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R E V I E W .

By Whom, all things; for Whom, all things.

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THE SUPREMACY OF CONSCIENCE AND OF REVELATION.

RIGHTLY understood, laws inscribed on external nature, written on the heart of man, and revealed in the Word of God must harmonize. They are all from the same infallible Author. However they may differ, so far as they relate to diverse objects, they are at one, and utter one voice when they relate to the same things. Any seeming contrariety must arise from misconceptions of, or false inferences from, one or more of them. There can, therefore, be no real antagonism between the normal conscience or law graven on the heart and that written in the Revealed Word, however greatly the latter may outreach and surpass the former. This, moreover, results from the supremacy of each. The principle that conscience is the regal faculty in man, entitled to rule him, if first duly articulated and emphasized by BUTLER, reinforced by KANT and CHALMERS, was not first recognized by them. Men always acted and reasoned on the assumption of its truth, and were mastered by it though they had not mastered it. But it is no less, if possible it is more, true that the Scriptures, as the unerring Word of God, are the supreme, sufficient, and absolutely binding rule of faith and manners. Conscience, then, is supreme. The Bible is supreme. At their common points of contact, therefore, they must coincide. They cannot contradict each other, even as no truth can contradict any other truth.

But it is constantly and vehemently asserted by persons claiming to have specially deep and broad views of Christian truth, that the conscience, in its categorical imperatives, especially in its most primitive and unsophisticated moral intuitions, goes athwart certain doctrines apparently lying on the very surface of the Scriptures, and incorporated into the symbolic and devotional literature of evangelical, in a high sense of entire,

Christendom. We refer especially to the Fall and Corruption of Man, the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption through sacrificial Atonement, Spiritual Regeneration, Justification by Faith, Eternal Retributions. Hence it is argued by some that one, by some that another, by others that several or all, of these and affiliated doctrines should be wrenched out of Scripture by some kind of rationalistic special pleading. It becomes necessary, therefore, to inquire whether the supremacy of conscience requires any such torture of Scripture in order to meet its behests. If an alleged conflict arise between the dicta of conscience and the Scriptures, which ought to rule over and rule out the other? On this question we now enter.

For our present purpose it is not necessary to discuss different theories of the nature or genesis of conscience: whether it be, as we consider it, a simple and original faculty of the one indivisible soul; or whether it, with its perceptions and judgments, be ultimately derivatives from other forms of consciousness more primitive, such as the sense of truth, fitness of things, sympathy, the spirit's own excellency, the feeling of pleasure or pain, even in the way of evolutionistic heredity, as set forth by Herbert Spencer and other materialists. However they may say it is derived or originated, they all admit the present supremacy of conscience. Even mechanical evolutionism does not undertake to set it aside. Its great effort is to find a place for conscience and for supersensuous truths of the speculative reason without displacing itself—an effort, in our view, notable chiefly for ingenious devices to achieve the impossible, which come near achieving self-stultification.¹

¹ Herbert Spencer admits "moral intuitions" of imperative authority which he attempts to derive by "heredity" from experiences or sensations of utility felt in some remote ages of the past by our progenitors, which have been transmitted to us through the nerve-modifications they have gradually caused. So they now appear and operate in us, without consciousness of their source or genesis, as moral intuitions or imperatives. He fails to show us, however, in what way the sense of right and obligation can be begotten of the mere sense of pleasure or pain; much more how these can be born of any ultimate force or persistence of force, "alike unknowing and unknown." The fatuity of an attempt to find the "place of conscience in evolution" is made conspicuous in some recent articles on the subject in British reviews, among which we note an excellent paper on "The Ethics of Evolution" in the *British Quarterly Review* for July, 1878; also an article by Rev. T. W. Fowle in the *Nineteenth Century* for that month, followed by a reply to it in the September number. Mr. Fowle explains how *ex nihilo nil fit* in tracing the stages of this genesis. He says, "Conscience is the struggle for existence become aware of itself in the mind of a thinking person." The italics are his. He further speaks of

Precisely, what is meant by the "supremacy of conscience"? This and this only: That it is of right, and ought to be in fact, the regnant faculty of the soul; that whose dictates all other faculties and susceptibilities, volitional, affectional, emotional, and practical, ought to obey. These all may control us in excess: conscience never. The very nature of its behests is, that it is the affirmation of the man to himself, "I ought to do this or that, for it is right; to abstain from this or that, for it is wrong." It is the categorical imperative in the soul, which is to it as the echo of the voice of the supreme Lawgiver: "Do this because it ought to be done, is right in itself, no matter what other considerations may weigh for or against it." It has underneath itself a tacit or conscious reference to God as the Maker, Sovereign, and Judge, who ordains, approves, and will enforce the right. Hence no one can disobey his conscience without sin. This is self-evident. To say otherwise is to say that a man can innocently do what he believes he ought not, or refuse to do what he believes he ought to do. This subverts the very idea of morality and moral obligation. A dilemma may hence arise. For it will soon appear that it is possible for men to bring themselves to believe that to be right which is wrong and *vice versá*, without making it so, or clearing them of guilt in having, or acting upon, such perverse convictions. But we reserve the solution of this until we regularly reach it.

It is implied in all this, that men in the right use of their

"such an epoch, resulting in the origin of conscience, in which a being conscious of himself said, or thought, or felt, "I am," and then, confronted with a world of opposing or destructive forces, said, "I have a right to be." Again: "Morality consists in transferring to other beings like ourselves those rights which we feel that we ourselves possess." How the conviction that we have a *right* to be, or that others have a *right* to be, and the whole delicate and complex framework of morality, come of killing all others in our power in a ferocious struggle for existence, is inconceivable. Yet this author tells us that morality thus derived is "innate," "intuitional" and "imperative." Such a solution runs the whole system into the ground—its birth-place and home. The same ingenious author, in the same periodical for March, 1879, seeks to find "the place of the Will in Evolution" by a like "chemistry of thought" which evolves it in the following order: "I am, I must, I ought, I will," (p. 387). "When man first uttered the words, or rather felt the impression to which subsequently language gave definite shape and force, I 'will live in spite of all the forces that are compassing my destruction,' then was free-will created upon earth. He was literally *homo contra mundum* [what a light does this aspect of evolution throw upon history?], the parent and precursor of that long line of illustrious martyrs who have witnessed for the inherent freedom of the human spirit." (p. 392.) Such a will indeed is either twin to such a conscience, or its first-born. But the martyrdom begotten of it must be unique.

faculties may know their duty, and cannot without fault be in ignorance or error about it. That men do fall into great and fatal errors respecting their duty, is proven by the simple fact of the vast disagreements among them about it. Some of them must be in the wrong, although, as we may yet see, less in fundamental moral insight than in its concrete applications. This must then arise, if they are accountable for these aberrations, or the misdeeds to which they prompt, from the criminal neglect or refusal to look at the light and evidence at their command. So reason affirms, and it is the inspired solution as well. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1: 18-20). This surely asserts such abundance of objective and subjective light, even by nature, in regard to the true character and service of God, that all ignorance of and error about them, on the part of the heathen, are inexcusable, because due to wilful negligence and refusal fairly to note and estimate the evidence thus arrayed before them. This solution of the case is more explicitly given in other parts of this tremendous portraiture and in other portions of the Bible. It is charged that "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (ver. 28), that "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (ver. 21). They "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (ver. 23). "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (ver. 25). It is thus past all question that heathen blindness to the truths of natural religion even, is due to an inexcusable shutting out or turning from the light. This at once arises from and thickens the films of prejudice against, or the veil of enmity to the truth disclosed by such light. So the heart becomes at once "foolish" and "darkened," the imaginations vain. Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. In aid or aggravation of

this comes that divine judicial abandonment to the lusts they cherish, and the delusions which feed them, in virtue of which God no longer arrests their downward course by His restraining providence and grace. This is thrice asserted in this appalling sketch, in accordance with other Scriptural averments: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts" (ver. 24). "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections" (ver. 26). "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (ver. 28). This is in exact accord with the more precise enunciation elsewhere of the effect of first repelling light and espousing error, the love of unrighteousness begetting the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," and thus provoking judicial abandonment, to it on the part of God: "With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2: 10, 11, 12).

This liability of the conscience to swerve from the standard of rectitude which it is its normal office, as the Supreme Guiding Faculty of the soul, to uphold and enjoin, is manifoldly set forth in other Scriptures, as they declare of some that "even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit. 1: 15); and speak of those "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4: 2), of "an evil conscience" (Heb. 10: 22), a "weak conscience" (1 Cor. 8: 12), in contrast to the "pure" and "good conscience," so often elsewhere mentioned. While it is undoubtedly true that in these phrases reference is sometimes more prominently had to living in a manner approved or condemned by conscience, or the cleansing away of conscious guilt by atoning blood, it is no less certain that reference is equally had to the error or truth of the moral judgments. The case of Paul before conversion, who "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" Christ's prayer for His crucifiers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" His forewarning His apostles of bloody persecutors who would think themselves "doing God service" by killing His servants and ministers—are conclusive on this point.

Moreover, the Bible is explicit and strenuous in denouncing

such false moral judgments, including the disbelief of its own revelations and requirements to which they lead, as culpable and justly obnoxious to grave condemnation and punishment. It denounces "woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5 : 20). The inexorable alternative of the Gospel propounded by its divine Author is "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16 : 16). This implies the sufficiency of the evidence of its truth, and the inexcusableness of the unbelief which is blind to it. But the truth and the whole rationale of it on this subject are clearly set forth by our Saviour as follows: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3 : 18-21).

So this moral blindness to the evidence, excellency, and glory of the truth, as incarnated in, taught and enjoined by, Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, is due to the fact that the unbeliever or rejecter of this truth loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. So he is unwilling to let in the light of truth upon them to make manifest their evilness. "For whatsoever doth make manifest is light." So he will not come "to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd." This is practically the guilty secret, and philosophically the *ultima ratio* of the reality and the responsible guiltiness of this blindness and bewilderment of conscience, in respect to truths and duties which shine in ample light of self-evidence or other evidence. It will not attend to this evidence, or come to this light.

This being so, it goes far to establish a presumption in regard to the competency of the natural conscience in man's present abnormal state to set up its judgments as the measure of what the infallible God may teach as true, or in bar of the accepted church interpretations of the teachings of the Bible as impossible to be true, because in alleged contradiction to the

moral intuitions of the human soul. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that the aberrations and abominations sanctioned by the heathen, through voluntary blindness to the light which shines upon them, are largely dissipated in Christendom through the supernatural light of Revelation. The higher moral tone and purer moral standards which Christianity has imperceptibly diffused through Christian nations are often proudly recognized and avowed even by those who repudiate the Bible. They are indebted to the Bible for this higher "light of nature," which they would fain pervert, so as to discredit Christianity. The natural conscience as it exists in Christendom, even in those who think to employ it to break down revelation or the doctrines of revelation, as being counter to its dictates, owes its whole superiority in moral insight above the heathens, and its assumed authority to sit in judgment upon the Bible, or to rule out its distinctive teachings, to the illuminating and corrective power of those teachings. The light of nature in Christendom, in a word, is that light partially cleared of the mists with which heathen perversion has beclouded it, by the influence of the Bible. Yet it is not fully cleared for those who in any degree avert their eyes from this divine effulgence, or who consciously or unconsciously seek to deflect and remove it. Thus shining "in darkness, the darkness comprehendeth it not;" seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not understand. Although they cannot utterly exclude or extinguish this light, still they may so hate it as to refuse to open themselves to its fulness; yea, make it even the source of a bewilderment and confusion in many aspects equivalent to darkness. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matt. 6: 23). How then does it appear that the conscience of men, not as it might and ought to be, but in its actual state, is so infallible as to be incapable of enlightenment; and thus qualified to sit in judgment over the Word of God, as an authority paramount to the latter—the ultimate standard and test of what God may or may not reveal? If the eye were single indeed, the whole body would be full of light. So if the conscience were single-eyed, the whole man would be fully enlightened.

But the question arises, whether a misguided conscience justifies acts morally wrong, which the doer sincerely thinks right; or whether the intention with which an act is done

alone has moral character and good or ill-desert, irrespective of the nature of the act done. It must be confessed that these questions cannot be satisfactorily answered by a categorical yes or no. If we take an act intrinsically bad, like fraud, cruelty, blasphemy, persecution, no good intention or conviction that it is morally right can make it so. Paul's persecution of Christians was not right nor innocent, even if he "verily thought" it so. This is the dread dilemma already noted, to which an utterly misguided and misguiding conscience brings its subjects. We cannot disobey its dictates without sin: we cannot innocently commit the sin it prompts or sanctions. "To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (Rom. 14: 14). But the true solution of this case goes deeper, to the underlying causes of the false moral judgment. These are culpable, even as it is culpable. As we have seen, they involve a faulty neglect of, or turning from, the light that would have prevented its aberrations. A good intention of "doing evil that good may come" is a misnomer. It is emphatically condemned by the Bible and all unperverted consciences. We can never give place to the maxim that "the end justifies the means," if those means be immoral. No man can innocently "call evil good and good evil." What can justify one in thinking theft or murder right, Christianity an imposture, or the persecution of Christians "doing God service"? Were the crucifiers of Christ excusable for not knowing what they did? for their blindness to what convinced the disciples, the converted thief, the astonished centurion, the faithful women, and Joseph of Arimathea—that Christ was indeed the Son of God, and the purest of men?

Yet it is evident that ignorance, though culpable, mitigates the guilt of the sin it cannot excuse. This is the intuitive judgment of men. It is implied in that prayer of Divine benig- nity on the cross already quoted; in Paul's declaration that he was "before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1: 13).

Moreover, there is this truth in the principle that the moral character of actions depends upon the good or evil intentions which prompt them: That acts in themselves morally indiffer- ent acquire moral character wholly from the good or evil inten- tion with which they are done. In respect to acts of this

kind, "unto the pure all things are pure" (Tit. 1 : 15). While no bad intention can be right, even though it prompt to acts that would be good if done with a good intention ; and no good intention, even if one perfectly such were possible in the case, can justify acts in their own nature morally evil, still, within these limitations, the morality of an action depends upon the intent of the actor. In short, in order to fulfil the moral law, an act must be both materially and formally good—good in itself and its motive. For the law prescribes both conditions.

This brings to the front the question, how far conscience is infallible, and incapable of education. That it is so, is asserted by that high authority, Professor CALDERWOOD, after KANT, as follows, in his "Handbook of Moral Philosophy," p. 8: "Conscience is a faculty which from its very nature cannot be educated. Education either in the sense of instruction or training is impossible. As well propose to teach the eye how and what to see, and the ear how and what to hear, as to teach Reason how to perceive the self-evident and what truths are of this nature. All these have been provided for in the human constitution." He quotes Kant's declaration, "an erring conscience is a chimaera" ("Met. of Ethics," iv., 12). In an appendix to after editions prepared in part for the purpose of obviating criticisms upon this deliverance, he says: "There is no part of this textbook which has more uniformly met with adverse criticism from those who give a general assent to its theory, than the position that conscience cannot be educated." He contends that if "we labor to enlighten and instruct our conscience, we regard it as deficient in guiding power and authority. If so, it is impossible to speak of the supremacy of our conscience. Butler's most important position is lost. . . . That conscience intuitively recognizes the moral law ; that it is supreme in its authority ; and that it cannot be educated—are three propositions which hang or fall together" (pp. 271-2).

The familiar phrases "practised ear" and "trained eye," imply a capacity for education in these organs which renders them poor illustrations and proofs of the non-educability of conscience. If our limits do not permit us to go further in that complete refutation of this Kantian position of which it is susceptible, it is the less necessary, as Professor Calderwood concedes "there is undoubtedly a measure of truth underlying the pop-

ular declaration that conscience needs to be educated" (p. 271). This is unquestionable, although the contrary appears to be argued by the author from the intuitional character of the faculty. It is such so far as discerning the nature and first principles of morality is concerned; but in deductions from these first principles, and the application of them to concrete cases for our guidance, it is discursive. Besides, it is no small part of education to settle what are and what are not intuitive maxims in any science—for while all men are mastered by, few have mastered them—and much more to determine what, by right reasoning, can be deduced from them. All mathematics start from a few axioms intuitively known, but nevertheless adequately known only to the fewest without that education which has brought them and the proper statement of them to the mind of the learner. But then is not the mathematical faculty indefinitely capable of education? And may not men by "use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"?

So the moral faculty is capable of education—simply and purely as a faculty, like any other, by instruction and training, irrespective of the need arising from its defilement and error, through the perversion of sin already set forth; then especially in consequence of its bewilderment through sin; and still further as the truths made known through supernatural revelation vastly amplify the range of duties discoverable by the mere natural conscience and reason; or as Christianity creates duties unknown to natural religion.

Nor does this capacity for or need of education undermine the supremacy of conscience as the guiding faculty of the soul. In order to be competent for this function, it is not requisite that it be incapable of error, if perverted; but capable of being a right guide of life, if unperverted. It is not necessary that it be qualified for the office without availing itself of all the light and helps within reach; but that it be capable by the due use of its powers, first of discerning the lights and aids natural and supernatural within reach for its adequate illumination, and then of using them aright, "not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully." To assume that, in order to the rightful supremacy of conscience, it should be impossible for it, if wrongly used, to err, is as absurd as to say that we ought not to be guided by our understanding, because, through perversion or neglect, it may come to erroneous conclusions;

through wilful inattention to the truth and evidence it may leave us ignorant of the snares and pitfalls before us. The misuse of the understanding is no excuse for not rightly using it and following its lead, at least to the light stronger than its own, where this is insufficient. We are not to be "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," even if "the way of the wicked is as darkness" and "they know not at what they stumble." It is not the prerogative of the conscience more than of the whole understanding, although both alike in their due place are set for the guidance and rule of the soul, to possess a self-sufficing light, further than as they can discern and open themselves to the light that may come from all quarters for their guidance. The eye is not sufficient of itself without the light which makes manifest the objects it beholds, or without the proper beholding on different sides of the objects so manifested. So of the inward eye of Conscience and Reason. In God's light it sees light.

Here we find the clue to the perfect consistency of the Supremacy of Conscience with the Supremacy of Scripture. In a sound, normal state conscience acting as our supreme inward director commands us to submit ourselves to the guidance of God's Word, and make that the supreme rule for the guidance of the whole man, itself included. So the supremacy of conscience in its sphere leads, and commands its own submission to the supremacy of the Bible, the moment it is seen, in the light of its internal or external evidences, or both combined, to be the Word of God, given by His inspiration and stamped with His infallibility. Into the proofs of that inspiration and infallibility we cannot now enter. We must for the present assume them—and that this inspiration has secured the utterance of the mind of God, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth," in a manner compatible with all the individualities of style of the several human writers, while it bears to every candid mind the impress of divinity, and is recognized as the utterance of One speaking as never man spake. Now, when once convinced by this internal evidence of divinity confirmed by miracle and prophecy, the conscience enthrones the Bible in and over itself as the Word of God, it perfects instead of impairing its own supremacy, in the supremacy of the Bible. This is prolific of important consequences.

1. Conscience must assume the truth of this revelation, and its perfection as a rule of faith and practice, "The law of the Lord is perfect." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). This covers the whole ground. They are "able to make wise unto salvation." Now suppose the conscience, the moral or even speculative reason, finds what seems to jar with its antecedent judgments? What is the presumption? That it is wrong, or the oracles of God are wrong? Or if it be sure of its own accuracy, that it may or may not have misconceived that representation of Scripture to which it demurs? And is it not better even with sightless eyes to be led by the hand of the All-seeing, than to grope and stumble in its own darkness?

2. It is withal to be observed, that, if the matters revealed be above the plane of the light of nature, or beyond the horizon of natural reason, such as the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Regeneration, Atonement, and Justification, natural reason or conscience cannot adjudicate upon or against them, unless they offer some indubitable contradiction of intuitive first principles. In this case the presumption is of some misconception, of the supposed Scriptural utterance, or of the intuition supposed to be arrayed against it. Of revelations in the sphere of natural reason and conscience which seem to conflict with them, we have seen how all this may be accounted for by perversions of them arising from dislike and inattention to the truth. The presumption here then is, until the contrary appears, that the alleged contradiction comes, not of error in the Bible, but the aberrations or defilement of our own consciences. Of revelations of truths above nature this is still more emphatically true.

3. And this all the more, as when once the mind acknowledges the Divinity of the Scriptures through whatever proof, and deals with them accordingly, it is quick to discern beauties, concinnities, harmonies, outshinings of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and in the heavens which also declare it, all blending in the heightened effulgence of the one God of nature and revelation, which were hidden from it before. Thus a holy wisdom illumines the soul, scatters mists and errors, solves apparent paradoxes and contradictions, or rele-

gates them to the sphere, not of contradictions, but of insoluble mystery, where it is the "glory of God to conceal a thing." So also the Scriptures claim to speak: even "the wisdom of God in a mystery," "the hidden wisdom," "which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:7, 8). The very knowledge that the Bible is from God wonderfully facilitates and quickens the appreciation of its truth, beauty, and divinity, as a whole, in its parts, and their harmony with each other and with right reason. CHALMERS very felicitously avails himself, in illustration of this point, of the observation of Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS, that once we know certain paintings were by the great masters, such as Titian, Raphael, Michael Angelo, we proceed with promptness and decision to mark their beauties, which we might have been much longer in detecting, had we not the impulse and support of such a predisposition to discern them. So is it with the Word of God. When once recognized and treated as such, its divine beauties stand out to our gaze, and are quickly taken in by the eye, so that the difficulties that have perplexed, and the mists that have bewildered us, are scattered by the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

4. Thus, even if we meet in the Bible with revelations or requirements of God which we cannot at once reconcile with our moral standards, or ideas of goodness, conscience will assume that it is consistent with absolute righteousness and goodness, and would appear so to all right-minded persons, if it could be brought in all its aspects and relations to our view as it is to the Infinite Mind. A typical instance of this is the command to Abraham to offer up Isaac, obedience to which is declared in the New Testament to have been an eminent act of faith (Heb. 11:17-19).

The reason and conscience when confronted with insoluble cases will take into account that, in a large sense, they cannot be the measure and standard of what is possible with God; for two reasons: 1. Their finitude. How shall the finite span the Infinite or know more than "parts of His ways"? 2. Their perversion, as already shown, resulting in a comparative blindness to many sides of moral and religious truth, too often so long persisted in as to become indurated into the bondage of habit. Remembering this, the candid inquiring spirit will be

slow to conclude that the apparent teachings of the Word of God, which have commanded the faith and moulded the life of the best peoples of the earth, are, rightly understood, incompatible with the dictates of unperverted conscience and reason.

It is said, "We never can give up first truths: we can't use our reason to find out essential truths, and then hold that our reason is not to be trusted." Indeed we never can give up first truths. But we may well cease to summon against the Word of God spurious claimants of that dignity and authority which represent only strong personal or partisan convictions, or distortions and misapplication of such truths. Of this more to come. The proposition "We can't use our reason to find out essential truths, and then hold that our reason is not to be trusted," if true in one sense, is not true in every sense. Reason may find evidence of a divine revelation of truths entirely above its own plane and comprehension—its own moral standard even—which it can never discover, master, or judge of by its own insight. It simply finds them affirmed by the testimony of God. If He affirms them, that is enough, whether it can understand all about them or not, nay—though it does not as yet see how they can fail to contradict some indubitable intuition of sense or reason. In this case, neither the intuition nor the divine testimony is to be questioned, but our own interpretation or application of one or the other of them. May not reason be employed to find evidences of revelation, and what it teaches, without being "trusted," in a higher range for which a divine chart has been given? Is it indeed so that reason is to be trusted to determine that God cannot, without denying Himself, reveal the Trinity, Incarnation, Regeneration, Justification, Eternal Retribution? As well say that because the naked eye may be trusted to guide the helm down the Hudson, or through Long Island Sound to the Atlantic, without chart or compass, it can be trusted without them through the trackless ocean; or that it can be trusted to determine the *à priori* possibility of the magnificent revelations of the telescoping and microscopy of modern science; or that after such revelations it can even read the phenomena within its own proper horizon as before—that the meaning even of the rising or setting sun will remain unaltered. Even so faith, reinforcing reason, and trusting the testimony of God, is "the evidence of things not seen," *i.e.*, not discoverable by any native power of

sense or reason. "Religion passes out of the ken of reason only when the eye of reason has reached its own horizon, and faith is then but its continuation. Even as the day softens into the sweet twilight, and twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into the darkness" (Conclusion of "Biographia Literaria," by S. T. Coleridge).

And the truths of the Gospel in its purity positively commend themselves to the conscience purified of its perversities. They cannot go athwart any unperverted conscience. So the apostle declares: "Not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4: 2).

We are now face to face with the whole scope of the *judicium contradictionis* which natural conscience or reason possesses as a warrant for denying that certain doctrines can come from a perfect God, or can be contained in any revelation of His will. In determining its scope, it is a safe attitude to strive rather to lift our reason up to God's Word, than to bring that down to our reason: to take the yoke and learn of the great Teacher, remembering that in a large sphere "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3: 19). Nothing is to be accepted as the Word of God which contradicts any other unquestionable truth of sense, reason, or conscience. So the bread and wine of the sacrament are figuratively, they cannot be literally, the body and blood of Christ. So two cannot be four, nor the same subject three and one at the same time and in the same sense—an objection sometimes falsely made against the doctrine of the Trinity. So nothing can be from God which denies the axioms or demonstrated truths of mathematics. So that could not be a revelation from God which commands, sanctions, or promotes irreligion or immorality, lying, treachery, cruelty, profanity, blasphemy—although the character of the Bible in this respect is to be estimated rather by its plain indubitable tenor and influence, than by some exceptional unsolved cases. So what clearly contradicts our indubitable moral intuitions, as that we should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, cannot be recognized as from Him. So far reason keeps within its true province, not vaulting into rationalism.

But we have seen how widely men under the blinding in-

fluence of passion or prejudice may misstate or misapply their own moral intuitions, or how they may elevate to the rank of intuitive truths their own strong prepossessions, or the tenets of party, sect, or tradition, which they have been wont to count sacred. Those who have given competent attention to this subject have therefore seen the importance of finding criteria to distinguish such intuitive truths, moral and otherwise, from unwarrantable pretenders to this dignity. *Unaquæque gens hoc legem naturæ putat quod didicit.* We have not far to seek for the main test, which is the universality of their acceptance—not, indeed, in the avowed profession or acknowledgment of them, but in the real, even if unconscious, submission to their regulative force in thought and action. Men thus recognize their truth in the concrete, even if they dispute or are ignorant of them as abstract, formulated propositions. Let the fatalist deny free-agency, or the reality of moral distinctions, he will nevertheless show his belief of them when himself injured or maligned. Let one deny causality, he will show that he believes it in reference to the next event he observes. So whoever may deny or blind himself in any way or degree to these moral intuitions or their proper import, nevertheless feels their undertone in his soul, which constantly tends to make itself heard in reasserting them and compelling their recognition. The law of God “written in their hearts” may be defied, blurred, or distorted in the soul’s manner of dealing with it. Nevertheless it will assert itself among those who, given “over to a reprobate mind,” in the commission of all heathen abominations, yet, underneath all, know the judgment of God “that they which commit such things are worthy of death.” “Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom. 2 : 15).

Indeed, however these intuitions may be smothered, or kept in abeyance, so making room for those conflicting moral judgments which have so wide a prevalence among men, yet it has been noted by moral philosophers that this disagreement pertains more to the use or abuse, the application or misapplications, or fallacious reasonings from, the first principles of morals, than to the principles themselves. Or it is more in the region of positive than moral laws; in reference to some aspect of ac-

tions *per se* indifferent, than to what is intrinsically good or evil ; more in respect to moral judgments founded on varying representations of the intellect in different persons regarding the act approved or condemned, or the aim and intent of the doer, than in respect to the moral character itself of such aim and intent when these are seen by different consciences to be identical. The famous case of Caius Toranius, adduced by Paley to prove that there is no original moral faculty, no intrinsic moral good or evil in actions, because no uniformity of moral judgment among men ("Mor. Phi.," i. : 5), rightly viewed, proves just the contrary. The wild boy of Hanover, with faculties all undeveloped, brought forward by Paley to act as judge of the moral character of the act, is no more to the purpose than an infant. But let the case be submitted to men of developed minds the world over, and there might be differences of opinion as to the moral character of this betrayal, from varying representations of the motives which prompted it : not otherwise. If it were understood that Caius Toranius did it to further his own interest by aiding the murder of his father, scarcely any man who had not dehumanized himself would fail to brand him as the worst of parricides. But if he did it feeling that he was called upon to make the dreadful sacrifice to save his country, it might look more like Abraham's offering up his only son Isaac at the command of God. "And thus the identical acts which in one nation are the subjects of a most reverent and religious observance, may in another be regarded with a shuddering sense of abomination and horror. And this not because of any difference in what may be termed the moral categories of the two people, nor because, if moral principles in their unmixed generality were offered to the contemplation of either, either would call evil good or good evil. When theft was publicly honored and rewarded in Sparta, it was not because theft in itself was reckoned a good thing ; but because patriotism and dexterity, and those services by which the interests of patriotism might be supported, were reckoned to be good things" (Chalmers, "Nat. Theology," B. ii. 20).

The "deceitfulness of sin" is spoken of in Scripture as one of its unquestioned attributes. It invents specious pretexts to veil its own deformity and ill-desert. It has ever done this from the primal sin in paradise to the last murder and even peccadillo.

That "with names of virtue it deceives," and "has a thousand treacherous arts to practise on the mind," is the utterance of childhood hymns which articulate the experience of the race. The historian thus reflects upon the hideous atrocities of the Jacobins in the darkest crisis of the French Revolution. "Even the blood which they shed was often the result, in their estimation, not so much of terror or danger as of overbearing necessity; they deemed it essential to the success of freedom. . . . They massacred others because they were conscious that death, if vanquished, justly awaited themselves; but still the weakness of humanity in their, as in many similar cases, deluded them by the magic of words, or the supposed influence of purer motives, and led them to commit the greatest crimes while constantly professing the purest intentions" (Alison's "History of Modern Europe," chap. 14; see also Cicero's "Republic," iii. 22-33).

As we come more directly to apply the foregoing considerations to the Christian doctrines against which the authority of conscience is so often claimed to be arrayed, it is worth while to keep in mind, even at the cost of a little repetition, that the conscience or light of nature thus arrayed against Christian doctrine has acquired whatever fitness it possesses for this purpose from the Bible itself. Is it then *à priori* probable that the very doctrines which have thus elevated and purified the conscience of Christendom can incur the condemnation of that conscience exercised aright upon them? These have made Christendom, and moulded its life and manners. They have given the conscience of the Christian nations whatever superiority to the heathen conscience it possesses. Are we to suppose that this conscience, thus receiving its enlightenment from the power of Christian truth, in the main as accepted by evangelical Christians, should, fairly employed, reject and condemn those doctrines as contrary to its own intuitions, or other right moral judgments? If we cannot hesitate as to the proper answer to this question in regard to Christianity as a whole, neither, can we in regard to the substance of particular catholic doctrines most controverted, as contrary to the ethical or other intuitions of the race.

We have before named some of the doctrines most impugned, as contrary to these moral intuitions, or other princi-

ples of acknowledged authority among men. They are confessedly taught by Scripture in its *prima facie* import, both express and by implication with the analogy of faith. They have been inwrought into the faith and life of the Christian Church. It is futile, therefore, to say that in their true meaning they are contradictory to any genuine intuitions of the human soul. Such alleged intuitions are destitute of the criterion of universality. They are not recognized by the large majority of the excellent of the earth, who believe, love, and live the propositions they are said to contradict. And further, many of the doctrines they are claimed so to contradict evince their truth, by their regulative and controlling power over those who speculatively dispute them. Here we are happy to refer our readers to the excellent article by Principal KILLEN, with which the January number of this Review for the present year begins, entitled "The Conscience as a Witness for Christ." Its chief object is to set forth the positive attestation by the conscience of the truth as it is in Jesus. Of course, truths which the conscience thus recognizes and affirms, it cannot, in any legitimate use of it, be employed to wipe away by a *judicium contradictionis*. Referring our readers to that article, we shall very briefly give a more specific application of the principle we have been contending for—that our moral intuitions do *not* contradict Scriptural and evangelical doctrines.

We need not again refer to the Trinity. The Incarnation is confessedly a mystery. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." But it involves no more contradiction of moral or other axioms than the union of soul and body.

The attempt to impugn the doctrine of the Fall of all men in and through the Fall of their first progenitor, as being contrary to our moral intuitions, fails at the very outset, because the actual fall and degradation of the race from its normal standard, indeed from its own standards of rectitude, are attested by all fact and history. That it should have been consequent on the fall of the Head of the race, as set forth in Scripture, is only a broader exemplification of that way of Divine Providence whereby it constantly occurs, that the represented suffer for the acts of their representatives, nations for the sins of their rulers, and children for the iniquities of their parents through successive generations.

Rationalizing and latitudinarian religionists constantly strive to hurl the moral intuitions against the Redemption system, in respect to its supernatural provisions or methods of salvation. It is said that the propitiatory or vicarious character of the Atonement, whereby the sufferings of the just are substituted for those of the unjust, "involves the loss or confusion of all moral distinctions," makes the cross the "central gallows of the universe," is "the simplest form of absurdity," and much more the like. This has no plausibility with respect to any thing but some caricature of the doctrine, which makes the adorable victim an involuntary one, or his death an offering to Satan, or some matter of commercial exchange and balancing. So gratuitous justification is arraigned as destroying incentives to holiness. The moral intuitions of men, so far from revolting against these doctrines, find in them the only adequate foundations of peace to the soul and supports to holiness, because the only satisfaction of their own demands. The attempt to make expiation for sin by sacrifice is as old and as broad as the race. It has been misdirected indeed, till men, finding that one offering of blood divine, which "hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, "being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5 : 1).

A similar process is often attempted against the Divine method of removing not only the curse and penalty, but the bondage and pollution of sin ; viz. : Spiritual regeneration, with its correlate of human corruption dependent upon it for removal. All moral and speculative objections to this dependence on Divine grace, this helplessness which is at the same time sin and guilt, find their solution in actual Christian experience ; in the cries, "I believe ; Lord, help thou mine unbelief ;" "when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12 : 10) ; "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Ps. 119 : 32).

We conclude, passing over much else not alien from our present argument, with a reference to the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, which has of late been much assailed, as contravening the moral judgments and intuitions of the race. This first suggested and may properly conclude this article.

Whatever may be true of the sympathetic feelings which recoil from the bare thought of the everlasting, or even tempo-

rary, misery of any sensitive being considered solely *per se*, or of its being a proper recompense for sins which to us seem trivial because their "exceeding sinfulness" is unfelt by us, there is no reasonable question (1) that it is so expressly, manifoldly, directly, and by implication set forth on *the very surface* of the Scriptures, as to require the most adroit and toilsome special pleading to develop any contrary meaning from them; (2) that it has thus been, with small exceptions, the accepted doctrine of Christendom, including the choicest portions of mankind; (3) that this is conclusive proof that it cannot contradict any moral intuition of our race rightly interpreted and applied, nor any right moral judgment of any kind, since it has been and is so largely accepted by the purest and most enlightened of mankind. Still further, the apostle declares that those living in the depths of heathen pollution, and who have blinded themselves to the enormity of their abominations, nevertheless have an underlying intuition of the vastness of their ill-desert, which he sets forth in words to which we have twice adverted (Rom. 1 : 32). Death, declared to be the wages (earnings) of sin, we know is abundantly used in Scripture for the privation of good and incurring of evil, not only definite, but indefinite in degree and duration. It means that "destruction and perdition" from which we have no hint of any escape or deliverance for time or eternity, except by the salvation of Christ, which, alone is the power of God unto salvation, and whenever or wherever bestowed is not of merit, but of grace.

We know and feel the force of the appeal to our sensibilities when it is asked, "Can a God of Infinite Benevolence consign any of His creatures, for the sins of a day, or of the few and evil, evil yet few, years of our mortal life, to endless despair?" But, first, how do we know all the immeasurable conditions and possibilities that ought to influence the Infinite and Perfect One in the government of the moral universe? Are there not stupendous crimes which even we feel should consign the doer to sudden destruction, and that without remedy? And how do we know but that all sin, even any sin, is to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity an "abomination which His soul hateth" beyond all human indignation at the most monstrous crimes? And, secondly, if this reasoning were valid, it has a wider logical sweep than

most who use it count upon. If, so far as the mere benevolence of God is concerned, we cannot see how it consists with it to suffer any of His creatures to remain miserable in the future and eternal state, how is it consistent therewith that they should suffer the terrible woes, the anguish and desolation, which, however relieved while probation yet lasts by the good things of this life, yet spread a pall over human history—in the individual, from the birth-throe to the death-pang; in society, by war, carnage, devastation, plague, famine, tempest, tornado, drunkenness, every form of physical anguish and moral degradation? These things, and more which the pen falters in attempting to describe, give a woe-begone aspect to this sin-smitten earth, of which the unceasing funeral processions upon it are the constant emblem and culmination, relieved only by faith in Him who by death conquered death. They occur under the administration of a God of Infinite Benevolence, whose Providence permits and allots them. This benevolence, therefore, is not inconsistent with the infliction of terrible anguish and desolation. An argument from it against the infliction of dreadful woes for sin, dreadful whether from intensity or duration, is an argument which proves too much. If good for Universalism, Restorationism, or Annihilationism, it is good for a great deal more. It is good for infidelity, nay, for Atheism itself. For if there be a God, He is not a God who fails to distribute sorrows in His anger, even though His nature be love, and punishment His strange work.

Moreover, it will scarcely be pretended that a man under the dominion of sin, of hardness of heart, of alienation from and enmity to God, can be happy. "He satisfieth the longing soul" made to enjoy Him forever, and to be wretched when severed from Him by sin, even though its evanescent pleasures beget a transient insensibility to this misery. After all, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and "to be carnally minded *is* DEATH" while "to be spiritually minded *is* LIFE and PEACE." Sin unrepented of, unexpiated, and unforgiven, not merely brings death: it is death—the blight and ruin of a rational being. We need not suppose nor need we deny any outward positive infliction. Let men continue eternally wicked and they are eternally miserable, for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Heaven itself, if the supposition of

their presence in it were enduring, could not make the obdurately wicked happy. The evil conscience still remains, and its remorse is all that is necessary to constitute the deathless worm and the quenchless flame. This the apostate angels too well know, as they "believe and tremble." The sting of death is sin.

Consequently, the soul carries the elements of woe in itself wherever and so long as it carries its impenitence, whatever mitigations of its anguish may now come from the favors mingled with its present state of probation, in which mercy tempers judgment and keeps off despair. But what evidence or hint have we that the impenitence, from which no accents of redeeming love could woo the stubborn and infatuated soul in a world of opportunity, will yield in that sphere of darkness which no ray of hope illumines, where, so far as we are informed, the very offers and ordinances of redemption are forever unknown? What shall prevent that "he that is unjust, shall be unjust still: he that is filthy, shall be filthy still: he that is righteous, shall be righteous still: he that is holy, shall be holy still"? (Rev. 22:11.) If any doctrine is taught in the Word of God, it is, as we have seen, that God in this life often withdraws the purifying and restraining influences of his grace from the obdurate, and judicially abandons them to self-imposed infatuation and blindness, in retribution for their obduracy.

Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat, is a maxim recognized alike by heathen and Christian peoples. "Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone" (Hos. 4:17), is typical of God's way with those who offend His majesty, trifle with His forbearance, and contemn His grace. God indeed delights to pardon the believing penitent, and mercy rejoices against judgment. But where has He promised to pardon the stubbornly impenitent? Or where has He "promised penitence on sin," whether in this life, or the life to come? Where has He promised pardon for the unpardonable sin which "hath never forgiveness"? Making the utmost of the "love which passeth knowledge," what is in store, and storing up, for those who continue to abuse or despise it? Is this to bridge the great gulf fixed between the lost and the saved in the future state? Will not rather the self-intensifying obduracy which braces itself against redeeming love, and so accumulates increasing treasures

of wrath here, propel itself in undiminished momentum through the ages to come? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25 : 46). "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds?" (Rom. 2 : 2-6.)

We will add a word in regard to the effort now making to eliminate the doctrine of eternal retribution from the place it has held in the faith of that group of Protestant communions hitherto known as evangelical, known also by their earnest, aggressive, revival, missionary spirit—their zeal for holy living and the propagation of the Gospel. We can only testify our conviction, in the absence of room for argument, that thus to eliminate is to emasculate. The logic which leads to it is bound to take further strides. Its first practical tendency will be to minimize the sense of the evil of sin by minimizing the conception of its ill-desert and punishment. This attenuating process will go on till it narrows the whole scope and importance of salvation to the measure of the perdition from which it saves. We forecast no further. We fear that the attempt to broaden the church by dropping out this article, which energizes the entire truth as it is in Jesus, will be to increase its extension at the cost of its intensive life and force, if it do not cause new divisions and sects. This enervating tendency is not disproved by some notable cases of doubters or rejecters of this doctrine eminent for purity of life, pulpit power, and pastoral fidelity. The bodies of people who have long rejected it are known by their fruits. As a whole, less wrought upon by the terrors, they are less constrained by the love of God in Christ. Each of these illustrates the other. In both are found the blended elements of Infinite Excellence. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11 : 22).

LYMAN H. ATWATER.