

LIBER PRIMUS

DE CONSCIENTIA, ET EJUS CASIBUS IN GENERE

CAPUT I-CAPUT V (PAGES 1-13)

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Sola Deo Gloria!

This translation is being done as my 3rd Quarter Middle Dogmatics assignment for Professor John Brug. I chose this work by Andreas Quenstedt because it was consistent with the topic covered in our survey of dogmatics and because it had not yet been translated by someone else. I would like to thank Mark Lotito for patiently bearing with me as I delved back into my study of Latin and as he proofread my work. Without his help, little of this translation would have made sense. He made many necessary and beneficial changes to my original translation, as well as providing me with a better understanding of the grammar and syntax of the Latin language. I would like to thank Dustin Yahnke as well for the proofreading he provided for the first half of this translation. Both men provided invaluable help and advice.

I am by no means a Latin scholar. In fact, I am far from it. My translation is often rough and may therefore be hard to follow at times. My prayer is that it will be improved upon with time by men much more capable than myself, men who also desire to delve into the untranslated treasures of our fathers in the faith, the great dogmaticians. May the fruits of my labor, imperfect as they may be, in some way allow you, the reader, to glean something from the thoughts of Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688).

Wade R. Johnston

*fili mi si susceperis sermones meos et mandata mea absconderis penes te
ut audiat sapientiam auris tua inclina cor tuum ad noscendam prudentiam
si enim sapientiam invocaveris et inclinaveris cor tuum prudentiae
si quaesieris eam quasi pecuniam et sicut thesauros effoderis illam
tunc intelleges timorem Domini et scientiam Dei invenies*
(Proverbs 2:1-5, Vulgate)

CAPUT I
An Sit Conscientia
(Whether there is a conscience?)

Although the wicked man says in his heart, “there is no God” *Psalm 14:1¹; Psalm 52:1²* nevertheless, not only in Sacred Scripture, but also in creation, the divinity and power of God is made manifest, so that it is even able to be handled with the hands *Romans 1:20³; Acts 17:27⁴*: in the spirit of many men the conscience has become extinct, so that although they occasionally feel it as a silent stimulus, nevertheless what they hear concerning these things they hold in mockery, as if the conscience were a figment, a dream and inane *το μορμολυκειον*, that is, a hobgoblin.⁵ In German, they call such people *Gewissen lose*, that is, conscienceless. Paul wrote *κεκαυστηριασμένων τὴν ἰδίαν συνείδησιν 1 Timothy 4:2.⁶* Therefore, on account of this, before we can approach a case of conscience, it must be taught that there is a conscience.

I. Scripture teaches about conscience, where mention is made of a good conscience

Proverbs 15:15⁷; Syrach 13:30,⁸ and of a bad conscience Wisdom 17:10,11⁹; Syrach 14:2¹⁰ when

¹ NIV Psalm 14:1 For the director of music. Of David. The fool {The Hebrew words rendered fool in Psalms denote one who is morally deficient.} says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.

² NIV Psalm 52:1 For the director of music. A maskil {Title: Probably a literary or musical term} of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech." Why do you boast of evil, you mighty man? Why do you boast all day long, you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God?

³ NIV Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

⁴ NIV Acts 17:27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

⁵ This translator added the translation of the Greek.

⁶ NIV 1 Timothy 4:2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

VUL 1 Timothy 4:2 *in hypocrisi loquentium mendacium et cauteriatam habentium suam conscientiam*

⁷ NIV Proverbs 15:15 All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.

⁸ UL Sirach 13:30 *bona est substantia cui non est peccatum in conscientia et nequissima paupertas in ore impii*

⁹ VUL Wisdom 17:10 *cum sit enim timida nequitia dat testimonium condemnata semper enim praesumit saeva conturbata conscientia*

VUL Wisdom 17:11 *nihil enim est timor nisi praesumptionis adiutorium proditio cogitationis auxiliorum*

¹⁰ VUL Sirach 14:2 *felix qui non habuit animi sui tristitiam et non excidit ab spe sua*

men are either provoked by their conscience *Genesis 43:22*¹¹; *1 Corinthians 8:7*¹²; *2 Corinthians 1:12*¹³; *4:2*¹⁴; *2 Timothy 1:3*¹⁵ or when they are refrain at the judgment of their conscience, as *Ecclesiastes 7:23*¹⁶; *Romans 13:5*¹⁷: when the judgment of the conscience in the impious is described *Romans 2:15*¹⁸ when the concern of the conscience is commended with regard to our neighbor *1 Corinthians 8:10, 13*¹⁹ and with regard to ourselves *1 Timothy 1:5*²⁰; *4:2*.²¹

II. The prayers of the saints and the desire for a good conscience teach that there is conscience, as when David prayed in *Psalms 51:12, 14*²²: *Create in me a clean heart O God and a right Spirit renew in my inmost parts; restore to me the joy of your salvation and confirm me with your free spirit.* Such was the wish *Syrach cap. 23, verse 2: Who will lay a whip against my*

¹¹ NIV Genesis 43:22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."

The English is unclear in explaining why Quenstedt would cite this verse. One will see why, however, when they look at the Latin:

VUL Genesis 43:22 *sed et aliud adtulimus argentum ut emamus quae necessaria sunt non est in nostra conscientia quis eam posuerit in marsuppiis nostris*

The Hebrew reads like the NIV: וְכִסְפֵי אַחֵר הוֹרְדוּנוּ בְיָדֵנוּ לְשִׁבְר־אֶכֶל לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מִי־שָׂם בְּאַמְתוֹחֵינוּ:

¹² NIV 1 Corinthians 8:7 But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled.

¹³ NIV 2 Corinthians 1:12 Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.

¹⁴ NIV 2 Corinthians 4:2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

¹⁵ NIV 2 Timothy 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

¹⁶ NIV Ecclesiastes 7:23 All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise"-- but this was beyond me.

¹⁷ NIV Romans 13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

¹⁸ NIV Romans 2:15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

¹⁹ NIV 1 Corinthians 8:10 For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols?

NIV 1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

²⁰ NIV 1 Timothy 1:5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

²¹ NIV 1 Timothy 4:2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

²² NIV: ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. ¹⁴ Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

thoughts and put the discipline of wisdom in my heart, that I may not be spared in my ignorance, lest my sins become apparent (shine forth), my ignorance increase and my sins multiply. All of which are nothing other than a desire for a good conscience.

III. The joys of the pious teach that there is a conscience from the testimony of a good conscience, concerning which John wrote in 1 John 3:21²³: *If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence in God's presence and whatever we ask, we will receive from Him.* Along this line, there is the very famous maxim by Bernard (*in lib. De interiore domo cap. 22*): *Conscience, he says, is the good title for religion and blessing, a delightful garden, a golden couch, the joy of angels, the ark of the Covenant, the storehouse of the kingdom, the palace of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, a book sealed and shut to be opened on the day of Judgment. Nothing is more pleasing, nothing is more untroubled than a good conscience, Let the body oppose, the world drag down, the devil gnash his teeth: conscience will be untroubled. Untroubled when the body dies, untroubled when the soul is presented before God, untroubled when both stand in the before the terrifying tribunal of the Judge in the day of Judgment. There is not a more useful remedy for future blessedness, or a more certain testimony, than a good conscience.*

IV. The terrors of the impious teach that there is a conscience, after some sin has been admitted. For no one is so morally corrupt that he does not occasionally experience some fear of the divine will which punishes those who transgress his laws. *Indeed all men have the book of the law written in their hearts, their own consciences themselves bearing testimony of that, within them their own thoughts in turn accusing, and also defending them. Romans 2:15.*²⁴

V. Experience teaches this daily. Indeed, every man has a witness and judge of his deeds in his own heart, which praises and consoles him if he does something good, and, in so much as

²³ NIV: ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

it [experience] is able to arouse him to the judgment of his conscience against the perverse judgment of the world, for example, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:3.²⁵ If in truth one is wrongly blamed and damned by himself, it may well be that many others praise that deed. Indeed, everyone is his own best and surely infallible witness, as well as judge. Many commit the judgment of their own deeds to others, as to whether they are good or bad, they wish to learn from *Scabinis*,²⁶ who if their own consciences directed to the magistrates, also without expense and with greater certainty they made decisions on their matters.

VI. Finally, they accept the saying and opinions of the pagans, in whom they recognize the judgment of the conscience, such as *Cicero pro Milone: The conscience has great power in two ways: on the one hand, because those who have sinned always suppose punishment to remain before their eyes, and, on the other hand, because those who have not committed anything fear nothing. Socratis to Demonicum: μη δε ποτε μηδεν {αιξρον} ποιησασ ελπικε {λησψ} {γδ} αν τουσ αλλουσ λησησ συ τω συνειδησει: if you do something shamefully, you never ought to hope to hide yourself, even though you may surely hide from others, yet certainly you yourself will know: the quotation is from Seneca in epist. 97. Never may faith, when it is hiding, actually be hidden, because conscience shows it clearly, and it exposes itself.* The short verses of Ovid are also well-known *Ovidii lib.1. Fastor: A witness is given to each mind, so that it conceives within hearts before a deed both expectation and fear concerning it.*

And the beautiful line from *Menander: {βρξισ} απασιν η συειδησισ θεοσ, The conscience is god to all men.* There are obvious similar passages here and there, which testify concerning the

²⁴ NIV: ¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

²⁵ NIV: ³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

²⁶ I am not sure who this refers to.

conscience of man, so that the very wicked, who neglect conscience, are neglecting their own salvation.

CAPUT II.
De Nomine conscientiae
(Concerning the name of conscience)

Conscience, in Greek, Latin, and German, has its name *a sciendo*, that is, from knowing, because it knows the thoughts and words of man. That knowledge brings man a knowledge of himself, as of all the things which have been set forth by a man, conscience is the indicator and judge of whether they are good or evil.

Among the Hebrews, however, it is not rare that it is the heart itself, which convicts man, be used for the conscience, as in *Eccles. 7. vers. 23*²⁷ where the Latin version²⁸ has: *Your conscience knows, because you also have frequently cursed others*. In the Hebrew²⁹ it is: *Your heart knows etc. for conscience is knowledge of the heart*, says *Hugo l. 2. de an: c. 12. and Bernh. De inter: dom: c. 22*.

In the Syriac language, conscience is called חֲאֵרָא. For thus the Syrian interpreter has in *cap. 2 Roman*.³⁰ *Also it testifies against them תְּהוֹנֵן תְּאֵרָא*³¹ *his conscience*, which is formed from

²⁷ I believe Quenstedt is speaking of Ecclesiastes 7:22

NIV: ²² for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

NIV: ²³ All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise"— but this was beyond me.

²⁸The vulgate does have this verse as Eccles. 7:23 as follows.

VUL: ²³ *scit enim tua conscientia quia et tu crebro maledixisti aliis*

²⁹ BHS seems to match with Eccles. 7:22 as well. Both verses are supplied.

BHS: כִּי גַם־פְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת יָדַע לְבָדֵךְ אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה קָלַלְתָּ אֲחֵרִים: ²²
כָּל־זֶה נִסִּיתִי בְחִכְמָה אָמַרְתִּי אֲחִכְמָה וְהִיא רְחוּקָה מִפְּנֵי: ²³

³⁰ I believe he is referring to Rom. 2:15, which he cited earlier. This is the only reference to conscience in Rom. 2.

NIV Romans 2:15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

VUL Romans 2:15 *qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum et inter se invicem cogitationum accusantium aut etiam defendentium*

³¹ see MS pg 4, par. 2 for pointing

the root תָּאָר, which depicts and expresses, because conscience is the expressed form of words and deeds in the mind.

However, it [conscience] is not simply called knowledge, but conscience. A threefold reason for this name can be given.

I. There are those who think conscience is something to be listened to, as if it were knowledge of the heart. For *Hugo*, said *1. d. the heart also understands itself by its own knowledge, as well as many other things; when it knows itself, it is called conscience; when it knows other things beside itself, it is called knowledge*. For this reason, conscience is said to be concerned with personal actions.

II. To some, conscience is something, so to speak, which includes knowledge, because conscience is a practical syllogism, which judges and concludes from the light of nature and grace, what is honest and what is shameful; what is commanded and what is prohibited, and whether reward or punishment awaits the man on account of that action. In this syllogistic proposition the greater source is from either the light of nature or Scripture, e.g. *whoever sheds human blood, his blood will also be shed* as Scripture teaches in Genesis 9:6.³² Conscience near at hand in homicide: *You have shed human blood*: Hence, it follows that man pronounces the sentence upon himself: *Therefore your blood also is going to be shed*.

III. Others think that conscience is talked about as knowledge in combination with other things; for it introduces an order of knowledge to something, and this can be understood in two ways.

I. Indeed, conscience is the application of knowledge to a certain act, either doing them or not doing them, and also concerning that deed about which it judges, deciding whether it

is right or wrong. And conscience is spoken about in this way because it is the application of a deed with knowledge, or the application of knowledge to the deed, which the etymology accepts, i.e. *Thomae. part. I. quaest. 79. art. 13: in conclusion, that, to betray God, is to be forbidden*. Of the betrayer Judas, it was correctly observed: that when the application of his conscience was applied to that realization: *you have betrayed the Lord*, it was followed by the proper judgment of the heart: *Therefore you have done an illegal thing worthy of punishment*.

2. Then for this reason this is also knowledge in combination with other things, because man is not only conscious of his own deeds, but many others also may know, and thus conscience joins the many to one, or joins its own knowledge with that of others. For 1. God in heaven also knows our secrets, about which Job says: *Behold, in heaven is my witness, and my advocate is in the highest* (16:20³³) and about which David also speaks in Psalm 139:3³⁴: *You know my thoughts from afar*. Wisdom 1:8³⁵ calls it *the witness of my innermost parts and the investigation of my heart*.

2.³⁶ If the deeds are external, the holy angels, who are the spectators of our good and evil actions, approving of the good but hating and accusing us of the evil, they also know of them. Whence Bernard admonishes in *homil. 13. super Psalm: He who lives etc., walk carefully, since it is apparent the angels are present just as it is commanded them, in all your ways. In whatever lodging place, in whatever corner you may be, have reverence for your angel. Lest you*

³² NIV Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

³³ NIV Job 16:19 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.

³⁴ NIV Psalm 139:3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

VUL Psalm 138:3 *intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe semitam meam et funiculum meum investigasti*

³⁵ *Sapientia 1:8*, which is listed as Wisdom 1:6 in my Vulgate: *benignus est enim spiritus sapientiae et non liberabit maledictum a labiis suis quoniam **renum illius testis est Deus et cordis eius scrutator est verus et linguae illius auditor***. In bold is the part quoted. There is no *hinc* in my Vulgate, however.

³⁶ This is how they are ordered in the manuscript.

dare, in its [an angel's] presence, to do something which you would not do if it were watching you.

3. Other men. Nothing indeed is practiced in hiding, which the days indeed may not uncover. By one knowing, many others easily will know. *A particular author may be absent, but every voice tells of him*, as the Poet sings. Adulterers, thieves, and robbers have many comrades, all of which are conscious of the other one's evil, *Denn ein Schalck weis / wie dem andern zu muth ist* [For a rascal knows what is demanded of the other person]. Also, however, those who do something praiseworthy do not lack in fame. Indeed, *Ovid in lib. 2. Fast.* has, *Fame awaits deeds, flowing from an appointed veil so that memorable fame awaits him who conducts himself well.*

4. Furthermore, besides those who know about their deeds, men also have the Devils, who are grieved by those who do good, but who inspire, aid, promote evil deeds and, most importantly of all, oppose just judgment. Because of this, Satan is called *the accuser of our brothers* in *Apoc 12:20*³⁷ and, as the ancients spoke of him, the chief exactor according to guilt and the chief torturer according to punishment.

5. And finally, heaven and earth with all its creatures are conscious of our deeds, who testify in their way concerning them, and on account of their abuse they *groan* as Paul

³⁷ *Apoc. 12:20* is listed as Revelation 12:10 in my Vulgate:

VUL Revelation 12:10 *et audivi vocem magnam in caelo dicentem nunc facta est salus et virtus et regnum Dei nostri et potestas Christi eius quia proiectus est accusator fratrum nostrorum qui accusabat illos ante conspectum Dei nostri die ac nocte*

NIV Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the **accuser of our brothers**, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

affirms in *Romans 8:22*³⁸. Hence, *the heavens* are said to reveal the iniquity of the impious and *the earth stands against them* (*Job 20:27*³⁹). God Himself also quotes the testimony of creatures against sinners *Deuter. 30:19*⁴⁰. *Esa (?) . 1, 2, and c.* But this suffices concerning the etymology of conscience.

CAPUT III.

Quid sit conscientia?

(What is conscience?)

It is beyond doubt that conscience belongs to the rational soul of man. Whether, however, to the intellect or the will, is not agreed upon by all. Some have referred to the will on the account that conscience is perfected through goodness, along those lines *Paul in 1 Tim. 1:5*⁴¹: *love is from a pure heart and a good conscience*, likewise, v. 18⁴². *Fight the good fight, retaining*

³⁸ NIV Romans 8:22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

³⁹ NIV Job 20:27 The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him.

My vulgate has slightly different wording, especially in the second half of the verse, but this is obviously the verse Quenstedt is speaking of:

VUL Job 20:27 *revelabunt caeli iniquitatem eius et terra consurget adversus eum*

⁴⁰ NIV Deuteronomy 30:19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

⁴¹ NIV 1 Timothy 1:5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

⁴² NIV 1 Timothy 1:18 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight,

NIV 1 Timothy 1:19 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

My Vulgate has slightly different wording, having *habens* in the place where Quenstedt has *retinens*. The thought is identical.

VUL 1 Timothy 1:18 *hoc praeceptum commendo tibi fili Timothee secundum praecedentes in te prophetias ut milites in illis bonam militiam*

VUL 1 Timothy 1:19 *habens fidem et bonam conscientiam quam quidam repellentes circa fidem naufragaverunt*

faith and a good conscience, etc. Goodness then pertains to the will, just as truth pertains to the intellect. Likewise, the law of the mind (which *Damascenus*⁴³ calls conscience) pertains to the will, just as the law of the flesh, which resists the law of the mind. Likewise, a morsel of conscience produces sorrow. Sorrow, however, is not in the intellect, but in the condition of the will. Likewise, that which is a delight as well as punishment--both of which are in conscience, in so far as something is good or bad--does not pertain to the intellect, but to the will or emotion, concerning all this see *Bonaventuram tom.2.dist.39.lib.2, art. I. quaest. I.*

Many, however, also refer the conscience to the intellect because it is said to know *Eccl. 7:23*⁴⁴: *your conscience knows, that in your mind you have cursed others.* It is called the law of our intellect by Damascenus; conscience is divided into right and wrong. Wrong, however, is in the intellect. The acts of conscience--to choose, to judge, to direct, to testify, to argue--look to thinking, therefore, also conscience itself. These arguments are also found in Bonaventure in the place cited above.

Since, then, this sense became the most prominent in the schools, i.e. that conscience is in the intellect, another debate arose, *whether it is a habitus existing in reason, or it is truly an act*

⁴³ I believe this is who Quenstedt is referring to. The following is taken from Who's Who in Christian History:

DAMASUS I (c. 304–384), *Pope, 366–384*

Damasus was a pivotal figure in the settlement of the Arianism controversy which had plagued the church for half a century. (Arianism was a heresy that denied the Son's deity by asserting that he was created by God the Father.) Damasus was made a deacon by the man he eventually succeeded in the papacy, Liberius. Later, Damasus was elected pope by a majority, but a rival party elected Ursinus, and it took the Roman emperor Valentinian I's intervention to confirm Damasus's election.

Important bishops in the East, notably Basil of Caesarea, looked to Damasus for help in finally suppressing Arianism. Damasus's enormous influence helped turn the tide in favor of an orthodox settlement. He helped to end a schism in Antioch (caused by the Arian issue) and worked to suppress the Donatist schism in North Africa.

In 382 Damasus commissioned his secretary, Jerome, to prepare a new Latin text of the Bible. The result was the Vulgate Bible, which for centuries was the authoritative Bible in the Western church. P.TOON43

⁴⁴ NIV Ecclesiastes 7:23 All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise"-- but this was beyond me.

It appears that Quenstedt is referring to Ecclesiastes 7:22 in the English. The Latin is one verse behind the English. NIV Ecclesiastes 7:22 for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

VUL Ecclesiastes 7:23 **scit enim tua conscientia quia et tu crebro maledixisti aliis**

of reason? Scotus, Bonaventura, and Durandus defend the former position; concerning the latter, *Thomas, Gabriel, Cordubensis* and others, this later opinion commonly prevailed in the schools.

Since Scripture clearly attributes various kinds of operations to conscience, such as testifying, accusing, excusing, thoroughly terrifying, etc., for that reason, we have not said that either the *habitus* or the *actum* of the intellect simply exists, but rather analogically it is another part of the intellect, or a natural faculty or power, to which judgment concerning the actions of each man is attributed and to which it belongs.

Conscience is therefore an operative faculty of the mind, which is the source of actions, either from the light of nature or the inherent light of Scripture. It gives consideration to a certain act, concerning whether that act ought to be done by us or ought not to be done or whether it should have been done.

It is called a faculty of the mind because it has its own operations. It is called *facultas operativa* because it pertains to the active intellect. It is said *to apply the principles of actions with regard to certain deeds* because it resolves something definite for the man in regard to any possible deed, and so by this gift it [conscience] is distinguished from other endowments of the mind by its duty.

Although, indeed for man, knowledge of these skills, which they call κοινὰ ἐνοιαία (common thoughts), which have been divinely inscribed, can only be attained through light from the divine, by which they may know the chief sources of the skills: therefore God gave the judgment of reason to man, through which alone the honest and shameful things are discerned by the divine light, that which others call the light of conscience, concerning which *Alvarus Pelagius in lib. de planctu Exxles.:* *As a candlelight is able to light a house, so that those in the house are visible and discerned by it; so also God established conscience in the midst of the*

heart, or rational spirit, as a light, by which the spirit discerns what to do or what one ought not to do, etc.

This light is called by Paul *the certificate of debt which is against us, Colossians 2:14.*⁴⁵ Namely, the certificate of debt from God, having been inscribed in our hearts.

For just as God wrote with His hand ten laws on two tablets, and Moses handed it down, so also God wrote a future standard of life for all people, *Deuteronomy 9:10,*⁴⁶ when in creation he branded His law in the heart of man in his first state, so that anyone knows by nature the distinction between honest and shameful things, just as it is written in *Romans 2:14-15*⁴⁷: *When the Gentiles, who do not have His law, do by nature the things which are of the law, they were a law for themselves, who show the work of the law is written in their hearts, speaking testimony their own conscience against them, etc.*

Since, therefore, this testimony, or judgment, is inscribed divinely in our hearts, then this testimony or judgment is also divine, by which, concerning our actions, we reckon in the mind with a proposition according to the norm of the natural or divine law. In this reckoning the greater proposition is any natural or divine law, e.g. whoever commits theft acts in an evil way, and acts against God's law. The lesser proposition is the act, whether thought or spoken, that is in agreement or disagreement with that law of ours, which arises from nothing other than a command belonging to the heart, such as: *You committed theft*; then followed by the conclusion: *Therefore you have acted in an evil way and against God's law*, and in as much as you have

⁴⁵ NIV Colossians 2:14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

⁴⁶ NIV Deuteronomy 9:10 The LORD gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly.

⁴⁷ NIV Romans 2:14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, NIV Romans 2:15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

done wrong, you are under a curse. By conclusion, then follows next either delight in the heart, if you have done right; or terror and pain if you have done otherwise.

Scripture, therefore, calls the former force, and the latter as a way of thinking, in the proper and primary significance of the term, conscience. Thus Paul says *in Romans 13:5*,⁴⁸ *submit not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience*, this is lest you think to establish something more harsh for yourself by your own judgment and you think yourself fit to judge by the wrath of God.

Of secondary significance, conscience is made use of concerning the former practical syllogism, so that in this way *conscience is said to give testimony (Romans 2:14⁴⁹)*, when it [conscience] gathers one from the other, and makes an application from the lesser to the greater, so that, in places, reckonings themselves are spoken of as damning and in turn excusing.

Now and then, conscience is made use of concerning only the minor proposition of the practical syllogism, that is, concerning knowledge of one's own good or evil deeds, which lie either under the general rule of human law, natural law, or divine law, as when *Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4:4, I am conscious of nothing against myself*, this is, I have done nothing against the law or correct reason, nor do I know of any sin having been performed by me.

Finally, in conclusion, conscience is also addressed in the practical syllogism, as when *Paul appealed to his conscience in Acts 23:1⁵⁰*, and when in another place he encourages the preservation of a good conscience *1 Timothy 1:19⁵¹*. Indeed, a good conscience exists when it

⁴⁸ NIV Romans 13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

⁴⁹ NIV Romans 2:14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,

⁵⁰ NIV Acts 23:1 Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."

⁵¹ NIV 1 Timothy 1:19 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

[conscience] is not able to accuse itself of some sin, or, as *John says in 1 John 3:21, if our heart does not condemn us*, concerning which he speaks in many places.

CAPUT IV.

De discrimine conscientiae and syndereseos

(Concerning the distinctions of conscience and synteresis⁵²)

These two words, which are made use of repeatedly and indiscriminately, by which the conscience has been explained, pertain to knowing its definition. There are many indeed who call conscience itself the “knowledge,” that is, κριτήριον⁵³ (the standard) of honest and dishonest things, although, between these two words there is nevertheless no small distinction.

As was explained before, the word “knowledge” has been used for conscience, but that word has been corrupted in meaning to be understood as synderesin among the Latin Theologians. Most correctly it may be stated that synteresis is indeed the Greek word συντήρησις, that is, being preserved from the word συντηρέω⁵⁴, that is, fellow servant, which is the sense used by *Nazainz. in orat. 2. aer* where it is said της ψυχης προς το σωμα συντήρησις⁵⁵,

⁵² The guarding of the principles of the moral law.

⁵³ *UBS Greek Dictionary* lists this as the neuter singular nominative form, with the following meanings: court; case.

⁵⁴ *UBS Greek Dictionary* lists this as a verb meaning the following: protect, keep safe; preserve; keep in good condition; remember, treasure up.

Louw-Nida Greek Lexicon has:

συντηρέω (a) preserve 13.33 (b) keep in mind 29.1

συντηρέω: to cause something to continue along with something else - 'to keep together, to preserve both.' ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς καὶ ἀμφότεροι συντηροῦνται 'but new wine is poured into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved' Mt 9.17.

⁵⁵ Τήρησις is listed in the *UBS dictionary* as meaning the following: custody; prison; keeping, obeying.

Louw-Nida Greek Lexicon lists the following:

τήρησις εως f (a) custody 37.122 (b) prison 7.24 (c) obedience 36.19

37.122 συνέχω ; τηρέω” τήρησις εως f: to continue to hold in custody - 'to guard, to keep watch, custody.' συνέχω” οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ συνέχοντες αὐτὸν ἐνέπαιζον αὐτῷ δέροντες 'the men who were guarding him made fun of him and beat him' Lk 22.63. τηρέω” παραγγείλαντες τῷ δεσμοφύλακι ἀσφαλῶς τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς 'they ordered the jailer to guard them securely' Ac 16.23. τήρησις” ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἔθεντο εἰς τήρησιν εἰς τὴν αὔριον 'they arrested them and held them in custody until the next day' Ac 4.3.

that is, that synteresis is the bond by which the soul holds⁵⁶ together and is preserved with the body.

In this place, *συντήρησις* is a faculty of the soul, which is always contrary to vice, and continuously argues against the perpetration of evil, and desires to keep the spirit immaculate from sin. And this synteresis is not itself conscience, as says *Hieron. in cap. I. Ezechiel*. Some address synteresis as a spark of conscience, as does the *Glossa*⁵⁷ *ordinar. sup. Ezechiel*. Still others address conscience as the summit of the mind and the spark of reason, as *Gerson*.⁵⁸

But the difference between these two is manifest. 1. Synteresis is never able to err; conscience sometimes goes astray in judgment. 2. Conscience exists in regard to good and evil, and judges concerning honest and dishonest deeds; synteresis, however, exists only in regard to good, and it naturally stimulates to good and abhors evil, whence, *Gerson* appeals to the natural instinct for good *part. 3. serm. de nativ. virgin. Maria*. 3. Some say synteresis is the natural *habitus* of the source of works; conscience truly is the act or judgment of reason concerning these works, works which already have been done or that are about to be done. 4. Synteresis is a natural instinct in goodness before something happens; conscience, however, indeed brings judgment concerning good already done. *Adde* 5. That some say synteresis universally is something pursuing or fleeing; conscience truly judges each action in particular. 6. And, finally, in conscience there is a threefold application of knowledge to a certain deed, as *Thomas* shows *part. I. quaest. 79. art. 13. in conclus 1. When we know to do or not to do something*. Along

⁵⁶ or “cleaves to”

⁵⁷ *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin* defines *glossa*, a neuter noun, as follows: gloss, an explanation of an obsolete or foreign word.

⁵⁸ Jean Charlier de Gerson was a French Roman Catholic priest who often preached in the vernacular. *Who's Who in Christian History* briefly states the following in its subheading concerning Jean Charlier de Gerson: (1363–1429) Chancellor of the University of Paris; his life spanned the turbulent “Western Schism” and much of the Hundred Years’ War between France and England.

those lines *Eccless 7:23*⁵⁹: *your conscience knows you, that you curse others in your mind*. 2. *When*, through our conscience, we *judge* something concerning whether or not to do it. 3. *When* through conscience we *judge* that something we have already done was either a good or evil deed. Such application is not found in synderesis, and, for that reason, it is not able to be the same as conscience.

Although synderesis is not the same as conscience, it is, nevertheless, for that reason sometimes placed before⁶⁰ conscience. First, because the *habitus* is the source of the act, and synderesis is the source of natural *habitus*, while conscience is an act of the intellect. Therefore, synderesis is the source of conscience. Finally, because in conscience two acts of the intellect concur. *One* precedes the work about to be done soon and is not only a cognitive act, but also a moving act, because it moves and inclines the spirit to pursue good or flee. Some call this the practical act, and, in this respect, it is united with the natural *habitus*, as the superior light of reason, which is addressed as synderesis. *The other* act follows the work already done and produces judgment concerning such works, whether they were honest or dishonest, which is judged by the application of knowledge or of some natural law to the deed itself that has now been done. Some call this the speculative act, and, in respect to this act, conscience differs from synderesis.

⁵⁹ NIV: ²³ All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise"— but this was beyond me.

CAPUT V.

De propriis operationibus seu officiis Conscientiae

(Concerning the proper operations or duties of conscience)

Conscience is not idle in man, but always works either before or after a certain deed. The proper duties of the conscience, however, are: to obligate, instigate, restrain, testify, accuse, excuse, harass, reprove, praise, and console.

And since in all things the consideration⁶¹ of conscience consists in the application of some knowledge to a work about to be done or having been done, these duties of conscience also in many ways accommodate themselves.

First, indeed, since conscience actively judges something about to be done, whether it is honest, conforming to natural or divine law, or dishonest and against the law, for this reason, conscience is said to obligate and instigate, if something ought to be done; to restrain, however, if something ought to be avoided. It does not, for instance, only persuade and dissuade, but also obligates, encourages, impels, and instigates good things, and restrains from bad things and impedes their effect. Therefore, conscience is said to will something in cases where we comply with its obligating, encouraging, instigating, and restraining.

Conscience, however, does not obligate *per se*, but by reason of the law, which commands or prohibits something. The act of obligating indeed belongs to the law, but conscience is the herald of the law. Just as, therefore, the herald of a judge obligates him to whom the herald conveys the command, not by his own power, but by the power of the

⁶⁰ Or “synteresis” is sometimes used for “conscience.”

⁶¹ Or “reckoning”

command of the judge; so also conscience, by power of the law, of which it is the herald, when it conveys the command or prohibition of the law, is said to obligate.

*Then,*⁶² when the intellect judges a work speculatively after it has already been done, as to whether it is good or evil, then it is said to testify, that testimony is the most certain of all, because it proceeds from the internal judgment of the heart, which is free from all the rumbling of emotion, whereupon conscience is called *mille testes*, that is, worth a thousand witnesses⁶³, in consideration of which Paul condemns all judgments of the wicked: *Our glory is this, he says, the testimony of our conscience 2 Cor. 1:12.* and when he wants to bring forward some weighty, great thing, he appeals to this testimony *Rom. 9:1⁶⁴*. Hence, *Gregorius writes in hom. 9. in Ezech. In all which is said, we always ought to return quietly to the mind, and seek the inner witness. What indeed will it produce, if all praise, but conscience accuses? Or what will be able to harm, if all detract and only conscience defends?*

Conscience, however, testifies 1. *concerning the secret thoughts of the heart.* For that reason men now and then call upon their conscience in testimony, that, for instance, they did not know something. 2. *concerning the will and the emotions of the spirit,* according to which Paul called upon his conscience as witness, that he had great sorrow and felt perpetual torment of his heart on account of the rejection of the Jews (*Rom. 9:1⁶⁵*). 3. *Concerning external actions,* according to which Solomon said: *Conscience says, many times you have cursed others.*⁶⁶ It is in respect to this duty that conscience is called *the scribe of our heart*, because it knows the secret impulses that are experienced by us and admonishes us because of these.

⁶² This is the second point of the four he lists.

⁶³ This translation is not in the text. I have provided it.

⁶⁴ NIV Romans 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--

⁶⁵ NIV Romans 9:1-3 I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,

Third, when a good work has been performed and conforms to the law, conscience excuses false accusations and praises, commends, and consoles itself. This is spoken of as a good conscience, concerning which *Cicero* said *to be free from guilt is a great solace*. And *Ambrose in de officiis*⁶⁷ *The one who knows himself well ought not be moved by false outcries nor think that there is more to consider in another's outcry than in his own testimony*.

Fourth, when a work has been performed that is evil, the conscience accuses, censures, and vexes. Wherefore, *a bad conscience* is also addressed as fury, which always beats and whips the spirit of a man, which is anxious even in solitude, and is not able to be appeased either by vigils or by quiet. Accordingly, out of a good conscience comes repose and happiness, and out of a bad conscience comes sadness and pain. Hence, conscience is called *the corrector of emotion and the teacher of the spirit; the flogger after sin*, when at last the magnitude of the sin which has been performed is perceived by it: *the bridle before sin*, when it calls the spirit of man away from a thing that the law abhors. Conscience is like *the bed of the spirit*, in which man has either quiet or torment. As indeed a healthy man has quiet in bed, but a sick man has torment, so also a good man in his conscience sweetly rests in God, but an evil man in his conscience is tortured by sickness: *Indeed, an evil conscience always anticipates wild*⁶⁸ *things. Sapiens. 17:11*⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ This is Ecclesiastes 7:22 in the NIV and 7:23 in the Vulgate. "In your heart" appears in the Hebrew and English. "In your conscience" appears in the Latin.

⁶⁷ De Officiis is the title of this work by Ambrose.

⁶⁸ This can also mean "cruel" or "violent."

⁶⁹ It is hard to get a word for word translation of this verse, as evidenced below.

VUL Wisdom 17:10 *cum sit enim timida nequitia dat testimonium condemnata semper enim praesumit saeva conturbata conscientia*

RSV Wisdom 17:11 For wickedness is a cowardly thing, condemned by its own testimony; distressed by conscience, it has always exaggerated the difficulties.

NJB (New Jerusalem Bible) Wisdom 17:11 Wickedness is confessedly very cowardly, and it condemns itself; under pressure from conscience it always assumes the worst.

TEV Wisdom 17:11 Wickedness is cowardly in itself and stands self-condemned. Someone with a guilty conscience will always imagine things to be worse than they really are.

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