs to the specific ethical treatises, the next question is: “Where should it be placed in that section?” Without a shade of doubt, it should be connected to the treatise on prudence. The judgment of conscience is an act commanded by prudence, though prepared and posited by the virtues that are connected to it: *euboulia* (good counsel), as well as *synesis* (good sense) and *gnome* (the sense for exceptions).²⁶ Therefore, the study of prudence and conscience must unhesitatingly be pursued together. As a result, the treatise on prudence will receive the unique recognition it deserves.

It is a dumbfounding that the most perfect, most essential, and most fundamental of the moral virtues occupies such a diminished position in moral science today—a quite bizarre state of affairs indeed, given that no good act can fail to be simultaneously prudent. Students and even professors are so blind to its importance that many manuals pass over it in silence, or if they do speak about it, the entire treatise is reduced to four or five pages. As soon as it is connected to conscience, its exceptional importance will stand forth in its peerless character. To bring this point to the fore, we merely need to entitle this treatise: “On prudence and the virtues connected to it, considered in the formation of conscience.”

²⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 51, a. 2, ad 1: “It pertains to prudence to counsel (and judge) well *by commanding it*, to *euboulia* (and *synesis*) *by eliciting it*.” *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 6, ad 1: “Prudence makes use of good counsel (and judgment) not as though its *immediate* act would be to counsel well (and to judge well), for it perfects this act *by the mediation of* the virtue of *euboulia* (and *synesis*), which is subject to it.

Hence, we must face the question set before us: “How should the treatise on prudence be ordered?” We will furnish two responses to this question.

The first option is to unite the theory of prudence and that of conscience, simultaneously envisioning the cardinal virtue and the annexed virtues, introducing the doctrine of conscience into the overall plan of prudence, such as it was constructed by Saint Thomas.²⁷ This is what is suggested in the following table.

General Conspectus

The Treatise on Prudence and the Virtues Connected to it, Considered in the Formation of Conscience

Introduction

1. On the various states of mind: doubt, opinion, and certitude with its various species
2. What are *synderesis*, moral science, conscience and law, and prudence?
3. Definition of prudence
4. Necessity of prudence²⁸
5. Division of the treatise

Part 1. On Prudence in Itself

Q. 1 On the subject in which prudence inheres [i.e., the intellect-as-practical]

Q. 2 On the object of prudence

Q. 3 On the acts of prudence:

- a) On its acts in general
- b) On conscience taken specifically²⁹

Its definition

Its various species

It is the conclusion of reasoning

It is the rule of human acts

Q. 4 On the *habitus* of prudence

- a) From the perspective of being a virtue
- b) From the perspective of truth: practical truth suffices (wherein true and erroneous conscience are discussed)

²⁷ See *ST* II-II, qq. 47–56.

²⁸ See *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 5.

²⁹ This consists in a summary of what had been explained in the treatise on conscience in general.

- c) From the perspective of certitude: it suffices to have practical (or, moral) certitude broadly speaking

Q. 5 On the cause[s] of prudence

- a) On those having prudence
b) On the generation, increase, and corruption of prudence

Part 2. On the Parts of Prudence

Q. 1 On its integral parts

Q. 2 On its subjective parts

Q. 3 On its potential parts

- a) On those parts in general³⁰
b) On *euboulia*, which is a prerequisite in deliberation for the formation of right conscience
—on the obligation of employing solicitude in the formation of one's conscience
—the means to be employed in its formation
—the forming of right conscience in oneself and in others
c) On *synesis* and *gnome* in the formation of certain conscience:
in a negative doubt
in a positive doubt
in a state of opinion
in a state of perplexity
in a state of scrupulosity or of laxity

Conclusion: On the practical formation of certain conscience in oneself and in others

Part 3. On the Sins Opposed to Prudence

Q. 1 On sins opposed by defect

- a) On imprudence in general and on the sin of acting against conscience
b) On precipitancy and on the sin of acting without right conscience (i.e., with a vincibly erroneous conscience)
c) On thoughtlessness and on the sin of acting without a certain conscience
d) On inconstancy and on the sin of acting with a scrupulous conscience

³⁰ The special gift of the Holy Spirit called "counsel" could be introduced here.

e) On negligence and on the sin of acting with a lax conscience³¹

Q. 2 On sins opposed by excess

- a) On false prudence
- b) On craftiness
- c) On guile and fraud
- d) On excessive solicitude

However, prudence could just as well be studied separately by following the order established by Saint Thomas and then adding the treatise on the annexed virtues envisioned from the perspective of the formation of conscience, thus adopting, for example, the following plan.

General Conspectus

The Treatise on Prudence and the Virtues Connected to it, Considered in the Formation of Conscience
(To be placed immediately after the treatise on prudence ordered in accord with Saint Thomas's treatise)

Introduction

1. The virtues connected to prudence exist so that the judgment of conscience may be rightly formed. Indeed, good counsel is ordered to the right practical judgment through which counsel/deliberation is brought to its terminus, just as the right practical judgment is ordered to the command that commands the judgment of execution. Therefore, just as commanding is the proper and most important act of prudence itself, so too the judgment of conscience (which is formed from prerequisite counsel and in accord with which prudence's command must itself be rendered) is the proper or most important act of the annexed virtues which prudence utilizes for its own end. Whence, after we have spoken about prudence itself, we now come to those things that must be said concerning the virtues connected to it, viewed from the perspective of the practical formation of conscience.
2. From general moral theology, we know:
 - a) what conscience is and how it is distinguished from synderesis, moral science, law, and prudence;
 - b) that it is the conclusion of [practico-moral] reasoning;
 - c) that it is the proximate and subjective rule of human acts;

³¹ Scrupulous conscience and lax conscience could be connected to precipitancy and thoughtlessness.

- d) and that, however, in order for it to be such a rule it must be right (from the perspective of its object) and certain (from the perspective of the subject).

3. Having posited these points, since we do not always have right and certain conscience immediately and easily, we must now investigate how one is to proceed prudently in practice in order to form a conscience that is right and certain in the various states or circumstances that are involved in conscience's activity.

However, all the defective states of conscience are reduced to three categories: a defect in truth, a defect in certitude, and a defect in truth together with a defect in certitude. Whence, we must discuss:

- (1) the discovery and formation of right conscience for the sake of removing errors (this belongs, in particular, to *euboulia* because rectitude in judgment especially depends upon preceding deliberation);
- (2) the formation of certain conscience for the sake of doing away with uncertainty (this is particularly concerned with *synesis* or *gnome* because certitude is a quality of judgment).
- (3) and the way to form right and certain conscience in a case of uncertainty that is coupled with error (where aspects of both *euboulia* and *synesis* are observed together).

*Part 1. On the Formation of Right Conscience for the Sake
of Removing Errors*

Q. 1. On the obligation to undertake the inquiry [of counsel] with care and to form a right and true conscience, as well as concerning the means for achieving this

Q. 2. On the species of conscience considered from the perspective of the object (i.e., from the perspective of rectitude)

Having established the inquiry needed for the discovery of [the judgment of] conscience, when we consider matters from the perspective of conscience's object, we know that this can be either true or erroneous (whether vincibly or invincibly). Hence, we must ask whether there are several rules for acting prudently (i.e., in a practically certain manner):

- a) on true conscience;
- b) on invincibly erroneous conscience;
- c) on vincibly erroneous conscience.

Q. 3. On the practical formation of right conscience in oneself and in others (on how to discern erroneous conscience—on how to set it aside—on the obligation of teaching those who labor under erroneous conscience—on the education of conscience)

*Part 2. On the Formation of Certain Conscience for the
Sake of Eliminating Uncertainty*

1. On various states of mind: doubt, opinion, certitude, and their various species
2. After bringing a diligent inquiry and deliberation to its close, man either arrives at direct certitude of conscience or remains in a state of doubt or opinion. Hence, we ask:
 - a) What kind of certitude suffices so that conscience may be the rule of acting prudently and in a practically certain manner?
 - b) In the case of doubt or of opinion, how can someone (in accord with prudence) form an indirectly certain conscience which is the rule of acting prudently, doing so in a practically certain manner?
3. Various systems have been devised in order to resolve these questions.

Q. 1. On the quality of the certitude required for conscience

Q. 2. On the species of conscience, considered from the perspective of the subject and of certitude:

- a) On negatively doubtful conscience
- b) On positively doubtful conscience
- c) On opining or probable conscience
- d) On the right and prudent use of probable opinions

Q. 3. On the practical formation of certain conscience in oneself and in others

Q. 4. On the sin of the person acting against conscience

*Part 3. On the Formation of Right and Certain Conscience in the Case of
Uncertainty Together with Error*

A single question on the species of conscience considered from the perspective of the object and the subject at once:

- a) On perplexed conscience
- b) On lax conscience (definition and division—signs—causes and effects—remedies—imputability)

- c) On scrupulous conscience³² (definition—signs—causes and effects—remedies—imputability—methods for directing scrupulous people)

We did not wish to consider, in a disconnected manner, each of the virtues that are connected to prudence. Indeed, for now, the best position seems to be that *synesis* and *gnome* undergo the same process in forming the judgment of certain conscience. The only difference that exists between them arises from the principles that they invoke.³³ With regard to the counsel of *euboulia* and the judgment of *synesis* or of *gnome*, these two acts naturally call for each other: judgment presupposes certain deliberation, and deliberation is brought to its close by a judgment.

Therefore, good conscience simultaneously flows from two virtues.

However, as we indicated on the plans erected above, *euboulia* plays a preponderant role in the formation of right and true conscience, whereas *synesis* and *gnome* play a preponderant role in the formation of certain conscience. The rectitude (or truth) of a [practico-moral] judgment principally depends on one's prior deliberation, whereas certitude depends above all on the judgment itself. This seems to be in conformity with Saint Thomas's doctrine:

To one ultimate end, which is to live well in a complete manner, there are ordered various acts according to a kind of gradation, for counsel precedes, judgment follows, and finally there is the command, which is immediately related to the ultimate end. However, the other two acts are remotely related to each other. Nonetheless, they themselves have certain proximate ends: counsel has the end of *discovering those things that (truly) must be done* and judgment has *certitude* as its end.³⁴

This is why erroneous conscience declaring an evil course of action to be taken is a defect of *euboulia*, and the craftiness that seeks false ways is an abuse of counsel:

³² We take the words "lax conscience" and "scrupulous conscience" in the proper sense of an actual judgment, and not, like many theologians, in the sense of a habitual disposition to scruples or laxity.

³³ If one were of another opinion on this matter, one could add a part: "On *gnome* in the formation of certain conscience." Saint Antoninus (*Summa*, pt. 1, tit. 3, ch. 10) seems to connect the reformation of scrupulous conscience to equity (*ἐπιεικεία* [*epieikeia*]) and consequently to *gnome*. However, Cajetan limits the role of equity to the cases in which the law becomes harmful.

³⁴ See *ST* II-II, q. 51, a. 2, ad 2.

There is no good counsel involved either in taking counsel (or, deliberating) for an evil end, or in discovering evil means for arriving at a good end—akin to how, in speculative matters, one fails in one’s reasoning either by coming to a false conclusion or by arriving at a true conclusion on the basis of false premises because one has not made use of a suitable middle term [in one’s reasoning]. And therefore, each of the aforementioned cases are contrary to the notion of *euboulia*.³⁵

By emphasizing these different roles, one could entitle the first part of the second plan laid out above, “On *euboulia* in the formation of right conscience,” and the second part, “On *synesis* and *gnome* in the formation of certain conscience.” In the third part, counsel and judgment will be of nearly equal importance: “On *euboulia* and *synesis* in the formation of conscience that is simultaneously right and certain.”

* * * * *

Of the two methods syncretized in the two tables that we laid out above, our preferences, quite frankly, stand with the second. First of all, it respects the excellent ordering of the treatise on prudence as it was conceived of by Saint Thomas. It would be a shame to break up this marvelous unity or even to cast the slightest shadow over it. Moreover, it helps to emphasize the perfect unity of the teaching concerning the formation of conscience by synthesizing it into a single whole.

Moreover, Saint Thomas always treats the annexed virtues, their acts, and the sins opposed to them after having treated the cardinal virtue. It is quite astonishing that he made an exception for prudence and did not raise specific questions for the virtues that are connected to it. The second method attempts to fill in this lacuna, all the while remaining within the general framework of the *Summa theologiae*. This is also the method that we have adopted for our students.³⁶ N.V

³⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 52, a. 1, ad 1; see also q. 55, a. 3, ad 2.

³⁶ Trans. note: As always, I owe a debt of gratitude to the editors at *Nova et Vetera*, whose careful eyes are always such a great help in the process of reworking and editing translations. Likewise, thanks go to Mr. David Capan, who kindly helped in the editing of this article with a spirit of true generosity.