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**Holmes, Peter (ed.). Caroline Casuistry: The Cases of
Conscience of Fr Thomas Southwell, SJ**

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Holmes, Peter (ed.).

Caroline Casuistry: The Cases of Conscience of Fr Thomas Southwell, SJ.

Catholic Record Society Publications 84. Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2012. Pp. 1, 308. ISBN 978-0-902832-27-5 (hardcover) \$80.

In 1981, Peter Holmes gave us *Elizabethan Casuistry* wherein he provided the texts and commentary on the William Allen and Robert Persons cases in the early 1580s and the roughly contemporary set of cases from the seminary at Douai-Rheims. With *Caroline Casuistry*, Holmes offers an invaluable understanding of seventeenth-century English Jesuit casuistry. His subject, Thomas Southwell (a pseudonym for Thomas Bacon, 1592–1637), was an established professor at the English College of the Society of Jesus at Liège.

Holmes explains that the cases in his new work provide a view of what constituted the challenges of Catholic priests and laity during the reign of Charles I. Though the cases on matters of marriage (as a contract), fasting, and ecclesiastical faculties might attract in themselves some investigation, most readers will see the collection as Holmes intended it to be: a companion to *Elizabethan Casuistry*, which had dealt with similar cases some 50 years earlier. Southwell himself cooperates with this reading inasmuch as he engages the earlier determined cases directly on a few occasions.

Holmes finds in Southwell's resolutions two areas of change. First, in the Caroline period there is less tolerance for the spectrum of conformity. Considering that Paul V condemned conformity in 1605, and the laity did not suffer as much for confessing Catholicism as they had years before, Southwell's stance is understandable: he is less inclined to allow Catholics to conceal their religious identity by equivocation than were the earlier casuists, though he is more lenient with priests who, unlike the laity, are still subject to grave danger.

The second change highlights how Catholicism as a minority religious institution is more secure and therefore more capable of adapting in ways that Allen and Persons had earlier warned against. While duress might have prompted the earlier casuists to tolerate conformity, the institutional stability of Catholicism provides Southwell with prudential countenance for some inter-church contacts.

I find even more interesting the methodological conservatism that develops from Southwell. Years ago, Holmes showed how Allen and Persons claimed a difference between divine law, which includes the law of nature, and human

law, which includes canonical and ecclesiastical law. The former trumped the latter for Allen and Persons, particularly when priests and laity were allowed to do what they needed in order to survive.

Southwell's casuistry is less natural, founded on the authority of other recognized casuists. A casuist's judgment was in itself the foundation for a safe moral action, even if another casuist gave another opinion, more rooted in reason and more commonly accepted. This spectrum of safety was "probabilism."

In giving his judgments, Southwell provides rational argument and validates them, if you will, by showing that his are congruent with, at least, one other authoritative theologian. In Holmes's volume, however, we learn certain specifics about how this probable casuistry operated, when determined by Southwell.

First, Southwell insists on invoking and recognizing a more recent authority rather than the more ancient, because recent authorities often have a more cumulative reading of the historical validity of a given moral interpretation. Indeed, many of his sources are Jesuit—first among them Thomas Sanchez, an established probabilist.

Second, and this follows from the first, Southwell has a propensity to make his argument more probable than another by stating convincing rational arguments and by pitting a more extensive array of sources against a meager set belonging to another point of view. While this move is commonsensical—after all, who would not claim more authority if one enjoyed it—it shows us how some casuists, among them Jesuits like Southwell, began effectively to propose "probabiliorism." Eventually this position suggests that the options that probabilism afforded are actually not as legitimate as the options offered by the less tolerant and more certain probabiliorists. Indeed, Holmes notes that Southwell's approach is arguably more probabiliorist (xxxiv). This certainly marks yet another difference with the earlier Elizabethan casuists.

Third, Holmes refers us to case 74, a case that I suspect will become a part of entry for many a doctoral dissertation. The presupposition of probabilism was that it allowed the laity the freedom to follow a legitimate position even if a more probable one existed. In case 74, we find whether "a confessor is bound to follow the probable opinion of a penitent" (50). Southwell resolves first that without sufficient cause a confessor cannot refuse to absolve a penitent following probable opinion, and here he invokes a variety of sources. But then he adds that almost all those authorities as well as two others hold that the penitent

is “bound to follow the safer opinion of the priest.” Providing a variety of instances, Southwell concludes “a penitent is not suitably disposed if he does not wish to obey a confessor who, for a just and grave reason, wishes the penitent to conform to the demands of his judgment” (51). Southwell lets Trent’s famous sacred tribunal of the confessional negate the probable freedom of the penitent, thus leaving us to ask, for whose original benefit was probabilism?

Holmes provides an incomparable volume that helps us understand how the Roman Catholic church in England faced contemporary challenges as it grew in institutional stability. One suspects that as the church grew in freedom, the consciences of its lay members did not.

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Onnekink, David and Gijs Rommelse (eds.).

Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650–1750).

Politics and Culture in Europe, 1650–1750. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. Pp. xi, 320. ISBN 978-1-4094-1913-6 (hardcover) \$134.95.

Realist international relations (IR) theorists have argued that the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 ushered in an era of foreign policy decision-making based on *raison d'état* rather than ideology. Consequently, ideology was all but written from the narrative of European relations in the post-Westphalian period, and political theorists, eager to understand the emergence of “modern” international relations, found few reasons to look for clues in the early modern period. Yet cracks are appearing in the realist edifice as post-structuralist and constructivist theories are applied to the study of foreign policy. David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse’s edited collection is a product of these developments and the first detailed study of ideology and early modern foreign policy. The editors have assembled a group of well-respected scholars, newly-minted PhDs, and accomplished graduate students who challenge the notion that between 1648 and 1789, foreign policy was merely a “cynical game for power, in which morality or religion, let alone ideology, played no role of importance” (2).

Their introduction suggests that after 1648, the political nation mattered; with the emergence of parties and interest groups in many European countries,