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***Treatise on Conscience* of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori,**

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Summary

Writings of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori have always enjoyed great popularity in the past centuries. They were read by people of various interests. His writings, which are particularly well-known and favorite among the faithful, include ascetic writings on Marian, Eucharistic, Christological topics, as well as the theme of preparation for death. This type of writings is classified as a particular type of spiritual writings, called ascetic. In addition to his ascetic writings, St. Alphonsus is also the author of many scientific writings, which constitute his contribution to the formation of the Church's doctrine and have their impact on it and pastoral practices to this day. These scientific writings include undoubtedly his monumental, four-volume work in the field of moral theology, entitled *Theologia moralis* (the critical edition of this work was prepared by Leonard Gaudé CSsR in Rome in the years 1905-1912). The first treatise of this work is the *Treatise on Conscience*, which opens access to his entire moral theology. *The Treatise on conscience* is so important that it is impossible to correctly understand the moral theology of St. Alphonsus without being quite familiar with it.

This book, entirely devoted to the *Treatise on Conscience*, is entitled "Conscience according to St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori. Historical background, characteristics, actuality and translation of the *Treatise on Conscience* of St. Alphonsus de Liguori". It consists of two parts. The first part is an extensive introduction to the *Treatise* entitled "Historical background, characteristics and relevance of the *Treatise on Conscience* of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori". The second part contains the original text of the *Treatise on Conscience* in Latin, which comes from the first volume of the critical edition of *Theologia moralis*, and its parallel translation into Polish.

The first part of this work, entitled "Historical background, characteristics and actuality of the *Treatise on Conscience* of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori", deserves a special attention. This part consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction not only presents St. Alphonsus as a great saint and Doctor of the Church, and his merits in the pastoral, ascetic, pastoral and scientific fields, but also justifies the importance of the translation of the over 250-year-old *Treatise on Conscience* for modern people, due to the actuality of the moral thought contained therein. For the modern reader, free access to both the *Treatise on Conscience* and the entire *Theologia moralis* of St. Alphonsus is particularly difficult due to the barrier of almost universal ignorance of the Latin language, in which the entire work is written. Translation into modern languages of this work of St. Alphonsus offers a way to overcome this barrier.

The first part, apart from the introduction, contains three chapters. The first chapter presents pre-Alphonsian moral theology. Hence, it treats about probabilism in science, which is a method of reaching the truth, and about probabilism in moral theology, which was an important moral system initiated by Bartolomeo Medina (1527-1581). Probabilism as a moral system has developed ways of removing doubts and reaching a state of certainty of conscience, which allows one to take decent, i.e. morally good, actions. Probabilism also gave rise to other moral systems, such as probabiliorism, equiprobabilism, rigorism and laxism, which also indicated ways of acting morally good. The discrepancies in the answers given by moral systems regarding morally good actions were so significant that they were often mutually exclusive.

Moreover, in the first chapter, in addition to the brief description of casuistic moral theology, the teaching on conscience and law according to St. Thomas Aquinas deserves attention. St. Alphonsus paid an exceptional attention to Aquinas's texts and largely based the entire *Theologia*

moralis, and especially the doctrine of conscience, on his moral, legal, theological and philosophical thought.

The second chapter is devoted to the characteristics of the structure and contents of the treatise *De conscientia*. It is closely related to the third chapter, which shows the key to understanding of the moral thought contained in the *Treatise on Conscience* and its transepochal value and relevance. This transepochal, i.e. timeless value and relevance of the moral thought of St. Alphonsus is expressed in moral philosophy and philosophy of law. These two fields of philosophy, presented in the third chapter, are the key to understanding his moral thought and a challenge for contemporary people, who are currently dealing with these fields of science. Contemporary trends are based on a different teaching on natural law than that presented by the teaching of the Church, which is based on the Thomistic and Alphonsian concepts of natural law. Moreover, the modern philosophy of law, which grew out of nineteenth-century positivism, and especially from the legal positivism, which rejected the medieval and Thomistic concept of natural law and separated morality from law, made positive law the highest instance of legal validity, rejecting natural law and, therefore, eternal law.

The correct and important understanding of St. Alphonsus' equiprobabilism, based on the philosophy of morality and the philosophy of law contained in the *Treatise on Conscience*, which are the basis for discerning the morality of an act, the existence of sin, its gravity, achieving a certainty of conscience and morally good action, is also presented in the third chapter.

The conclusion contains a short summary in the form of several loosely formulated thoughts, and among them, in the first place, it defines the original synthesis of the morality of human action and useful comments on the reading of the *Treatise on Conscience*. The first part contains at the end an extensive bibliography, which the author used while writing, and an index of people and their years of life.

The second part of this work, which is the original Latin text of the *Treatise on Conscience* and its parallel Polish translation, is of particular importance to people who speak Polish. The text of the Polish translation contains links to notes that explain more difficult issues. This part also contains a bibliography that St. Alfonsus used while writing the *Treatise*.

The presented two-part work clearly shows that the casuistic *Treatise on Conscience* has not lost any of its value and relevance since its publication in the second half of the 18th century. It is an excellent work for all those who are looking for justification, i.e. sources of morality of human actions. In this work, the reader will find a clearly and simply systematized argumentation of the morality of human action, written by a doctor of both laws, based on the ontological structure of human being, which is the foundation for synderesis, conscience and natural law. St. Alphonsus, the Most Zealous Doctor and patron of confessors and moralists, with his work in the *Treatise on Conscience*, did a great service to all those who struggle with doubts and uncertainty of conscience, showing them the ways leading to their removal and the formation of a certain conscience, necessary to perform actions.

(Translation: Jacek DEMBEK)