

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

HAVE YOU A GOOD
CONSCIENCE?

J. R. GRAVES

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By J. R. GRAVES, LL. D.,

Editor of "The Baptist," etc.

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"Baptism—the answer of a good conscience."— Peter.

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WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

"We trust we have a good conscience."—*Paul.*

"Baptism—the answer of a good conscience toward God."—*Peter.*

HAVE I A RIGHT TO WORSHIP GOD ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF MY OWN CONSCIENCE?

TWO PROPOSITIONS can be affirmed without discussion:

I. That I have no right to worship God according to the dictates of *another's* conscience.

II. That I have no right to worship God *contrary* to the dictates of my own conscience. I think it can be made apparent, that it depends upon circumstances whether I have a right to worship God according to the approvings of my conscience.

This question is one of vast practical import, and should be clearly understood by every one,

and by none more than the professed Christian. The Scriptures can not be understood, nor this question answered, without we obtain a correct answer to the underlying question —

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

This inquiry is scarcely second to any other in the whole domain of Ethics and Theology, since a false theory of conscience will inevitably work the destruction of the whole system of Christianity. The authors of our moral philosophies and lexicons have not agreed upon a definition of conscience. Three principal theories have been before the world for the past century, and each of these I propose to examine. Taking this for granted, that no theory whose practical workings make void the teachings of the Bible, and result in evil to nations and communities, can be the true theory of conscience, the first that I notice is—

1. *That conscience is the verdict of our natural reason and judgment touching the moral quality of any act.*

This I denominate the French theory, since it was so generally accepted by that nation prior to the Revolution. Let us decide as to the correctness of this definition by the results to which it led. The apostles of this theory

taught that every proposition, whether appertaining to religion, morals or politics, should be indorsed by human reason. Consequently, every system and policy, every relation of life and distinction in human society, every theory of government, and even the teachings of the Bible and the acts of the Allwise God were arrested and hailed, before the tribunal of human Reason, and acquitted or condemned, according to its, in their estimation, infallible decisions! And what were the very natural results? With respect to government, they claimed that Reason taught them that *all men should be free*. In a monarchy, they declared the king alone was free, and the people *slaves*, because restrained by his will; and the cry was raised for the overthrow of royalty, and the abolition of this slavery throughout the empire. Reason taught them that all men should be *equal*; and conscience called for the abrogation of all ranks and an equal division of the wealth of the kingdom among all classes; and that all men, irrespective of birth, color or condition, should be placed upon an equality of social position, and, with the harrow of universal agrarianism, reduced to the level of a common *brotherhood*, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," was the motto in-

scribed upon the banners of the Red Republicans of France; and so soon as they obtained the balance of power, the bitter and bloody fruits of the theory appeared. Following the dictates of their consciences, they murdered the king and subverted the throne, annulled the constitution and abolished the laws. They consigned the titled and the rich to the executioner and the block, and confiscated their property for no crime, except that they possessed titles and wealth by hereditary right, according to the law of the land. They sent to the guillotine or the dungeon all sexes who presumed to differ from them in opinion. Conscience, the voice of the understanding and reason, unguided by statute, human or divine, became the "higher law" of France, and France became a hell. Not only all laws affording any salutary restraint to crime or protection to virtue fell before this higher law, but the Bible itself was condemned, tied to the tail of an ass and driven from the city; while a nude prostitute, representing the goddess Reason, was carried in triumphal procession through the city, and enthroned upon the high altar in the cathedral of Notre Dame. Then old Anarch triumphed, and universal murder and ruin followed, and unbridled passion and lust held high carnival.

I need not examine this theory of conscience further. A theory, that, when left free to develop itself, mounts above the Bible, Christianity, and even the throne of God, we must reject, as an emanation from the pit and the gospel of perdition.

2. There is another theory of conscience that has been taught us for the last fifty years in all our dictionaries and in all our schools, from the lowest to the highest, and from nearly all the pulpits of our country, viz: *That conscience is an independent faculty, like the eye or the ear, and given to us to discover the moral quality of all our actions, and its decisions infallible, and the highest source of appeal!*

I offer in proof the following authorities:

Webster's Dictionary:

"Conscience — Internal or self-knowledge or judgment of right or wrong; or, the faculty, power or principle within us which decides on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our own actions or affections, and instantly approves or condemns them. Conscience is called by some writers the moral sense, and considered as an original faculty of our nature.

"Conscience is first occupied in ascertaining our duty, before we proceed to action, then in judging of our actions when performed.—J. M. Mason."

Worcester's Dictionary:

"CONSCIENCE — The faculty of judging one's own

conduct with reference to some standard of right and wrong; **THE MORAL SENSE; THE MORAL FACULTY.**"

"Whatever creed be taught or land be trod,
Man's conscience is the oracle of God."—*Byron.*

Dr. Wayland:

"By conscience, or the moral sense, is meant that faculty by which we discern the moral quality of actions, and by which we are capable of certain affections in respect to this quality. . . . This notion is, in its nature, simple and ultimate and distinct from every other notion." "It is not merely a discriminating, but also an impulsive faculty. . . . It is the most authoritative impulse of which we find ourselves susceptible. . . . Now, as our Creator has constituted us such as we are, and as by our very constitution we do thus consider conscience to be the most authoritative impulse of our natures, it must be the most authoritative impulse of our natures, it must be the most authoritative, unless we believe that he has deceived us, or, which is the same thing, that he has so formed us as to give credit to a lie."—*Moral Science.*

Dr. John Dick:

"It is that faculty which perceives right and wrong in actions, approves or disapproves of them, anticipates their consequences under the moral administration of God, and is thus the cause of peace or quietude of mind."—*Lectures on Theology.*

I could multiply authorities, but these must suffice.

This I call the American theory of conscience. It teaches us that conscience is a distinct and independent *moral faculty*, and is to each of us a clearer light to guide than the light of nature, or the voice of God, speaking in his Word!—that no impulse of conscience can possibly be wrong, unless God deceives us! Here falls the supreme authority of God's Revealed Word, since each man, according to this, has a God or a Pope in his own bosom,—an infallible conscience, that tells him what actions are right in the sight of God, and what are wrong; and more, even impels him to the right. Here also falls the cardinal doctrine of universal and total depravity, which teaches that each man's moral sense as well as tastes and affections are wholly estranged from God: "*Having his understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*" (Eph. iv. 18.) In place of this utter darkness of judgment and blindness of heart, we have conscience, like a sun, reflecting the noon-day light upon the character of every act; and its God-like voice teaching us with infallible certainty not only the right way but impelling us to walk in it. This

is more than those teachers claim for the Word of God. That I do not misstate this theory that conscience is a distinct faculty or *moral sense* — whose province is to decide upon the moral quality of our actions, as the eye or the ear performs its distinct function, and that the decisions of conscience can not be either improved or changed by any amount or character of information, any more than can the eye or the ear or sense of taste; since, notwithstanding all the disquisitions of earth, to the eye black is still black, and to the sense of taste or smell, a spoiled egg is still as offensive — let us examine Dr. Wayland a little further, since his "Moral Science" has been almost exclusively the text-book of all our schools for the past half century. He says:

"The conscience is not improved by the reading of moral essays, nor by committing to memory moral precepts, nor by imagining moral vicissitudes; but by hearkening to its monitions and obeying its impulses."

What justly follows from this? Is it not that conscience is to each individual a higher source of appeal than the Bible?

"Before you resolve upon an action, or a course of action [does he advise us, as Christ does, to 'search the Scriptures' to learn whether God approves or disapproves? no, but put the question to

your own conscience, the infallible divinity within our own breasts; hear him], let the first question always be, is this action right?"

You are to put this question to your conscience, mark you, not to your Bible or God's law:

"For [says our author] this purpose God gave you this faculty [of conscience]. If you do not use it, you are false to yourself, and inexcusable before God. . . . Man is under obligation to obey the will of God in what manner soever signified. That it is signified in *this manner* [*i. e.*, that the teachings of conscience is the voice of God to the soul], I think can not be a question, and for this knowledge he is justly held responsible."

We have, therefore, this advice given:

"Cultivate, on all occasions, in private or in public, in small or in great, in action or in thought, the habit [does he say of trying the act or thought by God's Word? not a syllable of it; but he says] of obeying the monitions of conscience, *all other things to the contrary notwithstanding.*"

And he quotes from a poet corrupted by the same false teachings:

"Its slightest touches — instant pause,
Debar aside pretenses;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences."

I do not misrepresent the theory of conscience so universally received in this country and in England when I sum it up in these few sentences: The conscience is a distinct faculty, like the eye, and, therefore, like our senses, can not be instructed by law, human or divine; that its dictates are always infallibly right; that it is the ultimate and highest source of appeal; and that its monitions should be obeyed at *all costs*, "all other things," even God's Bible, "to the contrary notwithstanding," and "*uncaring consequences*." It would seem that propositions so frightful as these would strike the mind of every thinking, and especially every religious man, with horror, but, strange to say, it meets with almost universal approbation; and it finds its most constant and enthusiastic supporters in the Protestant and Catholic ministers of this country. I have most bitterly opposed and exposed this theory for more than a quarter of a century, as a student,* an editor and minister, as the doctrine and gospel

* When a student, at the age of seventeen, preparing my lesson on conscience from Wayland's Moral Science, and having read the chapter containing the above, I startled my elder brother from his book, in another part of the room, by an emphatic—"That's false!" with a violent hand-stroke upon the

of the pit, fraught with every form of evil to society and governments, and as certainly destructive of the soul as of the very principles of Christianity! But little did I think I should live to see all the horrors with which it was pregnant wrought out and discharged, in one mighty birth, upon my own nation.

Before noticing the bitter fruits this most unreasonable and pestilent theory has borne in America, let me briefly expose its fallaciousness.

If conscience be a distinct moral sense, sustaining the same relation to facts in morals that the other senses—sight, taste, smell, etc.—do to facts in nature, then its decisions, like those of the eye and the ear, are *fixed, reliable, and unalterable*; no instruction, no laws, no change of country or society, no religion, no amount of knowledge from other sources, can affect its decisions; they are absolutely fixed and infallible, and the decisions of all men, in all nations, touching the moral quality of any and every act, must be the same, as are the decisions of each and all the senses in all men. To the Hottentot and the Esquimau black is

table. This was forty-five years ago, before a contrary theory had ever been published, known to the writer. Haven has since exploded it.

black and white is white, sweet is sweet and bitter is bitter, as well as to the most educated Caucasian. The senses in their normal condition are infallible in their decisions. To suppose instruction or increased knowledge or the Word of the living God, to avail to correct the errors of the *sense* of conscience in regard to moral acts, would be as preposterous as to suppose the legal opinions of Blackstone or Coke, Moses or Christ, would avail to reverse the judgment of the eye in regard to colors, or the sense of smell in regard to odors. Men must, then, infallibly agree respecting the decisions of the conscience, not only in a multitude of cases, but in *all cases* where moral actions are the object, as they agree in the decisions of all the senses. Black is black, white is white, bitter is bitter, sweet is sweet, to all men of all nations; but do all men, or even the members of the same family, agree in regard to the moral quality—the right and wrong—of religious acts? * There is the utmost di-

* I say religious, because every conceivable religious act is a moral act, and therefore must be a *personal and voluntary* one. If baptism is a religious act, it must be the personal and voluntary act of the individual. The baptism of an unconscious infant, therefore, is not a religious act.

versity. The Christian's conscience stings him with remorse for doing what the Pagan approves, the Protestant's conscience for doing what the Catholic's conscience approves, and the conscience of the Baptist for doing what both Protestants and Catholics approve as religious and right. How do we account for this?

They have all the same Sense, or Faculty of conscience, if it be a Sense; but their views of right and wrong, owing to the difference of education, are widely different, and consequently it can not be a "Distinct Sense" or "Moral Faculty." The demonstration is clear.

1. *Education can not affect the decisions of a Sense;*
2. *But education does affect the decisions of a conscience.*

∴ Conscience is not a distinct sense.
The theory is *demonstratively false*.

It may be said that the Pagan's or Catholic's conscience is defiled. There is no question of it; but that admission, instead of meeting the difficulty, surrenders the statement that the conscience is a distinct faculty or sense. The Pagan and the Catholic may say that the Christian's or Protestant's conscience is defiled; and who shall decide between them? Who ever heard it charged that a heathen's sense of sight

or smell was defiled? No one; since nothing but physical injury can affect the operation of the physical senses. Who ever heard of a Pagan's *Senses* discerning things so differently from those of a Christian? *No difference of education or character can alter the decisions of the Senses in reference to their appropriate objects.* The Pagan's sense of sight reveals to him all colors, his sense of taste all flavors, just as the Christian's does to him. The reason why men religiously differ must be obvious to the dullest apprehension,—because conscience is not, like the eye, a sense, but the *creature of education.* The *experience* of all men also refutes this theory. The children of two families, though separated by only a yard-fence, can be made to possess consciences wholly unlike and contradictory touching every religious action. What the consciences of the one pronounce to be right, the consciences of the others pronounce wrong. The children of one family are taught by Jewish or Catholic teachers, and those of the other by Christian ones. Now, interchange the teachers, and the verdicts of the consciences of those children will soon be the very opposite of what they were before. This fact also disproves the theory.

This theory is opposed to the teachings of God's Word. That teaches us that a man may have a good conscience, or an evil or defiled one. "Pure," "evil" or "defiled" are terms that can not be predicated of the Senses. Paul declared that he had "lived in all *good* conscience before God;" and yet that very course of action he pursued so *conscientiously*—even the delivering men and women to death for no other reason save they believed on Jesus of Nazareth—he afterwards condemned as most sinful; and for which, though he believed God had forgiven him, he never forgave himself, and accounted himself the least of all saints and not deserving to be called an apostle of the Lord. He charged others with having a defiled conscience; he taught that an evil and defiled conscience could be changed into a good one, so that its decisions would be the very opposite of what they were before the change; but the decisions of a Sense can not be changed; and, therefore, if the Bible is true, conscience is not a Sense.

I now invite you to notice *the fruits of this theory of conscience.*

We have seen that the former erroneous theory made Red Republicans in France, and plunged the mightiest nation of Europe into in-

fidelity and atheism, and baptized it in fraternal blood. This American theory made *Black Republicans* of a portion of this nation, who, for the last forty years wrought out this theory; and, at last gaining the balance of power, plunged this nation into civil war. The same cause that produced the reign of terror in France produced the reign of terror in America, viz: A false theory of conscience acted out.

The past generation had been taught from childhood—in the family, in the common schools, in the Sabbath-schools, from the Pulpit, in the Academies, the Colleges, Universities, Lecture-rooms, and Lyceums, from all sources of instruction—that the voice or impulse of conscience was the Divinity, speaking in unmistakable language to their souls, and the impulse of conscience, unquestionably the impulsion of the Great and Mighty God; and this voice and impulse were to them a Higher law, that must be obeyed at all costs, and “uncaring consequences.” They were educated, religiously and politically, to believe that one man is the equal of another, and entitled to the same rights and relations, social and political, in society and government, irrespective of race, color or qualification. They *conscientiously* believed this. They had no other argu-

ment but that they *felt* it to be so; that God said so to their consciences, and it must be so. They had been taught that every thing, human or divine, that contradicts this is, must be, erroneous and false. Following the dictates of their own consciences, they trampled under foot the most solemn compacts, disregarded law, and overrode the Constitution of the land. They, without compunction, severed every cord and ligament that bound together this once peaceful and happy republic. Following the dictates of their own consciences, in utter disregard of the Bible, they were led to adopt the same motto of the atheistic French: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” In other words, “the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man.” And what has resulted? An ocean of fraternal blood has rolled, like a flood, across this continent; desolation and ruin and distress mark all that was once lovely, prosperous, and happy; and all this to force into theoretical equality a race *that God ordained to be inferior, mentally, socially, and politically*. I can not doubt this with the Word of God in my hands, and my eyes resting upon this decree, declarative of the eternal purpose of the Most High: “And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And

he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the land of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant." (Gen. 9: 25-27.) Social equality was prohibited by the decree of God, as clearly as intellectual and political or national inequality established between the three races. Who will say that social equality can exist between master and servant? and who that believes the Bible will deny that God, by sovereign decree, established this relation? Had God constituted the three sons of Noah constitutionally and intellectually equal, humanly speaking, it would have been impossible for the descendants of one to have been for ages the servants of the posterity of the other brethren. But this prophecy has been literally fulfilled in all ages, and despite the ravings of Higher-law theories. *The descendants of Canaan will ever be an inferior race: though the scenes of his servitude may change, he will still be a slave, in its essential sense, somewhere, and to somebody, until the dawning of the Second Advent,* when, for the first time, every curse of sin will be removed, and every yoke and distinction it has imposed be broken.

And it was the same Sovereign God, who has the unquestioned right to execute his will

among the inhabitants of earth as in the armies of heaven, who decreed to enlarge Japheth, that he should dwell in the tents of his brother Shem, and be served by Canaan,—should, by virtue of his intellectual and constitutional superiority, enter and possess, at his pleasure the countries inhabited by Shem. And this, too, has been fulfilled to the very letter—the Caucasian, or Japhetic race to-day dominate the world. And it should be observed that God prohibited, by *express enactment*, the commingling of the races by intermarriages; else how could this and multitudes of other prophecies concerning the races be fulfilled? It is as sinful for the Jews to intermarry with the descendants of Japheth and Canaan to-day as it was in the days of Moses. And He has planted in the sons of Japheth a constitutional abhorrence of the **color** and **odor** with which he has forever marked the descendants of Canaan.

I have said this much to vindicate the teachings of God's Word, and God's truth, that abideth forever, and to check the spirit of infidelity which the results of the late conflict have greatly stimulated, and this pestilent higher-law doctrine is disseminating all over the land. Nor would I be understood to utter these my convictions as a politician; for I am no poli-

tician. I utter them as a Christian minister, and in the spirit of a Christian. From *my* stand-point, I more *pity* than *blame* the war citizens, who had adopted these views, and our Christian brethren of the North, as I do the poor mistaught, deceived, yet conscientious, heathen who bows down to an idol his own hands have fashioned, or tears his flesh, or throws himself beneath the car-wheels of his god to be crushed. They both have been so taught from infancy; it is their religion to believe so; and I would undeceive them. The Bible, it can not be denied by any candid man, as clearly sanctions and regulates the relation of master and slave as it does the marriage or *parental* relation. But they would not hear it on this subject; and if you could convince them that it sanctions a relation their consciences so disapprove, they will tell you, that "the written Bible [as I once heard Mr. Beecher affirm] may be *mistranslated*, or we may *misinterpret* it; but the voice of God speaking within us can neither be misinterpreted nor mistranslated. If any man, therefore, tells me that any line of it does countenance slavery by regulating it, I will tell him I know that he mistranslates or misinterprets his Bible; because the Bible God has written in my soul tells me,

in unmistakable language, that the relation of master and slave is sinful *per se*, and an utter abomination in the sight of God." The majority of the population North believed this, and the dictates of their consciences taught them that it was their duty to stamp out the institution, at the cost of millions of treasure and of innocent human beings —

"Uncaring consequences."

It is thus *they exalt conscience above the Bible, God's own and only revelation to man*. I can pity, and pray for, and forgive them, as I can the mistaught and deceived. Their false theory of conscience must be exploded, and a generation be educated by teachers and textbooks inculcating a correct Bible theory of conscience, before the nation will ever find repose on this subject. Marvel not, you, my hearers,*

*This was first preached before the Mississippi Baptist State Convention during the war, and, by request, several times since, always in the interest of national brotherhood. That I may not be misunderstood, if any should wish to misrepresent me, I will record what have ever been my conscientious convictions on the subject of servitude:

1. God did establish the institution of domestic

who judge with the least charity, had you been born there, and educated under the above influences and teachings, would doubtless have believed as they believed, and have acted out your convictions as they have.

But I turn from the sad political results of this false theory of conscience—the “ground and pillar” of *Higher-lawism*—which drove the plow-share of desolation over the fairest land

servitude among his ancient people, and gave laws to regulate it; it was not service for wages, but a possession, and servants were reckoned an element of wealth.

2. Slavery existed among the nations to whom the gospel was preached, and among whom churches were organized, and slaves and their masters often belonged to the same church, yet Christ nor his Apostles forbade or rebuked the institution as sin, but gave laws for its regulation. Paul did not intimate to Philemon that it was his duty to emancipate Onesimus, but reminded him that he was now a brother as well as no more a sin, *per se*, than the marriage relation, but like that is liable to abuse, and this is what is strictly condemned in both Covenants.

3. I have never doubted but that it was the purpose of God to cause it to work for the greatest good to those nations he appointed to inferiority and servitude as a punishment for evil doing; and the history

of earth. I have referred to it, the more surely, to arrest and fix your attention, and impress you with the momentous importance of my subject, and help to instruct you, and, if possible, to drive one or two great truths touching conscience down through your reasons and judgments deep into your hearts and memories, to remain there forever.

It is a sad, fearful fact, infinitely more ter-

of those nations, past and present, seems most clearly to prove it,—the idolatrous and licentious heathen were brought into the families of the Jews, and obtained thereby a knowledge of the true God and of His worship. Their condition in every respect was greatly improved. Africa, before her sons were enslaved, was the *terra incognita*; but through this means millions of her children have been Christianized, and they are now returning from their servitude with the Gospel of Salvation to their fatherland; and the Christian nations are introducing the arts of peace and civilization into her most central regions, and Ethiopia is stretching forth her hands unto the Lord.

May I never be tempted to say that God committed a sin of blackest dye when he doomed the descendants of Canaan to perpetual servitude. Say that the *God* of all the earth can not make human servitude right! It is simply blasphemous. I never expect to adopt *Higher-lawism* instead of the Word of God, and pronounce Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Job, and

rible in its consequences than those we have considered, that, while these teachers and propagandists have, by the pulpit and the press, indoctrinated the masses of the North with this pestilent theory of conscience, they have instilled the same views into the masses of our southern populations. While they have made religious and *political* Black Republicans of the multitudes North, they have made *religious*

all the Patriarchs, and thousands of the first Christians, to whom the Apostles preached, as sinners of the darkest hue because they were slave-holders.

4. I think the day is past when domestic servitude would prove a further blessing to the South or to the sons of Africa. God has doubtless served his double purpose with it on this continent. Nor can I think that the North was justified in abolishing it by fire and sword, and by shedding the blood of a half million of innocent men and women, and in defiance of God's Word and the Constitution. The South may have abused the institution — thousands of masters did do it, as tens of thousands of husbands have abused, and do now abuse, the institution of marriage — and the Lord may have sent the sword through our borders as a punishment, not for the sin, but the abuse of domestic servitude; but, the hand that so madly and cruelly used that sword, God will judge when He shows mercy to the land that was desolated by it.

Black Republicans of the majority of our people here. I doubt not that the majority of the population, even the professed Christians, of this city and State hold the theory of conscience I oppose, and will regard me in the same light, for opposing it, that the advocates of *Higher-lawism* every-where will. There are many of you before me who believe that "*every man has the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.*" You have, all your lives, heard politicians expatiate upon this great boon, secured to us by the Constitution; you have, all your lives, heard ministers from the pulpit thank God for this inalienable and inestimable right and privilege; you have met the sentiment every-where: and you believe as firmly as you believe in the Gospel of Matthew that man has the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and that it is his duty to do so. This exalts the conscience above the Bible, and man above God, and tramples Christianity and its Founder into the dust. This is the identical "*higher-law*" doctrine of social and political agrarianism. What is the natural conclusion from this premise? It is, alas, what the majority of professed Christians and ministers North and South — all who teach for doctrine the commandments of men —

teach; viz: that it matters little what man's religious sentiments are, or what doctrines a man believes, or how he worships God, if he is only *conscientious* in it! It teaches if a man is only honest and sincere in his worship,—fully satisfied in his own mind,—his religion is as good as any other man's, and that it should be respected as Christian; and you regard the man who would disturb him by religious discussions, or pronounce such a worship unscriptural or anti-christian, and the devotee of it in dangerous error, as an illiberal bigot, manifesting a very unchristian spirit. Is not this doctrine genuine Black Republicanism of the blackest stripe? Does it not place the dictates of a man's conscience above the revealed law of God Almighty? Is it not the rankest Abolitionism, as respects Christianity? Does it not abolish all distinction between right and wrong? For, according to this doctrine, what is right in me is wrong in another. Does it not abolish the Bible, the Law of God, and the authority of Jesus Christ? If the doctrine be true, each man's conscience is to him his Bible, his God and Savior. You see, you know it must be false; that it imperils the soul of every believer in it; that it is the gospel of damnation. Hear the voice of God, and start back from the precipice on which you stand:

ipice on which you stand: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death." Paul once traveled that "way" for a season; he was a most devoutly religious, pious, and honest man, worshiping his God "according to the dictates of his own conscience" with all zeal; and he regarded it as doing God and man a service to make havoc of the church of God,—to murder the last Christian, and exterminate Christianity from the earth. He declares that, in doing this,—"breathing out fire and slaughter" against the church of Christ, and "hailing men and women to prison and to death," he was truly worshiping God according to the dictates of his own conscience. He declared he did it in all good conscience! But did he do right? Did he please God? According to your doctrine, I would have been an "illiberal bigot" to have opposed him in his course, and attempted, by the word of God, to convince him that he was most egregiously wrong.

The moral man in our midst quietly rejects Christ and his atonement,—has no use for Christianity,—and says if he does as little harm as possible, and as much good to all as is in his power, he is quite satisfied that he will be saved. If you press him he will fling his Higher-lawism

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into your teeth,—for he is at heart an infidel—and tell you that he is conscientious and sincere in his way of serving God; that “every man has a right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.”

You meet the Unitarian, who makes it one of the special articles of his published creed to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost, and attempt to convince him that he is wrong, and deny that he is, or can possibly be, a Christian, with such a faith, and he will meet you with the same doctrine: “One man’s religion is as good as another’s, if he is only conscientious in it, for each man has the inalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.” So talks the Universalist, who denies a future hell, while he lives as though there were no God or future heaven. What can Christianity do, so long as it finds error mailed in such impenetrable armor as this? The idolatrous Pagans are sincere, and a thousand times more devoted than most professed Christians, in worshiping God according to the dictates of *their* own consciences; so, the followers of Mahomet; so are Greek and Roman Catholics. If conscience be the criterion of right, each of the above creeds, though contradictory, is true, and will equally save the soul. Why,

then, did Christ come into the world? What did his sufferings and death effect, or his mission accomplish, but to create another sect, and still further confound the religious confusion of earth? According to this theory, contradictory propositions, if only conscientiously believed, are each true, and things wholly unlike and unequal to the same thing, are equal to each other! That a man is saved by works alone, without Christ, or by faith and works conjoined, is as true as that a man is saved by grace alone. That baptism is designed to confer regeneration of heart, remission, and justification, is as true as that it is only for the open declaration, on the part of the subject, that he has obtained these, through faith in the blood of Christ, if the falsehood is only conscientiously believed. That the sinner is only, or *unbeliever*, even though *unconscious*, has a right to Christian baptism, is as true as that a believer in Christ has; that the ungodly and unconverted have as good a right to membership in Christ’s church, and to partake of the supper of the Lord (of which, if a man eat and drink without the proper qualifications, he eats and drinks damnation to his own soul), as the scriptural church member has at the table of his own church, *provided each proposition be conscientiously believed!* All sects

or churches, no matter how opposite, variant and contradictory their forms of faith, or their rites and laws, if only composed of respectable, conscientious people, even though unconverted, are equally right and scriptural, and entitled to be called and respected as Christian churches, and their various religions as the Christian religion, if it only be granted that their upholders and adherents are only conscientious! The man who believes this believes also that God did not expect or design for all men to adopt the same religion—having “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism;” and he believes it is wrong for one religious man to oppose the faith and practices of another, and adopts the poetic dogma of Pope:

“For forms of faith let zealous *bigots* fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Which means:

His can't be wrong if conscience says it's right.

And this is the very sentiment of that couplet of licentious Byron, quoted by Worcester as an orthodox definition of conscience:

“Whatever creed be taught or land be trod,
Man's Conscience is the Oracle of God!!”

Do you not see the utter absurdity and wickedness of this? The Bible is thrust aside, the

voice of Jesus Christ rejected for the voice of an unerring conscience, Christianity overthrown, and the Judgment of the Great Day adjourned *sine die*.

Having thus demonstrated the absurdity of this second theory of Conscience by a *reductio ad absurdum*, I return to the great questions:

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE? and, WHAT A GOOD
CONSCIENCE?

If it can not be either the independent verdict of human reason, or of human opinion or feeling, nor a separate sense, like the eye or ear, it is clearly the result of several faculties operating together—the result produced by all the intellectual faculties, enlightened by a given law or rule of action, human or divine.

WHENCE THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE?

Conscience roots itself in the belief of an infinite, holy, and just God, who takes cognizance of all our acts and thoughts, for which he will bring us into judgment. *No God*, no sense of right or wrong, *no Conscience*. God created man a *moral intelligence*; *i. e.*, implanted within him the sense of right and wrong as intuitive ideas, or, which amounts to the same thing, endowed him with such powers, and

placed him in such circumstances, that *he must necessarily acquire them*. It is the universal conviction of all men, who believe in the existence of God, that it is their supreme duty to *please* him; that all things, acts or feelings, that accord with the will of God are right and commendable, and all that disagree are wrong and should be punished. This sense, innate or *necessarily* acquired by the use of our reasoning powers, is what distinguishes us as moral intelligences. There is also an innate *impulse* of the soul; that the right *ought* always to be done, and the wrong ought not to be done. It is not claimed, but denied, that God endowed man with a separate and distinct moral faculty that enables him unerringly to decide upon the moral quality of any and all acts; *i. e.*, whether any given course of conduct will please God or not. Let it be distinctly understood by the reader that the soul, or, that which is treated as something, made up of a multitude of *distinct entities* or faculties; as, reason, judgment, understanding, conscience, will, memory, imagination, etc., with many subdivisions. This way of speaking of the soul or mind is evidently confusing and misleading, and has led to a world of uncertainty and wrangling. *There*

are no divisions in the soul. My whole soul reasons, judges, remembers, wills, and imagines, etc.; and not one part does one thing, and another part the other. As well say my body is made up of walking and running, eating and resting, etc.; these are but the *operations* of my body, as the above are acts of my mind or soul.

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?*

Conscience, therefore, can not be a distinct and independent faculty, but—like the terms reason, judgment, understanding—is only the

*NOTE.—These are definitions put forth during the last few years:

“That peculiarity in the constitution of our minds by which they are qualified to exercise moral approbation and disapprobation, and to feel moral obligation, is called the moral faculty, or conscience.”—*Dagg*.

This lacks all the essential elements of a *definition*.

“The nature of its action results from the antecedent action of the judgment. Let the judgment, supplied with facts and light by the understanding, decide that a thing is right or wrong, and conscience approves or disapproves accordingly. This is its province. It approves or disapproves, and it is questionable whether it can perform any other operation.”—*Pendleton*.

name of a peculiar operation of the soul. This operation is the soul's *sensing* that a certain act—for certain reasons—is right and ought to be done; or, for certain reasons, wrong, and ought not to be done. *One can always give*

This definition only needs the recognition of God's Revealed Word as the supreme standard of right and wrong, and we know that the distinguished writer elsewhere includes this.

As a curiosity of its kind, we give this:

"Conscience includes—

"1. A direct perception of the difference between right and wrong in motives.

"2. A feeling that what is right in motives ought to be, and that what is wrong in motives ought not to be, chosen by the will.

"3. A sense of one's own approval or disapproval, according as what ought to be, is, or is not, chosen.

"3. A sense of an approval or disapproval from a divine Somewhat and Someone not ourselves, according as we choose good or bad motives."—*J. Cook.*

From this we are left to infer that if we are conscious that our motive is right, we may feel assured our action is right. Guiteau is conscious that his motive for "removing the President" was right, for the good of his party or this country.

"Conscience is simply the intellect perceiving and judging of moral truth, together with a corresponding excitement of the sensibilities, in view of the objects thus contemplated."—*Haven.*

the reason or reasons that influenced the decision, and, therefore, the act is not absolute and independent, like seeing, but involves the exercise of several powers of the mind; as, the understanding, reason, judgment. This act of

Since Haven is a text-book, now extensively introduced into our schools and colleges, I will give his definition more fully:

"(1) The mental perception that a given act is right or wrong. (2) The perception of obligation with respect to the same; as, right or wrong.

"(3) The perception of merit or demerit, and consequent approbation or censure of the agent; as, doing the right or wrong thus perceived. (4) Accompanying these intellectual perceptions, and based upon them, certain corresponding emotions, varying in intensity according to the clearness of the mental perceptions and *purity* of the *moral nature.*"

The reader can see that if these mental perceptions should ever be at fault, or the moral nature impure or depraved, conscience will be at fault; and therefore Haven says it is not always a safe guide. But he says: "Shall we follow a guide thus liable to err? Yes, I reply, follow conscience; but see that it be a right and well-informed conscience—forming its judgments, not from impulse, passion, prejudice, the bias of habit, or of unreflecting custom, but from the clearest light of reason, and ESPECIALLY OF THE DIVINE WORD. . . . We are responsible for the sort of conscience we have."

the soul in determining whether a certain course of action ought or ought not to be pursued, we call *conscience*, or a decision of conscience; as when the soul exercises its powers in comparing and deciding, it is called *judgment*; or, in recalling a past event, it is called *memory*. But it is denied that God has given to each moral being a distinct faculty which enables him to decide unerringly upon the moral quality of any act, *i. e.*, whether it will please or displease God. Experience demonstrates that this is not the case, for there are the *most diverse opinions* concerning the right or wrong of a specified act—almost as many different shades of opinion as there are persons. The revealed will of God is the only infallible standard of right and wrong upon all questions, since from it alone we can learn, without doubt, the will of God concerning us. The sense of duty to love, worship, and obey God unconsciously and *necessarily* springs from a knowledge of the relations he sustains to us as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. No moral being needs a revelation to teach him these duties. The heathen need no Bible to teach them these duties, and, therefore, we say they are right in themselves, and need not be commanded; but, concerning all *positive duties*, we do need an un-

erring revelation, since such are *duties only because enjoined* upon us by one who has the supreme right.

It is in this vital part that the two former theories of conscience were fundamentally deficient. They rejected God's Word as a perfect standard of right and wrong, and chose the flickering light of reason or opinion, and, consequently, were wholly out at sea, with ship and sail and rudder and needle, but without *chart* by which to steer, sea-lost, tossed and driven to and fro, until wrecked upon the reefed lea-shore of national destruction.

But the standard of right and wrong—the Bible—must be correctly interpreted, understood, and applied, and to do this God has endowed us with the power to compare, to reason, to understand and decide, and we call these operations reason, understanding, and judgment. By the proper exercise of these we can, without doubt, comprehend God's revealed will, and learn all he requires of us to believe for salvation or do to honor and please him—in other words, what is, and what is not in accordance with his Word—all our moral and positive duties. Now the soul can not know all this without the conjoint assistance of the judgment and understanding—judgment in interpreting and ap-

plying that Word, and, therefore, we may say the operation of conscience is complex, as its etymology indicates.

Con, with, and *scio*, I know—know with some other operation or faculty. In the Greek it is *sun eideseos*. *Sun*, with; *eidoo*, I know—know in conjunction with some other operation or operations; and these we have seen are the powers of understanding and judging of the requirements of God's Word.

Without the conjoint operations of the powers of the soul in interpreting the will of God, there can be no result entitled to be called conscience. There may be human *opinion*, *feeling*—will only—as there was during the bloody scenes of the French Revolution, and in the reign of American Higher-Lawism, but *no conscience*. We see why we can not predicate an act of conscience of an infant, an idiot, or a brute, and we can understand why those who are beclouded with ignorance, with little knowledge of God, with these moral faculties almost wholly undeveloped or perverted through misuse, have exceedingly weak and unreliable consciences. In some races the moral faculties are almost a blank, and some declare them entirely wanting. Theft, deceit, and lying are the *universal and inveterate vices* of all such, and in all persons,

just in proportion as the moral faculties are uncultivated or perverted.

We are now somewhat prepared to consider the question before us. Has any one a right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience? If it is meant right so far as individual or civil authority is concerned, I answer emphatically *yes*. But if it is meant, in the sight of God, I answer that depends upon the character of the conscience, *i. e.*, whether it is a good or a bad conscience. God requires of us a good conscience, and that we worship him in the exercise of a *good* conscience; and this implies that we are responsible for the kind of conscience by which we govern our actions.

WHAT, THEN, IS A *good* CONSCIENCE?

Since the conscience we have depends upon the proper exercise of other powers of the soul, as reason, understanding, and judgment, it is just as liable to be wrong as these faculties are to err, *i. e.*, as we are to reason irrelevantly, misunderstand, or misjudge, even if the Word of God is our standard. An error in any one of these will invariably result in a bad conscience—a conscience that will approve of what is wrong. If the understanding is “darkened” by ignorance, the judgment perverted by prejudice or *feeling*, or biased by evil influences, and above all, if

the soul itself is depraved by sin, the result will be an evil and defiled conscience that will be satisfied with and approve what is displeasing to God. On the other hand, where the soul has been cleansed by the blood of Christ and the understanding enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and the judgment "just," there will be a *good* conscience, void of offense before God and men.

It is the duty of each one to possess such a conscience. He is responsible for not having a good conscience. It is his supreme duty to worship God with a *good* conscience, for then, and then alone, he pleases God. All can see that a good conscience will approve only that which the Word of God reveals is in accordance with his will and pleasure, and will disapprove every thing contrary to that Word. In all that we do we must act conscientiously, so that conscience approves the act; but we have seen that the approbation of conscience does not make the act right any more than sincerity in error makes the error truth and safe. Many a person has taken morphine for quinine, and fallen a victim to his sincerity. Saul of Tarsus, while breathing out fire and slaughter against the infant church at Jerusalem, and "doing many things contrary to the name of Jesus," acted

conscientiously; he verily believed he was doing God's service, but he was sinning against God and man. While his conscience seemed good to him it was an evil and a defiled conscience. He did not properly enlighten his understanding, and he allowed himself to decide upon his course with a judgment perverted by bitter prejudice and biased by popular feeling. He tells us that it was through ignorance he persecuted the saints, and he was responsible for that ignorance. Paul, when wearing himself out preaching that same Jesus, and building what he once sought to destroy, acted conscientiously also; but we hear him say, in all carefulness: "We *trust* we have a good conscience." He trusted that his heart was right toward God, that his understanding was duly enlightened—for how diligently had he studied to learn God's will—and that he was acting unprejudiced by flesh or blood, and, therefore, he was warranted in saying that he was *persuaded* that he had a good conscience. I prefer the more literal translation of the Emphatic Diaglott: "Pray for us; for we have confidence, *because we have a good conscience,*" etc. Henry the VIII. acted conscientiously in consigning three thousand Baptists to martyrdom, during his reign, for worshipping God contrary to the faith and

the ritual prescribed by law; and so did the New England Puritans act conscientiously in fining, cruelly whipping, and banishing from their homes Quakers and all opposers of infant baptism, but they acted contrary to the plain dictates and genius of Christianity, and their acts were sins against the Most High. Conscientious conduct will do us no good at the judgment, unless that conscience be a good one—in unison with the teachings of the Bible. *Worship is obedience.* Cheerful, affectionate obedience to Christ's revealed will is the highest worship the creature can pay to God. He certainly has some choice in the character of the worship he would have offered him. There can be no obedience where there is no law, and where that law is not obeyed. God must then have revealed to us the service and worship he requires at our hands, and to offer him more or less, is *will worship*, and insultingly sinful. He has left no religious act or rite of worship, as Baptism or the Supper, to be determined by our tastes, conveniences, or feelings. Every thing, the least as well as the greatest, Christ has most carefully taught and commanded, and for us to say we have a right to alter or modify, by adding or taking away something that *we* think will do as well, is open rebellion, and is "as

the sin of witchcraft." God commanded Saul to go up against the Amalekites and utterly destroy them, old and young, with their flocks and herds, bringing away *nothing*. But Saul saw fit to spare the King and the best of the flocks, and of the spoil he brought away, that he might offer it in burnt offering and sacrifices unto the Lord. And Samuel said unto Saul: "Hath the Lord as great desire in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in *obeying the voice of the Lord?* Behold, *to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to *hearken* than the fat of lambs. For rebellion [acting in accordance with our own feelings and notions, as Saul did when he spared what God bade him destroy] is as the sin of witchcraft, and *stubbornness is iniquity and idolatry.*"—1 Samuel xv.

We shall not be judged and rewarded, at the last day, by our "honesty of purpose," our "sincerity," or our *conscience*, but by the *Words of Christ*. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John xii. 48. We shall not be asked if we were conscientious in our worship, if we did as our family or friends, our pastor or church dictated to us or told us was right, "but if we have done all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us." Matt. xxviii. 20. To ascertain this

he has given us his Written Word, to be a lamp to our feet, and our first and highest duty is to turn away from church Confessions of Faith, and from the Disciplines prepared by conferences, and to forget the relations of family and ties of kindred flesh and blood, and honestly and prayerfully inquire what the Lord Jesus requires of us in his Word, determined to do it. We so judge our own servants. What master leaves his servants free to serve him according to their own notions—the dictates of their own consciences? He, not they, knows how he wishes to be served; he gives his orders, he commands them to execute the specified work *in the time, order, and manner* he wants it done, and to reverse the order, change the time, or vary the mode, is to disobey. Your servants certainly have no right to a conscience that leads them to do any thing different from *your express directions*, and you, if a good master, would soon teach them that they had not. No man has a right to a conscience that approves the performance of any *religious act not commanded, or less or more than commanded*. It is our duty to take the New Testament, and, without prejudice or bias, patiently and prayerfully learn what Christ would have us do, and this *we can learn without a doubt*, and then, cost us

what it may—the loss of friendship and the smiles of the world—do it, not to merit salvation, but to honor the Savior whom we love.

We meet with the following passages, which are at war with all other theories of conscience, save the one just submitted: “Having their *consciences seared* as with a hot iron.” (1 Tim. iv: 2.)

It must be borne in mind, that whatever affects the reason, judgment or understanding, affects the conscience. If we will so abuse and do violence to our natural powers of reason and judgment, as to deny the existence of an infinitely Holy and Just God, we may safely class that one with those “past feeling” any obligations to a Supreme Being, just as a nerve of the hand would be if “seared with a hot iron.” It would be impossible for one to feel any compunctions of conscience for sin who did not believe in a God.

The conscience is said to be defiled when the heart and mind are defiled. “But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” (1 Tit. i: 14.) All such have depraved hearts and wills, in open and inveterate rebellion to God, and, hating his will, they do all in their power to oppose it, and then pervert their rational faculties to excuse their course. “Ev-

ery thing which they do tends to corrupt the inner man, more and more, and to make them really more polluted in the sight of God." A defiled mind—*nous*, understanding—comes from a corrupt soul, and this controls the decisions of conscience, and, of course, it must be a defiled—an evil conscience.

There are two passages of like import, viz.: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot, to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. ix: 14.) "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water." (Heb. x: 22.)

I commend the remarks of Dr. Barnes upon the former verse, which equally applies to the latter: "The word conscience here is not to be understood as a distinct and independent faculty of the soul, but as *the soul or mind* itself, reflecting and pronouncing on its own acts. The whole expression refers to a mind alarmed by the recollection of guilt—for it is guilt only that disturbs a man's conscience." Without a knowledge of God and his will, without a conviction of having violated God's law—there would be no guilt.

"Guilt originates in the soul remorse and despair; guilt makes a man troubled when he thinks of death and the judgment; it is guilt *only* which alarms a man when he thinks of a holy God; and it is nothing but guilt that makes the entrance into another world terrible and awful." The sinner, oppressed with a sense of his guilt, has a *guilty conscience*—a guilt-convicting conscience—which, in the latter verse, is called "an evil conscience," literally a *consciousness of evil*. So long as the just demands of God's violated law are unsatisfied, the wrath of God abides upon us. Not the sufferings and death—blood—of animals could do this, but

"A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they,

that of the Lord Jesus Christ himself alone, can do this, and the benefits of his sacrificial death and atonement are applied to all who will turn from their sins and accept of him as their Redeeming Savior, which application is called purging the heart with blood, and sprinkling the heart from an evil conscience, and the result is, a sense of pardoned sins takes possession of the heart, and, "therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!" We receive

more than simple pardon, freedom from the penalty justly due our sins—we receive a thorough renovation of our moral nature—hearts cleansed from the love of sin and adoption into the family of God, “and are made children; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ.” This new disposition, clean heart and right spirit created within us, confers upon us the power to possess a good conscience; one that will be satisfied with nothing less than a personal obedience to God’s will. Loving him supremely, we will, above all things, desire to seek and know his will that we may do it, not to obtain salvation thereby, but to honor and glorify his name. Therefore, the Savior was warranted in saying: “If a man love me, he will keep my commandments.”

An examination of the second text at the head of this tract must close this discussion. It is admitted by commentators to be a difficult passage, owing to one perplexing word, translated in our version “*answer*”—“the *answer* of a good conscience toward God.”

I will give a few of the latest, if not best, translations of the passage:

The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—*King James’ Version*.

“ . . . were saved through water; which in an antitype, immersion, now saves us also (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the requirement of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—*Bible Union Version*.

“ . . . saved through water; which, also, after a true likeness, doth now save you even baptism, . . . the *interrogation* of a good conscience toward God,” etc.—*English Revision*.

“ . . . which, also, in the antitype, doth now save you, even baptism, . . . the *inquiry* or *appeal* of a good conscience toward God,” etc.—*American Revision*.

“Which the antitype [of that] is now saving you also, even baptism, . . . the *inquiry* of a good conscience after God, by means of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—*Dean Alford*.

“The ark . . . into which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. An antitype to which baptism now saves us [or you] also, not the putting away of filth of flesh, but a *question* of good conscience toward God, by means of Jesus Christ’s resurrection.”—*Prof. Adkins*.

“The one troublesome word,” as Dr. Hovey calls it, in this passage, is *eperotema*, which, in these six versions is translated “*answer*,” “*requirement*,” “*interrogation*,” “*inquiry*,” or “*appeal*,” and “*question*.”

Difficult as this passage is, there are some things apparent:

1st. That baptism is—

A “question” or “requirement”

Of *conscience*.

A *good* conscience.

A *good* conscience toward God

By means of the *resurrection* of Christ.

That it is not designed to effect the cleansing of the heart from its moral defilement.

Therefore, we learn,

2d. That in connection with baptism there must be—

A *conscience*.

There must be a *good* conscience.

And that conscience must be *toward* God.

And that by *means of the resurrection of Christ*.

Now, a correct exposition must embrace and harmonize all these ideas.

One idea stands out prominently in the passage, viz.: *that there must be a good conscience before it can “require” or “answer” any thing.*

I will also translate this passage:

“The ark . . . into which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved *by water*. Baptism,

in a similar figure,* even now saves us—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the requirement of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

It does not say that the water of baptism is the antitype of the ark or the water of the flood, but that it is *antitypal*—a figure corresponding to it. Figures never prefigure figures. Shadows never cast shadows. Now let us look at the similitude between the water of the flood and baptism, or the water of our baptism. The water of the deluge was sent to destroy, it could not save in reality and therefore must have done so figuratively, *declaratively*, God using it to uplift and upbear the ark, thus making manifest that there was safety in the *provision* he had made for Noah’s temporal safety. The water made the salvation manifest to all, and thus declared it. Nor can the water of baptism or the rite save the soul, avail aught towards the putting away our moral defilement—but God has appointed that, by its use, the believer in Christ shall figuratively declare that he has a good con-

* It is not *antitupos*, an antitype, but antitupon, an adjective, *Antitypal*, that I have rendered with our version “a similar figure,” which relieves the passage of serious difficulties.

science toward God; the filth of the flesh, all moral defilement having been removed by the virtue of the resurrection of Christ; so it, like the water of the deluge saves declaratively—*figuratively*. Immersion, to prefigure our salvation by means of the *resurrection*, which necessarily implies the death and burial of Christ, is an appointment of God; of this he has expressly informed us, and of this, as of every other command, a good conscience will approve, and therefore immersion, in one sense, is a “question of a good conscience,” and in another it may be called a “requirement” of a good conscience; since no other act will answer its demands, and it is “toward God,” because the soul is conscious that God commands it, *and* it is for his honor and glory. This exposition embraces and harmonizes all *the salient* features of the passage.

I can not confer a greater favor on my reader than by giving him two paragraphs from an able article upon this text, by Dr. Atkin (*Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. III., No. 12).

“Besides this internal test and discipline of the conscience, and inclusive of this, the wisdom of God has appointed an external ritual test in the ordinance of baptism. The congruity of the figure requires that this follow the entrance into the ark. As Noah and

his family having entered and being safe in the ark committed themselves to the water of the flood, so believers in Christ, saved already ‘by grace through faith,’ are required to submit themselves to the water of baptism. This ordinance, by the profession of faith, which it requires and involves, includes the prerequisite internal test and evidence, and makes a close, direct, practical appeal to the conscience as to its loyalty to God. There are good reasons why the Apostle gave it the uppermost place in his comparison. Viewed as a mere external rite, as it naturally preserves itself, and as people are naturally disposed to reserve it, what importance can attach to it? What regard it, what importance can come from the external carnal rite? What profit or what improvement in the nature or state of the soul or spirit from an immersion of the body in water? Why insist on that particular mode? What difference as to the intent or effect, whether much or little water be used, or how it be applied? Is the inner being purified and renovated and fitted for heaven by the water of baptism? All such disparagements of the ordinance, by which its nature and design are misrepresented, and its claims evaded, might be summed up in one brief interrogatory. Why observe it at all?

“To all such questions Peter, in the text, has given answer, at once concise and comprehensive. True, ‘baptism is not the putting away of filth of flesh.’ It confers no external benefit except in connection with the ‘newness of life,’ of which, as the act of an intelligent moral agent it is a confirmatory pledge. It follows regeneration, and therefore contributes nothing

to that inner work of grace. Purification is not its design in any sense, real or representative. But do not, on this account, regard or treat it as non-essential. It is an ordinance of God. By his positive command it is enjoined as a duty upon every one, personal faith in Christ being made the indispensable prerequisite. Thus it appeals to 'a good conscience,' which always attends upon the state of grace, and which, as God's vicegerent in the breast, will demand implicit obedience, and, unless deluded by some fair, false theory, *will be satisfied with nothing short of that.* And this appeal is strengthened by the expressive symbolism of the ordinance representing Christ's burial and resurrection, and so embracing the whole plan of redemption. All this the apostle comprises in a bold *prosopopœia*, representing baptism as the very embodiment of a question of a good conscience toward God, by means of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Thus 'baptism is the outward sign of an inward grace' already received. Cordial, intelligent submission to it gives evidence of a conscience renovated and restored to its normal action. It is wisely designed to be a criterion of love and loyalty to Christ, and therefore to prove a right state of the affections; for, when conscience is right and its behests obeyed, all is right within. Those who love him keep his commandments; and the converse, as a test and index of character, and of the state of the heart, is true, those who keep his commandments [in spirit and truth] love him."

CONCLUSIONS.

There are five great fundamental questions which distract and divide "Christendom" settled by this discussion :

1st. That every man is responsible to God for the sort of conscience he has, and that it is his duty to possess a conscience that approves of and prompts obedience to every requirement of God's Word.

2d. That there can be no **SCRIPTURAL** baptism that is not a question or requirement of a **GOOD CONSCIENCE** toward God, and, therefore, the baptism of an infant or of an unregenerated person is unscriptural and **CONTRARY TO THE SCRIPTURES—NO GOOD CONSCIENCE, NO BAPTISM.**

3. That Christian baptism was not appointed as a sacrament, or means of remission of sins and of regeneration of heart,—the cleansing of our moral or fleshy natures,—and that whatever it does it does like the water of the deluge—**FIGURATIVELY.**

4th. And, therefore, before any one can be scripturally baptized he must enlighten his conscience by God's Word, so that his conscience will approve of it alone, and impel its possessor to obey all its requirements toward God—**i. e., in order to please God. And finally,**

5th. That no one has a right to attempt to worship God independent of, or contrary to the express teachings of His Word.