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CONSCIENCE

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CONSCIENCE

By
THOMAS BAIRD
FORMERLY OF SINGAPORE



NEW YORK
CHARLES C. COOK
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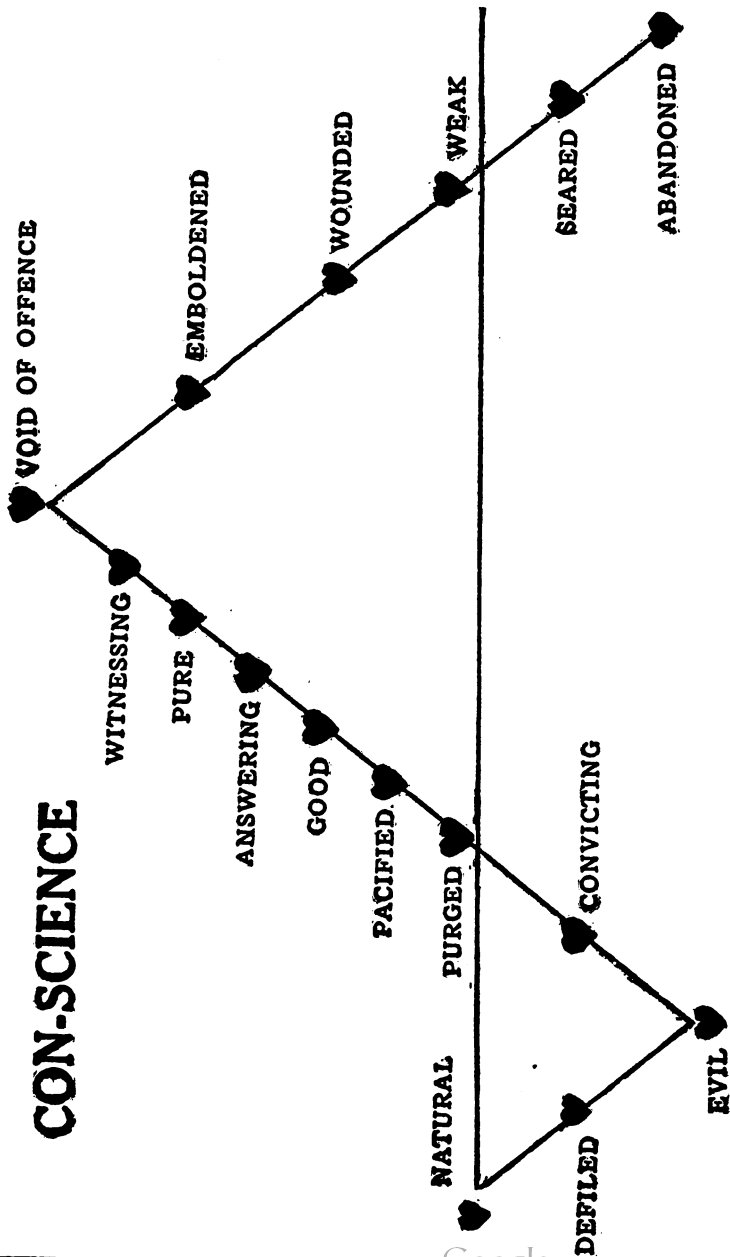
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CON-SCIENCE



DEDICATION

I most humbly dedicate this unpretentious volume, first, to my Heavenly Father; and, secondly, to every member of the heavenly family upon the earth.

Here you will find no attempted display of literary excellence; but plain, simple, humble, wholesome fare. John Baptist was a good man, albeit he appeared in "raiment of camel's hair and leathern girdle"; and a book may be a good book although its message be not woven with the fine silk threads of cultured phraseology, but tersely expressed in the homespun language of everyday speech.

FOREWORD

The contents of this book were delivered to large and appreciative audiences in five daily talks during a recent week in the *Fulton Street Noon Prayer Meeting*.

It affords me much personal gratification that they are now issued in this form, and I would only desire for the *readers* the same great blessing which came to those that *listened* to these instructive messages. The subject is a compelling one, greatly needed to be heard in these days of loose thinking. Mr. Baird honors God's Word in his dependence upon it. His arrangement of its passages offers but another instance and evidence that the Bible has all the truth we need to know on any given spiritual theme.

The Holy Scriptures are an inexhaustible mine extending correlatively under the surface of every human need, and contiguously with all time. Mr. Baird as a prospector has sunk another shaft.

Here is gold—enter!

GEORGE H. DOWKONTT,

*Superintendent Fulton Street
Noon Prayer Meeting.*

January, 1914.

Conscience—"The power or faculty in man by which he distinguishes between right and wrong in conduct and character, and which imperatively commands and obligates him to do the right and abstain from doing the wrong."—*Standard Dictionary*.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

MAN is a "fearfully and wonderfully made" being (Psm. 139:14). That he possesses a tripartite constitution is profoundly true, but that admission does not express the whole truth. God has also very richly endowed him with many other wonderful faculties besides "Spirit," "Soul," and "Body" (1 Thes. 5:24). Man also possesses "Mind" (Matt. 22:37), "Memory" (1 Cor. 15:2), "Will" (John 1:13), and "Conscience" (Romans 2:15), in addition to the afore-mentioned conditions. These latter faculties are all incorporated with, and may be somewhat subordinate to the first mentioned three, but they are not without their relative importance, and all equally necessary to man's complete entity of being.

Without wishing to pose before my fellows as a very learned Metaphysician, I

would here venture to express a difference of function to each of these mysterious faculties, keeping well in remembrance Lord Rosebery's inimitable definition of Metaphysics. He very graphically and epigrammatically describes the too critical investigation of Metaphysical problems as "Groping for a *black* cat in a *dark* room, where *no* black cat had ever been." The wisdom of the above delightful definition will be appreciated by all. The following attempted classification of faculties with their relative functions is neither arbitrary nor dogmatic, but rather more tentative and suggestive.

1. The *Mind* is the *thought producing* faculty.

2. The *Memory* is the *thought retaining* faculty.

3. The *Spirit* is the *thought analyzing* faculty.

4. The *Soul* is the *thought appreciating* faculty.

5. The *Conscience* is the *thought convicting* faculty.

6. The *Will* is the *thought energizing* faculty.

At first sight the distinction between *Mind* and *Memory* may seem superfluous and without justification, but on closer inspection it will prove not to be so. The difference may be simply stated in one terse sentence. The mind *produces* thought originally, but cannot *retain* it for practical purposes; the memory retains all that the mind conceives, but could not produce it *originally*.

Even after we have expressed all these suggestive thoughts relating to man's varied faculties, and their corresponding functions, there remains much unsolved and insoluble mystery concerning man's complex constitution. An accredited surgeon well skilled in the science of anatomy may dissect a human body and arrange all its vital parts before his wondering students. He can discourse on man's heart, lungs, liver, and kid-

neys, and explain man's physical constitution with intelligence and precision. Invite him to anatomize man morally and lay open to your vision his spirit, soul, mind, will, memory, and conscience, and he will immediately admit that you have set before him an impossible task.

No human being, however highly endowed intellectually, can explain what man's spirit is composed of, nor in what part of the body it resides. We are utterly without reliable knowledge as to the link which binds soul to spirit, and spirit and soul to body. It is still impossible to state with any degree of accuracy what relationship exists between man's diverse faculties, or what influence they exert upon each other. A very eminent scientist admitted rather regretfully that "life was still wandering through space, an undefined and indefinable thing." Pseudo-scientists make boast that they have discovered the origin and composition of life, and summon to their assistance innumerable

Greek phrases to define it. But Professor Armstrong at the last British Medical Association Conference reminded these "Savants" that many of their great swelling words were simply so much high-toned scientific paper used to wrap up their own ignorance.

One very advanced German professor at a previous British Medical Association Conference assured his illustrious audience that life was composed of certain definitely ascertained chemical compounds. All that now remained to be discovered was the proportionate admixture of these various compounds, and then life could be scientifically and instantaneously produced. What an astounding exhibition of addle-headed arrogance and ignorance combined!

Truly there is no folly so foolish as the foolishness of the wise. If these men state the truth, then we need no longer wait on Nature's slow process of producing life.

**Order your next kitten from your chemist
on your way home from business to-morrow.**

**“Children of God: leave this world to its mulishness,
Things to their nature and fools to their foolishness,
Beetles were blind in forests of yore.”**

EVOLUTION

Is there no Living God?
Then is there life in me?
If God be not, then I am not,
Nor could I ever be.

For life must needs proceed
From some primeval cause;
No self-creating thing is known
In all vast nature's laws.

But "Science," falsely called,
Dares to dictate to God;
It contradicts His Holy Word,
While atheists applaud.

It says man was a beast;
And that he slowly rose
By lazy stages, till at last
He came as man to pose.

If men evolved from beasts,
Will scientists explain
How man has lived so long as man
And still doth man remain?

σ

When did the process cease?
And why evolve no more?
Surely a further change must come
If change did come before.

'Tis true a grub may grow
And change its outer form;
From chrysalis to butterfly,
No more to live as worm.

But man was not made so,
Nor can he change his state;
As man he was, and man will be
To time's remotest date.

For God did man create
By special word and deed;
Let not earth's vain philosophy
God's record supersede.

Let evolution go—
A HUMAN theory—
Hold fast God's faithful word and know
By faith Life's Mystery.

THOMAS BAIRD.

CHAPTER II

CONSCIENCE DEFINED

ANY accurate knowledge to which we may attain regarding human life and man's incomprehensible composite being must come by way of the Bible. The *same* God is the author of *both*. He first made the Man, and then He made the Book. The Book was written to inform man how, when, where, and why he was created; and also to instruct him concerning the nature, character, and personality of his Almighty Creator. This book of God and god of Books not only unfolds *God to man* in all His wonderful attributes and prerogatives, but it also explains *man to himself*. It discriminates and differentiates between his manifold powers, and divinely divides and declares his spiritual, mental, and physical proportions. In this treatise, however, we must strictly confine ourselves to the subject

of Conscience, and the New Testament references on this point are, happily for us, both numerous and various.

The almost absolute silence of the Old Testament on the subject of Conscience must remain throughout all time an impenetrable mystery. Only once in the whole range of Old Testament revelation is it referred to, and then it is mysteriously relegated to a marginal position. "Curse not the King, no not in thy *thought*" (margin—conscience). (Eccles. 10:20.) We speak of the "Age of Conscience" as superseding the "Age of Innocence" in Eden, and antecedent to the "Age of Law." We do so entirely at our own charges. God never employs such language. We may be right, but we have no scriptural authority. Before proceeding to study together the diagram affixed to this volume, we will first cull a few illustrations from various sources to illuminate this important theme. Though we may not say with absolute accuracy what Con-

science *is*, we may discover somewhat of its constitution through its *operations*. Happily for us, the realm of illustration is particularly expansive and prolific, and we may draw gratuitously and plentifully therefrom without dread of being accused of plagiarism.

I. CONSCIENCE GOD'S SPY

Conscience has been purposely planted by God in every human breast. It discerns the soul's deepest secrets and intentions, and immediately reports thereon to God. Every conceivable mood and motion of the soul's invisible life is constantly under the espionage of an ever-vigilant conscience. The faintest impulse of the soul's inner being never escapes its penetrating gaze. This faithful spy never permits the soul out of its sight; no, not for the briefest interval of time. This most searching surveillance proceeds uninterruptedly day and night.

No excessive brilliance of light ever blinds the piercing eye of Conscience. No dark-

ness, however deep and dense, can exclude its awful scrutiny. The soul's *wish* is *known* to Conscience. The soul's *sigh* is *heard* by Conscience. The soul's *thought* is *read* by Conscience. The soul's *feelings* are *felt* by Conscience. Day and night, every hour, moment, and second, Conscience keeps perpetual vigil over the soul's inner energies and its outward activities.

II. CONSCIENCE GOD'S LINK

When every other bond which ever bound man to his Almighty Creator was ruthlessly sundered through sin, Conscience still held man to God with a hoop as strong as steel. When man's other spiritual and moral qualities became utterly atrophied by transgression, Conscience still lived and flourished in the midst of this moral devastation. When every visible trace of man's moral resemblance to God had been effectually effaced, the last remnant of his pristine magnificence to remain was Conscience.

Man is now a magnificent moral *ruin*; and the only hope of his ultimate regeneration and restoration to God is to be found in the possession of a Conscience. O man, whosoever thou art, I implore thee, cherish Conscience. It is the only avenue of approach God has to the citadel of your soul. If Conscience be destroyed, the last link that binds you to God is broken. Your doom is sealed.

III. CONSCIENCE GOD'S WATCHDOG

Just as a watchdog is stationed conveniently close to his master's house to bark and give warning at the approach of strangers and thieves, so Conscience is GOD'S watchdog, housed in the human heart to bark at the approach of temptation and sin. Happy are the inhabitants of an household who are easily aroused through the barking of a faithful dog, and thus enabled to drive off all marauders. Much more happy is the soul that permits itself to be

truly alarmed by the persistent warnings of a faithful Conscience, and prepared to resist the approaching evil. A *silent* watchdog is worse than *no* dog. A dumb dog is a menace to the safety of life and property. Even so, a *silent* Conscience is worse than *no* Conscience. It is a fearful menace to the soul's safety in the hour of its greatest danger.

IV. CONSCIENCE GOD'S BLOODHOUND

Where the *barking* of the watchdog is not heeded, the *howl* of the bloodhound will soon be heard. When the warnings of Conscience are disregarded, then the accusations of Conscience must be endured. The watchdog suddenly and mysteriously becomes transformed into an insatiable bloodhound to scent out the sin of which we were warned, but would persist in committing. Introduce a bloodhound into a scene of bloodshedding and he will invariably trace out all blood to its very source. Bring Conscience to bear upon sin, however secretly committed and

however carefully concealed, and it will soon probe it to its very center. Bloodhounds are now being extensively employed in all civilized countries for the detection of notable criminals, and superintendents of criminal investigation departments speak in laudatory terms of their efficient work. Conscience is GOD'S bloodhound to discover the soul's most secret sins.

V. CONSCIENCE GOD'S WINDOW

Conscience is to the soul what a window is to a house. A house without windows would be a dingy place, and a soul without a Conscience would be a dark den indeed. The Conscience, therefore, stands in the same relationship to the soul that a window bears to a house. Through the window of Conscience the eye of God penetrates into the soul's most secret and sacred precincts. Through the window of Conscience the eye of the soul may also look out and up into the very face of God. But windows to be useful

must be *clean*. Every diligent housewife knows the utility of well-cleaned windows. The *brightness* of the house largely depends upon the *cleanness* of its windows. The eye of the soul cannot see the face of God through the window of a begrimed and besotted Conscience. Keep the window clean and God will see you. Keep the window clean and you will see God.

VI. CONSCIENCE GOD'S PROTEST

Every time we sin, whether mentally or materially, Conscience, if healthy, will utter a most solemn protestation against the iniquitous thought or act. A normal Conscience will not suffer one single desire for evil or deed of sin to pass unchallenged or unreprieved. It would shirk its very first duty if it did so, and prove itself a traitor to God. When sin is committed anywhere, at any time, Conscience immediately enters a very grave and vigorous protest in the name of God. The language of Conscience

on such occasions may be summarized as follows: "I protest against turning the human mind into a seed plot for planting sinful thoughts. I protest against the human body being employed as an instrument for committing sinful deeds." Thus Conscience utters its impressive voice in the temple of the soul, and the whole moral edifice returns its awful echo. Conscience is a very real *Protestant*.

VII. CONSCIENCE GOD'S LASH

Conscience is God's lash for the soul's hide. Which of us, whether old or young, have not frequently and painfully had to endure the lead-tipped tail of the scourge of Conscience? Under every stroke we have oftentimes winced and writhed "with groanings which cannot be uttered." Conscience not infrequently administers its most severe castigations during the silence of night. The lash somehow does not reach us during the day. The soul is so thickly swaddled in the

habiliments of the daily activities or pleasures that the whip does not touch us. But night comes, and with the undressing of the body there comes a mysterious undressing of the soul, and then the lash finds its way to the tenderest part of the soul's flesh. Like as an experienced rider plunges his burnished spurs into the reeking flanks of his refractory steed, and sends it bounding forward on its course, so the lash of God has oftentimes whipped us out of the way of sin into the path of rectitude.

VIII. CONSCIENCE GOD'S SWORD

It has been graciously given to an illiterate Indian convert to Christianity to supply the highest and best definition of Conscience that probably ever has been or ever will be given. A missionary was catechizing a class of inquirers one day on the subject of Conscience. This man defined it as "A little triangular-shaped thing inside the heart, and every time it *turns* it *hurts*." I challenge

every theological professor in Christendom to produce a truer, briefer, or better definition. Hence we speak of Conscience as GOD'S sword. Every time we sin against God, Conscience turns within; and in turning it produces pain. That is exactly what it was created to do. A sword that does not *cut* is *no* sword at all. A conscience that does not prick and puncture the soul has lost its edge and point, and requires God's grindstone to whet its blunted blade. Would to God it hurt us more. We would sin *less* if it cut *more*.

IX. CONSCIENCE THE SOUL'S NERVE

The soul has its nervous system as well as the body, and Conscience may be most aptly designated as the nerve of the soul. When God wishes to make the soul ache over its manifold misdemeanors He simply places His holy finger on Conscience.

The soul then immediately begins to quiver and throb under the touch of the

Almighty. Almost every kind of toothache is caused by the exposure of the nerve of the tooth to the influence of the atmosphere. There cannot possibly be any pain in an *artificial* tooth, simply because there is no *life* there. The soul without a Conscience is a nerveless mass, and incapable of responding to the touch of God. It was a memorable day in our physical experience when we first felt the throbbings of persistent toothache. Much more painful was it in our spiritual experience when our soul ached for sin, because the great nerve Conscience had been exposed to the touch of the Almighty.

X. CONSCIENCE A COMPOUND FACULTY

It implies a mutual knowledge between *two* persons regarding *one* thing. Knowledge held in conjunction with another, and especially the knowledge of wrong-doing. I am conscious that I have sinned, and another is conscious of my sin, and that other is no other than God. No human being may

know or even suspect me of sinning. *I know* and *God knows*. *I know* that *God knows*; and *God knows* that *I know* that *He knows*. This knowledge generates unutterable mental anguish over sin committed. No sin can be concealed from the gaze of God. All transgression is naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. The Arabs have a remarkable proverb to illustrate the omniscience of the Almighty. "God can see the *black ant* on the *black stone* in the *black night*." And our own inimitable Bunyan describes God as "All eye and always eye." No sin can hope to escape the piercing glance of His holy eyes.

XI. CONSCIENCE IN OPERATION

We will now bring our illustration section to a close with a quotation from Dr. James Buchanan's remarks on the Sovereignty of Conscience. He dramatically describes the workings of Conscience in the breast of a midnight murderer. "He fears neither God

nor man, but for the satisfaction of his revenge, or with a view to plunder, he imbrues his hands in his brother's blood. As he steals along the dark, unfrequented road he feels in his inmost soul the stirrings of a power which cannot be quelled, and although he would gladly stifle its voice when it seeks to scare him from his prey, he can only resist, he cannot subdue it. It forewarns him against the guilty deed; it agitates and accuses him while the deed is being done; it follows him in his remorseless flight; it pursues him in the crowded city; it haunts him in the solitary desert; it darkens his thoughts as he lays down to sleep; it mingles with his very dreams; it smites him even at the festive board, amidst the revelry of companions as daring and desperate as himself; and all this against his will by an inherent, unalterable, and everlasting law of his nature."

GOD'S DELIGHT

A well-kept heart is God's delight;

Then let thy heart be clean,
For out of it life's issues flow,
The mighty and the mean.

A well-stored mind is God's delight;

Then fill thy mind in youth,
Draw deeply from the hidden springs
Of God's eternal truth.

A well-trained eye is God's delight;

Then train thine eye to trace
The glories of thy Father's house,
Where thou shalt see His face.

A well-drilled ear is God's delight;

Then strain thine ear to hear
The whisper of thy Father's voice,
Who walketh ever near.

A well-ruled tongue is God's delight;

Then guard thy tongue right well,
'Tis full of poison, full of strife,
'Tis set on fire of hell.

A well-placed foot is God's delight;
Then bring thy foot straight down,
Stand on the solid rock of right,
Ignore the proud world's frown.

A well-shaped course is God's delight;
Then have thy course defined,
Pursue it with blood earnestness,
Nor cast one glance behind.

THOMAS BAIRD.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURAL CONSCIENCE

BY THIS expression we mean Conscience in the natural man. Let us now approach our diagram reverently and study its variations slowly and carefully. The idea is borrowed from a hospital fever chart. As the thermometer accurately ascertains and indicates the rise or fall of the disease in a fever-stricken patient, so the unerring thermometer of God's Word discovers and registers all the fluctuations of Conscience in man with awful precision.

The black line drawn horizontally athwart the entire diagram indicates Conscience in a normal and healthy condition. This faculty is the birthright possession of every human being, and is therefore inherent in all mankind. Every individual person is endowed with Conscience more or less developed according to age and environment, and oper-

ating with greater or lesser intelligence and activity according to knowledge and understanding. Romans 2:14, 15, furnishes an excellent foundation upon which to build our present structure on Natural Conscience. Please note it is the *Gentiles* who are under discussion here; and a Gentile is any person who is not actually a Jew. It is first stated that these "Have not the law," and yet they are found doing naturally the things contained in the law.

Then follows the explanation of this astounding statement: "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts." God has made it His business to write a copy of His immortal moral code across the heart of every living being. To this law written within every human being, Conscience bears witness, and the thoughts of the mind either *accuse* or *excuse*, according to the health of Conscience at the time. If Conscience is alive and sensitive it will immediately convict man of wrong thoughts and deeds; but

should Conscience happen to be sickly or sluggish, it will condone the sin which it would and should otherwise condemn. Therefore we conclude that every heathen person under the sun *knows* or *may know* right from wrong. We will not press this passage beyond this point at present. They may not be able to express their knowledge in technical or even in theological phraseology, but they at least understand the difference between good and evil. They are destitute of the *power* to do the good, but they possess the *knowledge* of the good. When Satan promised Eve that she and her husband would "be as gods knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5) he only told a *half* truth, which is ever the "blackest of lies."

After the fall they certainly knew good and evil as Satan himself affirmed, but they *knew* the good without possessing the *power* to do the good; and they *knew* the evil without the available strength to *resist* the evil. This is what seems to perplex the apostle in

Romans 7. "When I *would* do good, evil is *present* with me." God also enters this solemn complaint against Israel: "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." (Jeremiah 4:22.) We may therefore sum up the Natural Conscience briefly as a knowledge of good and evil; only let us remember that "The good that I *would* I do not," and "The evil which I *would not* that I do." (Romans 7:20.) Yes, a sinner under the convictions of law and Conscience may be found doing things he actually *hates*. (Romans 7:15.)

CHAPTER IV

A DEFILED CONSCIENCE

Titus 1: 15

WHEN the natural man begins to tamper with Conscience through sinning against light, that very moment Conscience deteriorates, and begins to decline on the thermometer of experience. Satan's chief purpose in this world has ever been, and now is, to debauch Conscience and thus unfit it for the object God designed it to accomplish. In John Bunyan's imperishable allegory of the "Holy War" we have one of the most masterly portrayals of Conscience in all this vast world's remarkable accumulation of literature. There is nothing like it outside the realm of inspiration.

He conceives the soul of man to be a corporate town called "Mansoul," situated in the Continent of Universe. Diabolus, who had just been deposed from his exalted

position for sin, is depicted as ranging through space, searching for an opportunity to be avenged upon God for his punishment. He espies the corporation of "Mansoul"* and determines to make an assault thereon. He formulates his plan of attack in conjunction with other vengeful demons, and they approach the town and demand an audience. The inhabitants depute their five responsible elders to interview the besiegers. Their names are as follows: Captain Resistance, Lord Innocence, Lord Will-Be-Will, Lord Understanding, and Mr. Recorder. The latter is Bunyan's inimitable name for Conscience. While the parley is proceeding, a wicked sprite sends an arrow right through the brain of Captain Resistance, and he falls down over the wall, dead. Lord Innocence approaches more closely to ascertain the fate of his colleague, and another foul sprite blows a strong blast of fetid breath into his face, and poisons him to death. Lord Will-

*"The Holy War," by John Bunyan, price 50 cents.

Be-Will, observing the trend of matters, suddenly transfers his allegiance from the side of Shaddai to the side of Diabolus. The town now capitulates, and Diabolus and his hordes march boldly in and take possession. Lord Understanding is commanded to retire to his own apartments, and his windows are immediately barricaded. "Having the understanding darkened." (Eph. 4:18.) Four of the ruling elders of the town being thus disposed of, Diabolus now turns his attention to Mr. Recorder. He knows he can never thoroughly *subdue* him, and so he decides to debauch him. By slow and almost imperceptible stages he succeeds in demoralizing Conscience, until he lies prostrate on the floor of his own house, in a state of suspended animation. Diabolus now invites the inhabitants of the town to view the undignified condition of Conscience. He points out to them his inconsistency and incompetency, and mockingly reminds them that Conscience is not a dependable quality. One

day he will *reprove* you for sinning, and the next day he will *approve* of your committing the same sin.

Thus Conscience becomes defiled and debauched, and unfitted to perform his divine mission in the town of Mansoul.

Oh, Conscience! Conscience! man's most faithful friend,
Him thou canst comfort, ease, relieve, defend;
But if he will thy friendly checks forego,
Thou art, oh! woe for me, his deadliest foe!

CRABBE—*Struggles of Conscience.*

CHAPTER V

AN EVIL CONSCIENCE

Heb. 10:22

WITH further advances in sin the brutalization of Conscience now proceeds with alarming rapidity. All vice is delicately balanced on the edge of a precipice. All sin ever tends downward; only permit sin to commence and it will roll like a stone down a deep declivity, gathering force and velocity as it proceeds. Conscience has now become so desperately defiled as to have become essentially evil. It prefers evil; it delights in evil. As was recorded of antediluvian man that "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, and that continually." (Gen. 6:5.) *All evil and always evil*; this most fitly describes the condition of an evil Conscience in post-diluvian man. An evil Conscience repudiates all good and encourages all evil. It hates the good. It

avoids good men. It never reads a good book. Nothing is *too* evil for an evil Conscience. No *blasphemy* is wicked enough to shock it. No *profanity* is too disgusting to listen to. No *sight* is too shameless for its adulterous eyes. No *deed* is too reprehensible for its malicious hand. No *path* is too slimy for its sin-soddened feet. It feeds its evil fire with evil fuel, and constantly emits evil smoke. Here we will introduce four startling statements as being peculiarly apposite to our subject. They are worthy of committing to memory:

“EVIL FOR GOOD IS *DEMON-LIKE*.

“EVIL FOR EVIL IS *BEAST-LIKE*.

“GOOD FOR GOOD IS *MAN-LIKE*.

“GOOD FOR EVIL IS *GOD-LIKE*.”

God did nothing but good to Satan. Satan does nothing but evil to God. Beast does evil to beast, and you can never persuade a horse that it is wrong to kick back at another

horse who first kicked it. To give good for good is about the highest altitude to which a man of nature can attain in this present world. Evil for good is God-like, and every Christian who wishes to be like God must learn this lesson well. But the point here is that Conscience, being evil, gives evil *for* evil, and seeks evil *in* evil; and the *more* evil the evil *is*, the more the evil Conscience exults in the evilness of the evil. An evil Conscience wallows in evil. You cannot bring along too much evil for an evil Conscience. This is the deepest dip in the depthless deep of evil Conscience. It can sink no lower. Its deterioration is now complete. Its debauchery is perfect.

Were God not the infinitely merciful Being He is, He might easily abandon man to his awful doom. Man is a self-destroyed being. The steps leading him downward are four, as follows:

1. *Self-Assertion.*
2. *Self-Inflation.*

3. *Self-Direction.*4. *Self-Destruction.*

As God lingered long over obstinate Ephraim, exclaiming, "O Ephraim, how can I give thee up?" (Hosea 11:8) so God still lingers patiently over stubborn, perverse humanity.

"O Conscience, into what abyss of fears
And horrors hast thou driven me, out of
which
I find no way, from deep to deeper
plunged."

MILTON—*Paradise Lost.*

CHAPTER VI

A CONVICTING CONSCIENCE

PRAISE be to God for this phase of Conscience. The prodigal begins to stir amidst the swine. The Conscience in sin is like Creation in chaos—all darkness and death. But the Spirit of God begins to brood over Conscience in man, even as He moved on the face of the waters at Creation. Light begins to dawn on the soul's dark past. God has touched the nerve of Conscience at last, and it begins to tremble under His Almighty finger. "They being convicted by their own Conscience." (John 8:9.) Innocence is preferable to penitence, but where sin has been committed, the next fairest flower in the garden of God to innocence is penitence. Penitence is a lowly plant which grows in the tear-watered plains of contrition. But *conviction* is not *conversion*. It is the *way* to the strait gate, but it is *not* the

gate itself. Many persons have gone a long way along the path of penitence, but they stop short of conversion, and now their hearts are harder than ever before. They fall *deepest* into hell who fall *backward* into hell. Better far never to have been convicted, than being convicted, not to go forward into conversion.

The late Welsh revival furnishes many instances of this solemn truth. I personally visited the very center of this spiritual movement, and had pointed out to me men and women who were apparently crushed beneath an overwhelming sense of sin. Whilst the Holy Spirit was manifestly working, they were terribly troubled; but now they are as little concerned as if the revival had never happened. A very eminent Christian worker who passed through every phase of the revival pointed out to me a man on the street and said, "That man was in the chapel lying in a *pool of tears*, but now he lies in the saloon in *pools of drink*." We may well press this point till it is well driven in. Con-

viction is *not* conversion. There cannot be a *real* conversion where there has been *no* conviction, but there *may* have been a real conviction where there was no real conversion. A convicted Conscience, therefore, is the first rung in the ladder, which ascends from the depths of despair, and leads to the presence of God. My reader, if you be an impenitent sinner, hasten your repentance, I beseech you. Every day you delay your repentance you have one *more* day to repent *of* and one *less* day to repent *in*. You cannot possibly repent *too soon*, for you know not how soon it will be *too late*. C. H. Spurgeon used to urge his hearers to come to God *for* repentance, if they could not come to God *with* repentance. Christ has been exalted to God's right hand to *give* repentance. (Acts 5: 31.) The Goodness of God was designed to lead men to repentance. (Rom. 2: 4.)

The repentance of one sinner anywhere fills all heaven from center to circumference with Holy ecstasy. (Luke 15: 10.)

“When Conscience wakens who can with her
strive?

Terrors and troubles from a sick soul drive?
Naught so unpitying as the ire of sin,
The inappeasible Nemesis within.”

ABRAHAM COLES—*The Light of the World.*

CHAPTER VII

A PURGED CONSCIENCE

SHOULD the soul complete its course of penitence and be led by the Holy Spirit to exercise simple saving faith in Christ, then the Conscience becomes immediately and perfectly purged. (Hebrews 9:14.) This purging implies and includes the entire removal of all sin from the surface of Conscience. Every sin committed leaves a dark stain behind it. All transgression blackens the soul. This one verse contains the whole truth of the Gospel within its brief compass. The three Persons in the Holy Trinity are mentioned here, and all alike are engaged in procuring a satisfactory basis for the purging of Conscience. *God the Father* is represented here as the receiver of an offering that was to make atonement for human sins. *God the Son* is mentioned here as the

person who was to offer Himself in death to God to make reparation for our sins.

“Once, *only* once; and *once* for all
The Great Redeemer died.”

God the Eternal Spirit is also introduced as the power through whom Christ offered Himself without spot to God. The blood of Christ is declared to be the *means* through which the Conscience alone is purged. Many preachers seem satisfied to preach Christ as a *martyr for truth* or as an *example* to men. The Bible reveals Christ as a *victim for sin*. There is no salvation in the *fleece* of the lamb. All down through the long, dark ages of sin God has demanded the shedding of Blood by way of atonement. There was blood *in* Eden and blood *outside* Eden. There was blood in Egypt and there was blood in the wilderness. There was blood in the land, and there was blood at the Cross. “Without shedding of Blood there is no remission.” That eminent Welsh preacher Christmas

Evans summoned his relatives and ministerial brethren to his deathbed. Looking around upon them all ere he died he said, "Brethren, I have never preached without *blood* in the basin." Then beckoning to the death-chariot, and appealing to the driver, he said: "Postilion, drive on." Few modern preachers could make such an announcement as that. Many have their basins filled with *water*, and not a few have them well stocked with *chaff*. Conscience may fittingly be compared to the bright steel blade of a knife. Should a drop of water fall on it, and be immediately removed, the blade will suffer no injury at all. But if it be allowed to remain there for a prolonged period of time, a round ring of red rust will be discovered, which it will be difficult to erase. So with sin on the Conscience; years of continued sin, unconfessed to God, eat like rust into the substance of Conscience, and nothing but the blood of Christ can remove the stain.

JOHN NEWTON'S CONFESSION

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree
In agony and blood,
Who fixed his languid eye on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And helped to nail him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did!
But now my tears were vain:
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain!

A second look he gave, which said
"I freely all forgive:
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou mayst live."

Thus while his death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon, too.

CHAPTER VIII

A PACIFIED CONSCIENCE

THE pacification of Conscience immediately succeeds the purgation of Conscience. A pacified Conscience is a Conscience completely at rest after the agitations of Conviction have subsided. "Worshippers once purged should have had *no more* Conscience of Sins." (Hebrews 10:2.) Please note it does not say no more *Consciousness* of sins. The sin of *supposed* sinlessness is *more* sinful than *real* sin. "They who fain would serve Thee best are conscious most of sin within." There is all the difference in the world between a troubled Conscience and a pacified Conscience; that there was between the tempest-driven sea of Galilee before the Lord stilled its disturbed elements, and after.

In fact, there were *thirteen* storms on that lake on that eventful day. There was

the outer hurricane on the surface of the water; and there were twelve inner tempests in twelve human hearts; but a word from the Son of God, and these thirteen gales were subdued in an instant. After an ordinary storm the sea always requires a reasonable amount of time to recover its equilibrium, but here its pacification was instantaneous and perfect. The *succeeding* calm was greater than the *preceding* storm. Justification by faith is ever followed by peace with God.

“A mind at perfect peace with God,
Oh, what a word is this;
A sinner reconciled through blood,
This, this indeed is peace.”

One feels disposed to enlarge upon this heavenly theme, it is so seldom preached from the rostrum and so rarely enjoyed as an experience in the pews. Oh, the unfathomed excellencies of the blood of Christ! The Bible speaks of that blood as *innocent* blood. Surely its efficacy to purge the Con-

science lies in its innocency. One thought more:

Not only does this incorruptible blood purge the sinner's Conscience from all the sins of his past life, but it also purges God's *memory* from the recollection of those same sins; so that God can actually say: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 10:17.) There are four "*no mores*" in Hebrews 10:

1. *No more offering for sins required.*
v. 18.

2. *No more sacrifice for sin possible.*
v. 26.

3. *No more remembrance of sins by God.*
v. 17.

4. *No more Conscience of sins by believers.*
v. 2.

Blessed be God for the pacification of Conscience!

"I know myself now; and feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities;
A still and quiet Conscience."

CHAPTER IX

A GOOD CONSCIENCE

How could Conscience, after being purged and pacified, be otherwise than good? The contrast to this is found in that fathomless word *evil* which we have already noticed. Good and evil are eternal and irreconcilable opposites. No person can have a good and an evil Conscience in the same breast at the same time. Neither can any person leap from an evil Conscience into a good Conscience at one bound. The path to goodness of Conscience is a process. Contrition is a *process* leading on to the *act* of conversion, and sanctification is *another* process following the act of conversion. Now it almost seems superfluous to say that a good Conscience is an inestimable blessing. A good Conscience is a good companion, even as an evil Conscience is an evil companion. Six times over have we this de-

sirable condition of Conscience referred to in the New Testament, which fact I judge reveals the importance that God attaches to this particular phase. (1 Peter 3:16.) Those who possess this heavenly blessing know the value of it; while those who do not, do not as a rule care much for those who do. The High-priest commanded those who stood by to smite Paul on the mouth for asserting that he possessed a good Conscience. This experience was evidently too advanced even for God's High-priest to attain to.

'If God and Conscience both approve thy way,
Be undismayed, let all accuse who may;
If God and Conscience doth thy way upbraid,
Then, truly thou hast cause to be afraid.'

The Apostle John gives utterance to the same thoughts in other language. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not then have we confidence toward God." (1 John 3:20-21.)

One very remarkable fact we must not omit to mention while dealing with this point, and that is that the Apostle Paul possessed a good Conscience *before* his Conversion. (Acts 23: 1.) And not only so, but he also affirmed that he actually attained to a pure Conscience while yet he was only a Pharisee. (2 Tim. 1: 3.) This statement seems quite incompatible with the bitter persecuting spirit which he manifested toward the disciples of our Lord, but the explanation of the apparent discrepancy is to be found in our Lord's own words recorded in John 16: 2. "For the time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service." The apostle thought he was pleasing God when exterminating Christians, so that in the midst of his murderous work his Conscience was apparently good and even pure. Conscience makes a good *goad*, but a bad *guide*.

CHAPTER X

AN ANSWERING CONSCIENCE

1 Peter 3:21

THE writer has no intention of commencing a controversy on the subject of baptism, but this sacred ordinance is so closely associated with this phase of Conscience that it would be an act of mean treachery on his part not to allude to it. We never dispute with any person on the subject of baptism. It is far too holy a matter to be degraded to the level of human debate. As all know, our English word "baptism" is an anglicized form of an untranslated Greek word; and more controversy has been raised over this matter than over almost any other truth in the Bible. In this portion of Scripture baptism is asserted to be "The answer of a good Conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The

word answer is *twice* employed in this same chapter. Once it is urged upon every Christian to give an answer to every man who asketh him a reason for the hope that is within him. Please note it is not the *hope* merely, but a *reason* for the hope. Christianity is not an unreasoned nor an unreasonable religion. We will illustrate this point by introducing three classes of individuals:

1. A hypocrite has a *hope*, but no *reason* for his hope.

2. An atheist has a *reason*, but he has no *hope* for his reason.

3. A Christian has a *reason for his hope* and a *hope for his reason*.

Again, every Christian is urged to give an answer to God.

Now, there are many Christians who are ever alert to give an answer to *man* for the hope that is within them, but many of those same Christians are unaccountably slow to give *God* the answer He waits for. I cannot explain just why God associates baptism

with the Conscience here, but I know it is so; and what God thus joins together I dare not put asunder. Ignorance of the *purpose* of a fact is no argument against the *fact* of the fact. Has my reader given God his answer? How much longer will *you* keep *Him* waiting?

As to the *mode* of baptism there need be no discussion here. The good old English word "bury" is twice used in connection with the important ordinance of baptism, and no scholar would risk his reputation by arguing about the exact meaning of that word. (Col. 2: 12; Romans 6: 4.) Dean Stanley, the greatest authority on ecclesiastical law, thus gives the meaning of baptism:

1. "An Immersion."
2. "A Submersion."
3. "An Emersion."

According to this explanation the person is so completely *immersed* as to be *submerged*; and after submersion he *emerges* from the element in which he was immersed.

Thus Conscience gives its answer in the ear
of God.

THE BIGOT'S DEMAND

Believe as I believe—no more, no less;
That I am right and no one else confess;
Feel as I feel, think only as I think;
Eat what I eat, and drink but what I drink.
Look as I look, do always as I do,
Then, only then, I'll fellowship with you.

That I am right, and always right, I know
Because my own convictions tell me so;
And to be right is simply this—to be
Entirely and in all respects like me.
To deviate one hair's breadth or begin
To question, doubt, or hesitate is sin.

I reverence the Bible—if it be
Translated first and then explained by me;
By churchly laws and customs I abide,
If they with my opinions coincide;
All creeds and doctrines I admit divine
Excepting their's who disagree with mine

Let sink the drowning, if he will not swim
Upon the plank that I push out to him;
Let starve the hungry, if we will not eat
My kind and quantity of bread and meat;
Let freeze the naked, if he will not be
Clothed in such garments as are made by me.

'Twere better that the sick should die than live,
Unless they take the medicine that I give;
'Twere better all should perish than refuse
To be conformed to my peculiar views;
'Twere better that the world stand still than move
In any other way than I approve.

ANON.

Such is the Bigot's bumptious, baneful creed,
And he himself the offshoot of a breed
Which would not mercy show, but fain expel
All other men to darkest, deepest hell.
What reck's he though all else on earth be damned?
The Bigot's heaven never can be crammed.

THOMAS BAIRD.

CHAPTER XI

A PURE CONSCIENCE

CONSCIENCE may most appropriately be compared to a beautiful, tender plant. Flowers require careful cultivation, and in the hands of a competent horticulturist they are capable of great advance, both in grace of form and richness of fragrance. Much more so is it with Conscience, and the Christian who cultivates it continually will be astounded at the progress it will make in spiritual growth and spiritual loveliness. We have now arrived at a very interesting stage in the development of Conscience. A good Conscience is *good*, but a *pure* Conscience is much *better*. The Conscience may be good without being pure; but it cannot be pure without *first* being good. Purity is a decided advance upon goodness.

Why are we so much afraid of that word pure? Can it be that we have become so

habituated to impurity that purity shocks us? There was a time when to be called a Puritan was to be highly honored. Was not the foundation of these great American States built upon Puritan blood and character? Impure Britain doth now look with contemptuous scorn upon the Puritan period! In this comparatively impure age, if you wish to insult a man you cannot do better than throw the epithet Puritan at him. Purity of Conscience is indeed a prize to be strenuously struggled for in these degenerate days. A rapid survey of the Beatitudes in Matt. 5 will assist us to apprehend and appreciate the value of personal purity. There Christ describes every mood and disposition of the human heart, and to every separate and successive mood He attaches its own particular recompense.

1. The *poor in spirit* have the *kingdom of heaven*. v. 3.
2. The *mourner* shall be *comforted*. v. 4.
3. The *meek* shall *inherit the earth*. v. 5.

4. The *hungry* after righteousness shall be *filled*. v. 6.

5. The *merciful* shall *obtain mercy*. v. 7.

6. The *peace-makers* shall be called *God's children*. v. 9.

7. The *persecuted* shall be rewarded in *heaven*. v. 12.

8. The *pure in heart* shall *see God*. v. 8.

This is the highest compensation which God has to offer. A *pure God* reserves a sight of his *pure person* to such as are *pure in heart*. Truly, purity has the promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come. It will cost us an earnest effort to *attain* to and to *maintain* a pure Conscience.

CHAPTER XII

A WITNESSING CONSCIENCE

Romans 9: 1

WHEN this phase of Conscience is properly comprehended and appreciated it will be admitted to be a distinct advance on any phase of Conscience yet considered. The apostle is expressing his anxiety for "his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh." He speaks of the "great heaviness and continual sorrow of his heart" on their behalf. Then to show that this was no mere hypocritical display, he affirms that his Conscience bears him witness in the Holy Spirit. The more we ponder this unique expression the more our astonishment increases. This man of God invites the Eternal Spirit as a Witness to his veracity. This witnessing mentioned here must not be confounded with that other phase of witnessing alluded to in Romans 8: 16. Great confusion will inevitably

arise if we do not rightly divide the truth here. There it is the "Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This is the witness of relationship; the testimony of Sonship. This witness every genuine Christian possesses in greater or lesser degree; but the witness of Romans 9:1 is a vastly different thing, and a much richer Christian experience.

There are at least three distinct forms of witnessing referred to in the Epistle to the Romans:

1. The witness of Conscience to Law. (Romans 2:15.)
2. The witness of the Spirit to the Christian. (Romans 8:16.)
3. The witness of Conscience to truthfulness. (Romans 9:1.)

The apostle avows here his absolute sincerity. "I lie not." All Christians cannot affirm this with equal confidence. Christians sometimes tell lies. They ought not to do so, but they do. It was to a Christian

Church that the same apostle wrote and exhorted them "To put away lying." (Eph. 4: 25.) And to the Christians at Colosse he further wrote: "Lie not to one another." (Col. 3: 9.) *Converted* persons oftentimes do some very *unconverted*-looking things. *Saved* people are guilty of committing some very *unsaved*-looking deeds. Absolute truthfulness in every particular should characterize every Christian, and we should always be able to say in every circumstance, "My Conscience also bearing me witness." Especially must we ever be on our guard against *half-truths*. It was a half-truth that nearly ruined Sarah and destroyed Abraham. (Gen. 12: 13.) One of our own poets has expressed this weighty truth for us in such terse language that we cannot refrain from quoting it here:

"A lie that is *half a truth* is ever the *blackest* of lies: A *lie* that is *all a lie* may be met and fought outright; But a lie that is half a truth is a harder matter to fight."

"Lying lips are still an abomination to the Lord."

CHAPTER XIII

A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE

THIS is the spiritual Alps of conscious blessedness. Thus far, and no farther, may man go in the ascending scale of Conscience. Thus high, but no higher, may he hope to rise as long as he is subjected to the limitations imposed by the flesh. This phase of Conscience was announced by Paul in the presence of Felix. (Acts 24: 16.) But he also confesses that it cost him a considerable amount of exercise before he arrived at this sacred summit. Not only did it cost him much exercise to arrive there, but it called for continual exercise to remain there. He also speaks of possessing this assurance of no offence toward God in heaven. This humble man could look up into the face of God and say calmly and truthfully, "I know nothing against myself" (1 Cor. 4: 4), but

he was careful to add immediately, "Yet I am not hereby justified." Would to God that all so-called "holiness people" would breathe his spirit and adopt his language. Then looking around upon mankind he could maintain the same testimony. Robert Cleaver Chapman designated this aspect of Christian attainment as "A heavenly Conscience." But no Christian will arrive here without a terrible struggle. One eminent British statesman once said that "The price of peace was eternal vigilance." And if that be true of national peace, may we not say that the cost of a Conscience void of offence is eternal vigilance. There are four rules to be observed if we would attain to this spiritual altitude and remain there:

1. Never do anything that you are in *doubt* about. (Rom. 14: 23.)

2. Never do what you know to be *wrong*. (Col. 3: 25.)

3. Do everything you know to be *right*. (Eph. 6: 1.)

4. *Put* right everything you have done wrong, as far as it is in your power to do so. (Luke 19: 8.)

The Christian poulterer will not be able to palm off a tough ten-year-old rooster as a spring chicken and maintain a Conscience void of offence. This holy state will strike a death blow at all commercial trickery and every form of political jugglery. The milliner's bill will be scrupulously discharged. The gas collector will not be told that mother is not in at present, while mother is in all the time! The minister will not palm off an old discourse under a new title to prevent his preparing a new sermon. If your child is over age, you will not try to deceive the trolley-car conductor about him. A Conscience void of offence would revolutionize our private, social, political, commercial, and ecclesiastical conditions.

“What Conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do;
This teaches me more than Hell to shun,
That more than Heav'n pursue.”

POPE—*Universal Prayer.*

CHAPTER XIV

AN EMBOLDENED CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians 8: 10

IT IS with considerable diffidence we now approach this solemn phase of Conscience. The task is anything but agreeable, but necessity compels us to proceed. We have already traced the debauchery of Conscience in the natural man, but in an emboldened Conscience we have the first step of degeneracy in the experience of a Christian. The words "know" and "knowledge" are key-words in this chapter. Eleven times over these words are used in different forms. It may not be out of place to introduce here a remarkable Arab proverb on the subject of knowledge:

1. He that *knows not* and *knows not* that he *knows* not;

He is a fool—shun him.

2. He that *knows not* and *knows* that he *knows not*;
He is simple—teach him.
3. He that *knows* and *knows not* that he *knows*,
He is asleep—wake him.
4. He that *knows* and *knows* that he *knows*;
He is a wise man—follow him.

So here it is a question of knowledge, but knowledge grossly *misused*. A case is instanced of a Christian with knowledge going to an idol temple and sitting down to meat there. A younger Christian sees the action of this elder one, and is thereby emboldened to attempt what he has not sufficient spiritual strength to accomplish. The result is that he falls into error. The great lesson to be learned here is that "None of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." (Romans 14:7.) We must pause to consider how our actions will affect others. A chauffeur may be qualified to propel his automobile through the village street at a high rate of speed without danger to himself; but he finds himself arrested by an

officer of the law before he leaves the village. In vain he pleads that he himself is quite unhurt; but he must be taught to regard the safety of others as well as his own. So in this matter of influence with us all. The present application of this matter is rather different now than to what our chapter refers. Happily, we are not now living in idolatrous surroundings, but the world is still with us. Christian young men see elderly Christians smoking, and they are emboldened to smoke also. Christian maidens learn that their elder sisters frequent questionable amusements, and they are emboldened to enter these dangerous places. We elders are terribly responsible to God for the way we behave in the presence of our younger friends. It was the *old* prophet who dwelt in Bethel that accomplished the death of the *young* prophet. He lied to him, and caused him to be put to death. After his death he wept over him, but it was too late. Better to have wept over him be-

fore he slew him. Let us weep over our young people first, and we will not slaughter them afterward.

“Trust that man in *nothing* who has not a Conscience in *everything*.”

CHAPTER XV

A WOUNDED CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians 8:12

WHEN Conscience once begins to degenerate, suffering must inevitably follow. Each sin is a knife, and every time we sin Conscience receives a severe stab. Sin may be illustrated by a double-bladed dagger. When a person has decided to commit sin he seizes the dagger. He raises it aloft to give impetus to the downward stroke. The dagger descends, and its keen blade is buried in the victim's breast. We sin *against* those we sin *with*. When two persons sin conjointly they stab each other. When one person sins alone he stabs himself. When older Christians who ought to know better do things which they ought not to do, they deliberately wound the Consciences of their younger and less experienced brethren and sisters. In doing so they not only

sin against their brethren, but the apostle argues that they also *sin against Christ*. All good done to a Christian Christ will recognize as good done to Him. All evil perpetrated on a Christian, Christ will reckon that as evil done to Him. Paul never thought that when he persecuted the Christians that he was *persecuting Christ*; nevertheless, Jesus said unto him: "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" (Acts 9:4.) As elders our *good* may be *evil* spoken of. A thing may be lawful enough for us, but if it is not expedient for others, then we should be prepared to waive it, rather than wound them. (1 Cor. 10:23-24.) If we could only see Christ in His members it would alter our entire behavior toward them. Every time I offend a member of Christ's mystical body I offer an affront, and commit an injury against the great head of that body. The following simple story will illustrate this particular line of teaching: A Christian gentleman, as he was returning to his comfortable home

one cold winter night, had occasion to pass a sentry box, where a Christian soldier was stationed on duty. Seeing that the sentry had no overcoat, he divested himself of the one he wore and transferred it to the man. In a vision of the night Christ personally appeared to the gentleman with his overcoat on, and smiling approvingly upon him said, "For as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. 25:40.) Thus we repeat, all evil done to a Christian is evil done to Christ. All kindness shown to a Christian is kindness shown to Christ.

CHAPTER XVI

A WEAK CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians 8

WHEN the Conscience is frequently and deeply wounded, in what condition could we expect to find it but in one of extreme weakness? Even as the human body when wounded is considerably weakened thereby, so Conscience loses strength through the wrongdoing of others, as well as by its own folly. We are all familiar with the expression of hemorrhage of the lungs. There is such a thing as *hemorrhage of the Conscience*. Every time Conscience is wounded, Conscience bleeds. It does not bleed blood, for it has no blood to bleed. But it bleeds *virtue*, for virtue is the life-blood of Conscience. There are many Consciences to-day lying on the floor of human hearts, and they are slowly bleeding to death through wounds inflicted by careless hands.

They stumbled because of the attitude of those from whom they had a right to expect better things. Elders ought to be *stepping-stones* upon which their younger friends could easily climb nearer to God. But alas! alas! we are more frequently *stumbling-stones* over which our young people fall and become sorely wounded.

“There are two stones we may not cast:

The stone of stumbling in our brother's way;

The stone of censure at our brother's past;

For we ourselves have grossly gone astray.”

The High-priest in Israel was chosen because he could reasonably bear with them that were out of the way. He was exhorted to have “compassion on the ignorant, for that he himself was also compassed with infirmity.” (Heb. 5:2.) We do well to remember this. Somebody has truthfully said:

“There is so much that is *good* in the *worst* of us;

And so much that is *bad* in the *best* of us;

That it does not become any of us

To throw any stones at the rest of us.”

A careful examination of our chapter will reveal the fact that the word "weak" is five times employed here. Sometimes it is applied to the Christian, and at other times to the Conscience. In fact, the two things are indivisible. If a man has a weak Conscience he is sure to be a weak man morally. If he is robust and vigorous morally he will be strong in Conscience, and able to resist temptations.

CHAPTER XVII

A SEARED CONSCIENCE

1 Timothy 4:2

THE descent of Conscience in a Christian may have a very insignificant beginning, but it must inevitably lead to an inglorious end. Where doubtful things are persistently encouraged, and perverse deeds are regularly committed, Conscience must of necessity be injured thereby. The word *cauterize* better conveys the thought suggested. Notice here, too, the use of the expression "A hot iron." Under the head of a Wounded Conscience we have already referred to sin as a sharp knife. Here sin is a hot iron, and those who play with it must expect to be scorched thereby. Human skin frequently cauterized becomes thick, tough, and leathery, and is rendered insensible to pain. Every time we sin it is like passing a hot iron across the surface of Conscience.

But the question may arise in some mind as to whether this awful condition refers to a Christian at all. Well, the first verse of our chapter tells us that "Some shall depart from the faith," and they could never *depart* from where they had *never* been. There is a threefold use of the word depart in the Epistles to Timothy:

1. *All* Christians should depart from *iniquity*. (2 Tim. 2: 19.)

2. *Some* Christians depart from the *faith*. (1 Tim. 4: 2.)

3. *Paul* departs to be with *Christ*. (2 Tim. 4: 6.)

"Past feeling" is another expression employed in Holy Scripture to describe this blighted state of Conscience. When men once get here nothing ever touches them. They come and go to religious meetings, and hear the most searching ministry; but it leaves them quite unmoved. The most solemn threatenings find them unawakened and unrepentant. Conscience in its natural

state is soft and impressionable, but long continuance in evil hardens its constitution. In the material universe the same sun which softens the wax hardens the clay; yet no man can blame the sun because it is so. The fault must be discovered in the difference of the disposition of the materials. It is the *nature* of the wax to soften under the influence of the sun's rays. It is the *nature* of the clay to harden under the same influence; and so with Conscience.

At the beginning of its course it is soft, tender, and pliable, but under the influence of sin it hardens until it reaches the state we have here described.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ABANDONED CONSCIENCE

1 Timothy 1: 19

Now we have reached our deepest depth in the degeneracy of Christian Conscience. Its apostasy from God is now complete. The apostle here urges his son Timothy to "hold faith" in conjunction with "a good Conscience," and he immediately afterward adds, "Which some having put away." They never could *put away* what they *never* had. That is axiomatic. They are further stated to have made shipwreck. No man can suffer shipwreck if he is not *in* the ship. A man can never be shipwrecked if he never puts out to sea. The names of two individuals are inserted here as illustrations of those who have been guilty of this tremendous sin. The word "faith" is twice referred to in our verse, but its meaning is not the same in each instance. The Revised

Version reads "Holding *faith* and a good Conscience, which some having thrust from them make shipwreck concerning *the faith*." It is most important that we carefully discriminate and differentiate between *faith as trust* and *the faith as truth*. *Faith* is *trustfulness*; *the faith* is *truthfulness*. As soon as a person commences to question the faith; *i.e.*, the truth, he will soon begin to give over faith, *i.e.*, the trust. And conversely, when a person is tempted to put away *faith in God*, he will speedily give up the *truth of God*. No faith in God leads to no faith in truth; and no faith in truth leads to no faith in God. The whole thing may be summed up thus. Conscience in the breast protests against its owner doing certain things and going to certain places. The person persists in going; and Conscience persists in resisting. They reach a deadlock. The owner of Conscience at last speaks out and says plainly, "I am determined to continue this course upon which I have entered. If you

care to stifle your convictions and accompany me, good and well; but if not—farewell.”

I said good-by to my Conscience,
Good-by for aye and aye;
And I pushed her hands off harshly,
And turned my face away.
And Conscience, sorely wounded,
Returned not from that day.

But the time came when my spirit
Grew weary of its pace;
And I said “Come back” to Conscience,
“For I long to see thy face.”
But Conscience said, “I cannot,
Remorse is in my place.”

DOUBT: HONEST AND DISHONEST

"There is more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."
So penned a Poet (witless lout)
To praise the doubter's doubtless deeds.

But let me whisper in your ear,
There's no such thing as *honest* doubt;
For doubt will doubtless disappear
If it be honest out and out.

For doubt is very much like gout,
The more 'tis nursed the more it grows;
When fed on Atheistic stout
It juggles, wriggles, cavils, crows.

Much of the doubt before our eyes
Is most dishonest in its heart;
It poses under honest guise
And shoots with skill its subtle dart.

Its shafts have entered hall and hut,
And into churches not a few;
The preacher cracks the doubtful nut,
And spreads the poison to the pew.

'Tis now thought doubtful *not* to doubt;
Yea, we are taught to *doubt* our doubts;
All certainty is put to rout,
And no one knows its whereabouts.

Is there no knowledge to be had?
Has God not spoken once for all?
Indeed He has; all doubt is mad,
And destined to disastrous fall.

For God is God, and truth is true,
All doubt is sinful in His sight;
And doubters will have cause to rue
Their doubts through Hell's undoubted night.

THOMAS BAIRD.

CHAPTER XIX

A BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE OPERATIONS OF CONSCIENCE

THE history of Joseph's brethren furnishes us with one of the most dramatic demonstrations of the accusations of a guilty Conscience. They never seem to have had one peaceful moment in their lives after they sold Joseph. Every calamity in their after lives they attributed to and associated with their mean and wicked treatment of their innocent brother. (Gen. 42:21.) Conscience in man may be aptly compared to the chain-stitch work of a sewing machine. You have only to loosen the first stitch and the whole seam unravels immediately. So when Conscience once becomes exercised it will reproduce all the sins of a lifetime in a remarkably short period. As soon as Joseph saw his brethren he determined to awaken

in their hearts some true sense of their wicked behavior. He spake *roughly* to them. Then he suddenly changed his behavior toward them and bestowed great kindness on them. But even his *favours* filled them with *fear*.

A guilty Conscience is like a magnet; it draws everything *like* itself to itself. Our greatest British dramatist truly says:

"Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind;
The thief doth fear each *bush* to be an *officer*."

Joseph's brethren were always miserable in the presence of their deeply wronged brother. On their second visit to Egypt they were invited to Joseph's house to *dine*; and even there they were *afraid*. Conscience hurt them *much*; and hurt them *sore*; and hurt them *long*. Joseph did not cease to probe until he had reduced them to the very verge of despair.

CHAPTER XX

QUOTATIONS

WE WILL now conclude our attempted exposition of Conscience by several short and pithy sayings:

The natural Conscience is God's blurred monogram on battered humanity.

A good Conscience followed will reduce the judgment claim.

A good Conscience bids defiance to every slanderous imputation.

When Conscience is *healthiest*, the soul has reached its *highest*.

Conscience requires constant rectification by the Word of God. Otherwise it becomes erratic in its movements, and inaccurate in its conclusions. The most delicate mathematical instruments require occasional ad-

justment; and our chronometers must be regulated by the sun.

“What better breastplate than a heart untainted? *Thrice* armed is he who hath his quarrel just; and he but *naked*, though locked up in *steel*, whose Conscience by injustice is corrupted.”

Accusing Conscience is afraid to ask more, because it hath abused the former mercies; but faith, assuring us that all God’s benefits are tokens of His love bestowed on us according to His Word, is bold to ask for more.—*Greenham*.

There is peril attending every step which is taken in the indulgence of any known sin, or in the neglect of any acknowledged obligation. ‘A’ tender conscience will not trifle with its convictions, lest the heart should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.—*John Morison*.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

Our blessed Lord combined in one
 Two natures, both complete—
 In perfect manhood all sublime,
 In Godhead all replete.

(John 1:1, 2, 14.)

As man He entered Cana's feast,
 A humble guest to dine;
 As God He moved the water there,
 And changed it into wine.

(John 2:2, 8.)

As man He suffered weariness,
 And rested on a well;
 As God He pierced a sinner's heart,
 And saved her soul from hell.

(John 4:6, 29.)

As man He climbed the mountain's height,
 A suppliant to be;
 As God He left the place of prayer
 And walked upon the sea.

(John 4:15, 19.)

As man He wept in heartfelt grief
 Beside a loved one's grave;
 As God He burst the bands of death,
 Almighty still to save.

(John 11:35, 43.)

As man He lay within a boat
O'erpowered by needful sleep;
As God He rose, rebuked the wind,
And stilled the angry deep.
(Mark 4: 38, 39.)

As man He yielded to His foes,
Submitting to be bound;
As God His presence overawed,
And threw them to the ground.
(John 18: 4, 6.)

Such was our Lord in life and earth,
In dual nature one;
The woman's Seed in very truth,
And God's eternal Son.
(Luke 1: 35.)

O Child: O SON: O Word made flesh:
May Thy high praise increase;
Thou wonderful, Thou mighty God,
Eternal Prince of Peace!
(Isa. 9: 6.)

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