

THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA,  
NO. XXXI.  
AND  
AMERICAN BIBLICAL REPOSITORY,  
NO. LXXXIII.  
JULY, 1851.

ARTICLE I.

THE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MIND,  
FOR A FUTURE JUDGMENT AND RETRIBUTION.

By George B. Cheever, D. D., New York.

IN tracing the materials and agencies in the human mind for a future judgment and retribution, we find, next after Remembrance, the article and operation of Remorse. We are first to find the law, under which this operation of a guilty nature acts. And this is one of the plainest, best developed, and most unquestionable of the facts and laws of our being. It is the faculty and law of Conscience.

There is within the soul a silent, invisible, but ever present witness of all thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. This witness is named in our language, Conscience. The first and literal meaning of the Greek word, *συνείδησις*, is a *knowing with one's self*, a consciousness. This is also the etymological, elemental meaning of our English word conscience, *con-science*, *knowing with*. Add to this the idea of the discernment and judging of right and wrong, with the approval or disapproval of the same, and we shall have the full definition of the faculty of Conscience. It is a word perhaps to be found in all languages, and it has the same meaning, all the world over.

The conscience is sometimes called our Moral Sense, that is, an inward sense of moral qualities and actions, a sense of right and wrong, answering to our outward senses; and as these distinguish the qualities of external objects, distinguishing in like manner the qualities of moral objects, or the difference between moral qualities. Conscience is the judgment of the mind in regard to all the acts and

movements of our being. Sometimes it is so slight as not to be noticed, being merely a consciousness, general and indefinite, that does not take shape in a particular judgment.

There are five grand points, in reference to which we shall consider this faculty: 1. As universal in its existence; 2. Unceasing in its action; 3. Retrospective in its operations; 4. As affected by habit, and susceptible of perversion; 5. As eternal in its power.

First then, this faculty of conscience is a universal possession of mankind. It is doubtless a part of our essential being as made in the image of God. The sense of right and wrong in ourselves, and the judgment of right and wrong in others is an experience and a process familiar, in some degree, to every man. The development, education, and action of this faculty are determined very much by men's circumstances; and it is a faculty which acts according to the degree of light that has been enjoyed in regard to duty. But in some degree the possession and action of conscience are to be distinguished everywhere, and the faculty is as surely a part of every man's being as the faculty of memory, or the power of reason.

We inquire, to make this plainer, What would be the condition of the world without this faculty of conscience as a part of the human constitution? Conceive, if we can, of a man, an intelligent being, actually without a conscience. All sense of the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, would disappear from such a man's experience. Convenience and pleasure, self-enjoyment, present and to come, would be his only law. Utility would be his guide, and whatever was pleasurable would be regarded as useful, and the highest utility would be the production of pleasure for himself. All regard to God would cease, and all regard to man, save that of prudence in watching for his own interests, which would always, in his estimation, be above those of all other men in importance.

There would also be no sense of guilt or crime in others, no condemnation passed upon others, except merely as a matter of utility or profit. The condemnation which we pass on others arises solely from the same constitution of our being which produces the consciousness of guilt in ourselves, the displeasure of our own moral sense at our own conduct. If this introspective conscience did not exist, there would be no circumspective conscience, no such thing as a moral sense or judgment of the qualities of other men's actions. The same act of our moral being which justifies or condemns another, and renders the character of our neighbor pleasing or displeasing to us in a moral point of view, is the power that acts upon ourselves; it is the

same power. It would not act upon others, if it did not act upon ourselves.

Without this faculty, there would be, in morals, no distinction of colors. As to a blind man, white, black, red, green, or blue, all are the same; so in a moral sense, without the faculty of conscience, would be all the qualities of actions to the soul. As to one who had lost the sense of taste, it were a matter of indifference what element his food were composed of, since wood, iron, stones, fruit, meat, bread, vegetables, all would be the same, so would it be to one who has lost the faculty of conscience with the moral character and qualities of all feeling, thought and action. The sun strikes upon all objects, and the reflection of his rays produces the variety of nature; but there is no perception of such variety by a blind man; just so, the moral sun shines upon all qualities, and is reflected back, but there is no perception of this by a being without a conscience. There would be, in such a case, no response to God's Word, no sense of obligation. There would be merely the sense of profit. There would be no gratitude. Favors received would be absorbed as a dry soil absorbs the rain, or as a tree receives nourishment from earth, air, and the elements; but there would be no return, no feeling of love, no sense of obligation. Parental kindness would beget no affection but that founded on self-interest; so far as a parent could be useful, so far he would be cherished, cared for, cultivated, but no farther. Just so it would be in regard to God. The idea of Deity itself, of the Creator, Benefactor, Judge, of the All-merciful, All-wise, just God, would be merely the idea of a vast utility; or, as self would be predominant and absorbing, the idea of an enemy, the idea of a being too vast to be controlled and used for selfish purposes, and therefore opposed to self-interest and an enemy. Take away conscience, and leave only utility, and you make every man, in his own view, God, every man to himself the centre of the universe. And that too without any sense of guilt, that too with the blind, straightforward, unchecked, unceasing, unrelenting instinct of selfishness, which, whatever stood in its way, be it man or beast, God or nature, would sacrifice and tread down all. If the world were filled with such beings, the world would be a hell, without hell's sense of sin; a chaos of conflict, where the strife, if it went on, would depopulate the globe, and where the only stop to it would be the universal experience of its misery, and the mutual agreement of restraint and check as a matter of sheer utility, expediency and necessity. Such would man be, such would the world be, without conscience. But conscience is universal.

It is as universal as the ideas of right and wrong. There is a conscience of good and evil in mankind, with reference to those ideas, and because those ideas are necessary results of the activity of the human reason. The ideas of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are ultimate facts and fixtures of the mind, or creations of the pure reason, as necessarily and unalterably as the pure truths of geometry. Truth, for example, is regarded as right, not with reference to any standard of utility, but as an instant, inevitable, immutable affirmation of the mind. Truth is right, and is commanded of conscience, not because it is useful, for the affirmation is instant and universal, without reference to, or waiting for, that inquiry; and falsehood is wrong, not because it is injurious, but because, in itself and from eternity, there is this difference of quality, and the human reason is so constituted of God in his image, that it makes the affirmation instantly, and cannot help it. The truths of geometry are right, are absolute truths, not because they are good to build houses by, or to make calculations upon, but because they are realities of nature, as constituted of God. So it is with moral principles, holiness, justice, truth, which are right, not because they are expedient, but expedient because they are right. A thing is not morally good because it is useful, but useful because it is good. The mind never, naturally, and without sophistry, confounds or introverts these positions. A thing that is right, must be useful because it is right; and the reason why it is right, the ultimate reason, is not because it is useful, but because it is accordant, either directly, or by deduction of principles, with the attributes of God.

Hence the truth, stated by Coleridge, better perhaps than by any other writer, that he who fulfils the conditions required by conscience, takes the surest way of answering the purposes of Prudence. Conscience put first, and obeyed, may bring him into harmony with God; prudence consulted may not, for his prudence may be founded upon selfishness, may, in fact, be nothing but selfishness — and compared with a pure conscience, may be opposed to it and to God. For man is a short-sighted being, and God has given him principles to act upon, by which his axioms of prudence must be tested. He can see and understand the principles, even when he cannot see the consequences, or can foresee them but a very little way, and overlook but a very little of their extent and variety. Principles are for him, as Coleridge has beautifully said, *Prudence in short-hand or cipher*, because “the distinct foresight of consequences belongs exclusively to that Infinite Wisdom which is one with that Almighty Will on which all consequences depend.”

Hence Coleridge says, in the fourth *Essay* of the second part of his *Friend* — and it is a passage as true and admirable as it is masterly — “A pure conscience, that inward something, that *θεός οὐσίος*, which, being absolutely *unique*, no man can *describe*, because every man is bound to *know*, and even in the eye of the law, is held to be a *person* no longer than he may be supposed to know it. The conscience, I say, bears the same relation to God as an accurate time-piece bears to the sun. The time-piece merely indicates the relative path of the sun, yet we can regulate our plans and proceedings by it with the same confidence, as if it was itself the efficient cause of light, heat, and the revolving seasons; on the self-evident axiom that in whatever sense two things are both equal to a third thing, they are in the same sense equal to one another. Cunning is circuitous folly. In plain English, to act the knave, is but a roundabout way of playing the fool; and the man who will not permit himself to call an action by its proper name, without a previous calculation of all its probable consequences, may indeed be only a coxcomb, who is looking at his fingers through an opera-glass; but he runs no small risk of becoming a knave. The chances are against him. Though he should *begin* by calculating the consequences with regard to others, yet by the mere habit of never contemplating an action in its own proportions and immediate relations to his moral being, it is scarcely possible but that he must *end* in selfishness; for the *YOU* and the *THEY* will stand on different occasions for a thousand different persons, while the *I* is one only, and recurs in every calculation. Or grant that the principle of expediency should prompt to the same outward *deeds* as are commanded by the law of reason, yet the doer himself is debased.”

Right and wrong spring from God's existence, and cannot be conceived as having any being apart from God, right being what God is, wrong what God is not; hence we must refer, and by the command and operation of conscience do inevitably refer to what God is, and to the principles drawn from his own attributes, which he has given us for our guidance. Right and wrong are not such because God makes or wills them such, but because right is from eternity right, and all that coincides not with God's essence, is wrong. This distinction, eternal and essential, is affirmed by the human reason, which, in God's image, develops the ideas of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, duty, responsibility, essential and eternal morality; and conscience acts with reference to all these realities, and is as universal as all these ideas. There is no nation, nor race of beings, that

ever confounded truth and falsehood, as to the obligation of one, and the infamy of the other.

Now, if conscience acts vividly and powerfully in this world, in reference to these ideas and realities, much more must it in the eternal world, when these ideas and realities will be seen as they are, without any disguise, sophistry, veil, fog, or obscurity. There the divine attributes will appear, and the soul will know; will see and know their application to the paths of this world, and the application of the principles given forth from them for man's guidance, and affirmed by his reason. It will not be with reference to men's perverted or blinded habits, and conceptions of right or wrong, that conscience will act, but with reference to the realities, and to the measure and demonstration of right and wrong in what God himself is. All the ideas of truth and duty here developed, in regard to which conscience acts, will be developed and illustrated in the light of God's attributes as they are, with an intensity and power of brightness, of which we now hardly form a conception. Conscience in itself can even now make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven; how much more in that world where moral distinctions will be as clearly and as piercingly seen and felt, as the existence of the Deity.

Now, the final cause of this faculty, the final purpose for which it was so constituted in the human mind, may certainly to a great degree be determined by the manner of its operation. It was not *merely* as a guide to human conduct that it was given; for a great part of its operations are after-thoughts, looking to a judgment to come; and it is with reference to that judgment, that its action is most powerful. Nay, without the prediction and presumed certainty of that judgment, conscience would be comparatively lifeless and powerless; powerless as a guide, lifeless as an avenger. Conscience has not merely the operation of a time-piece for man's life, or a barometer to tell him the state of the weather, and warn him what to do; but it has within itself an arrangement, a power, by which the storm itself is evoked, if the pilot do not mind the warnings, and a retribution is inflicted for what he has done. Hence a great conclusion as to the universal office of conscience in the future world.

In the second place, the action of Conscience is unceasing. With most men Conscience seems to be asleep, but it is not. All our faculties acquire by use, a surprising facility and rapidity of operation. The will, for example, is so minute and rapid in its movements, that it is not possible to trace them. The Divine Omniscience alone can note them. There is a separate movement of the will, a distinct and

separate volition, with every movement of the hand, the foot, the eye, the body; but the movements which we do not notice, compared to those which we do, are perhaps as a million to one. Philosophers have entered into a curious investigation and analysis of this matter. Dugald Stewart has observed, that in the most rapid reading of a book to one's self, there is a distinct volition for every word, every syllable, though it may seem sometimes that the mind gathers up the page almost with a single glance of the eye. Thus the play of the will is habitual, imperceptible, yet none the less actual, and made up of distinct intervals. So it must be with the conscience. There is a judgment of the conscience upon everything. It may be so rapid, so transitory, swifter than the lightning, so brief as the most evanescent, imperceptible shade of thought, that it is not distinctly noticed, and cannot be, except by some supernatural arrest of the being fixing it on the last momentary act or interval; but it exists, as truly as the will exists, although its separate movements may not be noticed.

A wheel composed of a great many spokes may go round with such rapidity, that to the eye it shall appear to be a solid mass, like a millstone; nay, it may go round with such incredible swiftness, that the possibility of detecting the motion by the eye shall be lost, it shall seem to be perfectly still; and yet every one of its revolutions is distinctly made, in a distinct interval of time, and may be numbered. So it is with the conscience. It may seem asleep, but this may be only because its acts are so rapid, so brief, so innumerable, that they are not noticed. It may seem asleep, yet there must be a judgment of the conscience upon everything, even every idle word. We may not trace it, but God may. And our habit of neglect of the monitions of conscience, producing insensibility to its operation is no excuse for sin committed without apparent reproach, or remorse, or restraint from our own being; inasmuch as we have formed the habit voluntarily, and should not have done it, had we lived habitually as under God's inspection, in God's sight, with a perpetual regard to God's approbation.

Now it is evident that the more a man's conscience is unheeded now, the more a man puts in reserve to be heeded hereafter. The greater the number of the revolutions of this wheel within our souls unnoticed now, the greater the number to be counted hereafter. A man of insensibility, a man of a hardened conscience, is so far from being secured against the operations of conscience, that he is only accumulating work for himself to do by and by. He is like a man

falling in debt, who strives to keep off the sense of his liabilities, by keeping no account current, but going on in his business just as if he were every day starting fair with an unincumbered capital. Every unrecorded debt is a step to his ruin. It is a weight upon his fortunes, that, so far from being lighter because it is not now felt, is growing heavier every day that it is unnoticed. By and by, the crash will be inevitable, and overwhelming.

These silent, unheeded movements of the conscience are every one of them witnesses for man's guilt, and securities of God's justice. They are God's vouchers for so much truth, so much remonstrance, delivered to the soul, so much instruction and light and mercy, abused and wasted. They are God's vouchers, and must be produced. Their inspection will be requisite, to see both God's justice and mercy, and the man's guilt. The man must feel that guilt himself; so, by and by, he is to travel over the ground of his past experiences, and examine them as it were at leisure; he is to look at his past self, step by step; he is to judge calmly and slowly, what he acted rapidly, heedlessly, insensibly, while conscience judged as swiftly as could keep pace with his actions, but so swiftly that he then disregarded its judgments. God shall take him, as it were, and stand with him at the wheel in its revolutions, and it shall be stopped for his deliberate view, and he shall see what it was, what he himself was, what he was doing, what feeling, what in character, in habit, in relation to himself, and in relation to God. He shall see how much conscience did for him, how much he did against conscience.

This we conceive must be a part of the process of judgment. Thus much is necessarily included in the Saviour's declaration, that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. The man shall tell how it was uttered, when, where, in what state of mind, how occupied, for what purpose, with what motives, with how much knowledge of good and evil, after how long acquaintance with God and duty, after what providential interpositions, what manifestations of truth, what efforts of God's Spirit.

Thus, in the third place, conscience is not merely introspective, but retrospective in its operations. It is not only a knowing with, but a knowing back, not merely a witness at the moment, but long after. A man may dream, because conscience does not trouble him now, that there shall be no retrospective action hereafter, or may dream that every step he travels from the date and the scene of his sins, conscience will be weaker, and he more secure from its power. But it is never so, and sometimes the very contrary seems to be the



case. Sometimes the longer a man's insensibility as to his course of sin continues, and the more effectual its concealment, the more terrible is the power of conscience at the last. So that at the judgment this retrospective power of conscience will be greater than it was at the moment of the commission of sin; greater the longer the interval of time and forgetfulness that has elapsed. Sometimes the faculty of conscience does this work of retrospection and conviction *now*, with an appalling power. The whole being is arrested, petrified, as it were, in a single attitude of crime, projected beyond itself, and brought to gaze upon itself, to judge and condemn itself, with a power of self-anguish, self-retribution, self-misery, that, if it were exercised upon others, would be deemed a stern and awful vengeance; but no man accuses it of cruelty, no man accuses himself or God of injustice, when writhing under the agony of a wrathful conscience. And the reason why this retrospective work of conscience in some great things, some great crimes, is wrought with a power so immeasurably greater than in the ordinary instances of its exercise, so that it seems to rouse up as a new creation of the mind, a new faculty before unheard of, is not merely because of the so much greater heinousness and glare of guilt in some crimes than in others, though that is a great thing, but also because of the deliberation with which such crimes are generally committed. A man comes to the act, fighting against conscience all the way. A man revolves it in his thoughts, plans its execution, prepares for it, forecasts the result, provides for after action, advances to it circumspectly, with full time to deliberate, and conscience keeps pace with him all the way. So, when it is done, the whole power of conscience falls back upon him, in the weight and avengement of all previous outrage and resistance, all stifling and searing, all disregard of inward and external voices, all perseverance and obstinacy in sin, against light, love, mercy, providence and grace. Conscience falls back to her work of retrospection armed at all these points, with her power increased tenfold by previous neglect and opposition.

A man tracks a traveller over a wild moor. He knew that he had a purse of gold about him. He planned the outrage, the theft, the murder, deliberately. He saw him at the last inn. He forecast the attack and the avoidance of pursuit. He waited on his movements, and followed him till he came to the place most suited to his dreadful purpose. He struggled with him, stabbed him, and with the coveted gold in his hand, fled swiftly from his victim. It was not a sudden surprisal, temptation, or betrayal into crime. It was murder, deliberate,

cool-blooded, avaricious murder. And now the reign of conscience commences. Now as fast and as far as he flies, the work of retrospection hurries him back. Now the clouds of retributive vengeance lower around his soul. Now he would give the world, if he could take the place of his victim. The moment the dread deed was accomplished, the iron entered into his own soul. It was not the traveller whom he struck, but himself. It was not a *man*, whom he thrust out of existence, but a *conscience into* it. The sense of guilt and of inexorable retribution, waits upon him. Nemesis, the prediction and in part the experience of justice, is behind him, within him, around him. The whole world is a moor, a wilderness, across which, with a burning hand upon his heart, he flies. He flies from justice, from himself, from Conscience, from God, but he meets them all! Miserable man! they are everywhere! His crime is everywhere, his punishment is everywhere. Miserable, miserable man!

But Justice, calm, noiseless, unimpassioned, nay, with a face almost of compassion, of deep melancholy, flies over him. His brow is dark as a thunder-cloud in the darkness of his soul. Nemesis, with her hour-glass and her sword, as steady as inexorable fate, pursues him close through every lane of life, to the appointed moment of her blow. Can the murderer escape? Can he fly into a world, where there is no Nemesis? Nay, can he fly into a world, where the past realities of his being can be annihilated, and the constitution of his being changed?

Here, in such an instance, the retrospective, retributive power of conscience is seen, felt, known. It is a glaring instance. Now there is no reason to believe that this power of conscience will be less in the future world, when the soul is made to travel back, and judge the deeds, thoughts, feelings, of its life in the light of God and eternity. There is no reason to suppose that conscience will act with less power in regard to any sin against God, than in regard to deliberate and aggravated guilt against man. Nay, if there be a difference, it must be the sins against God that conscience will visit in the most tremendous gloom, and will exercise in regard to them the severest power of retribution with which the Maker of our frame has armed this fearful penalty.

Here comes in the farther consideration of the power and operation of conscience as affected by habit, in the goings on of our moral nature, and as susceptible of a temporary perversion. The vigor and intensity of its exercise are very much influenced by our habits, at present, both of association and of action. When, for example, an

evil habit is formed, conscience ceases to reiterate her judgment so loudly in regard to every particular time in which the evil habit is indulged, but speaks more loudly at times in regard to the habit itself. Thus the conscience of an intemperate man may have ceased to torment him with every instance in which he gratifies his appetite, but sometimes in regard to the habit of intemperance which he has formed, stings and condemns him severely. Just so with a profane swearer; conscience, that at first made every oath recoil upon himself, now scarcely can keep pace with his profane expressions; he drops them without thinking of it; but yet in regard to the habit thus formed, conscience sometimes makes a dreadful outcry. In regard to particular sins conscience may seem thus for a time to be seared, and insensible, and indeed no judgment of the mind may pass in the repetition of such sins; but then, such a judgment is absolutely inevitable, when, in the light of truth; the mind reviews the habits and actions of existence.

Conscience may be lulled to sleep for a season, but the energies of this faculty are not, on this account, weakened in the least degree, their exercise being simply put off to some future period of light and conviction, perhaps a dying bed, perhaps the day of judgment. Conscience depends much upon light and training; a conscience trained in the light of God's Word acts more powerfully than the conscience of a man who is ignorant of it; but if a man be wilfully ignorant of it, this will not prevent the future and vigorous action of conscience when that man's deeds come to be reviewed in the light of it. Conscience may be perverted, and sometimes is fearfully so, by habits of wickedness, so as to put evil for good and darkness for light. Now in such a case evil deeds may really be committed under the impression that they are good deeds; but it is manifest this only shows how dreadfully evil such a man has become; and by and by, when in the light of truth those deeds are reviewed, the action of conscience in regard to them will be just as terribly severe as if they had been performed in that light. Paul speaks of some, whose very mind and conscience were defiled; the darkening, perverting, defiling power of their evil courses of action having reached to the movements of their intellect, their understanding, and moral sense. He speaks of some in their wickedness left to so strong delusion, as really to believe a lie. Now the steps, in every case, by which men arrive at such delusion, are well known and gradual; to the eye of God they are distinct, and though they may not at present be remembered by the mind, there will be a day when they will be seen as clearly as God

sees them; and then the judgment of conscience in regard to all the acts that followed such delusion will be terribly severe.

For example, a man may be so deluded by the Devil and his own evil heart, as to deem it his duty to murder his own child; some among the heathen practise this crime with very little if any compunction. Now a man who has ever read the Bible could not possibly come to this conclusion without perverting or rejecting its teachings; and a man who has never seen or heard of the Scriptures, could not come to that conclusion, without doing violence to his moral nature. By and by the steps by which this violence was accomplished, and this perversion and blindness reached, will be traced, and then conscience will speak. Suppose that a man in a fit of intemperance, while actually insane under the influence of liquor, should murder his child. Are we not sure that when he becomes sober, supposing that his parental feelings have not been destroyed, his conscience will arraign him as a murderer, and do the work of remorse in regard to that crime?

Suppose, now, that a man really and truly *believes* such an act to be his duty; what can he do in such a case? He will violate his conscience if he does *not* perform the act; he will commit an enormous crime if he *does* perform it. Will he do wrong, if he refuses to perform it, while believing it to be a duty? It may be answered in the first place, that he has neglected to use the means of enlightening himself in regard to his duty, and is responsible for all the consequences of such neglect. If he had access to the Word of God, he should have made that Word his supreme rule of duty, and it would certainly have led him right. If he were a heathen, it is certain that he has, by a previous process of sin, darkened the light of his own being, and the light, whatever it be, which has shone upon him in the goodness and the works of God. But such a case, and it is not merely imaginary, affords a dreadful instance of the war and chaos which sin may introduce into a man's being; so that, whether he follow or reject the dictates of his conscience in a given case, he is sure to go wrong. It is a species of insanity, but not such insanity as excuses crime, but simply proves the great wickedness which the man has arrived at. When his course is reviewed in the light of truth, every step of evil he took, being known, and its consequences, the processes of the mind in regard to it, and the light disregarded and sinned against, then the things done under the rule of a perverted and darkened conscience, will be judged not by that conscience, but by conscience in the light; and that perversion of conscience, and all

its dreadful consequences, will be the source of unfathomable remorse.

Conscience is much affected by the *example of others*, and it is sometimes silenced or perverted in multitudes together, when it would have spoken loudly and rightly in individuals. Hence that very striking injunction in the Word of God, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*. A multitude support and justify one another in courses which, if the same multitude were to see one man alone pursuing, they would perhaps put him to death. This is the source of that wicked, reckless hardihood, with which nations will rush into crimes, from which almost every individual in the nation would start back aghast. There is not, perhaps, a single individual engaged in an unjust war, or voting in its favor, who would dare take the life of a fellow-creature for the non-payment of a sum of money, or still worse, to gain possession of such a sum. And yet, an unjust war, a war whose object is conquest and territory, taken by force from an independent kingdom, is murder and robbery, is unquestionably nothing else; and all the glory acquired in such an unjust war, is no more than an accumulation of the glory which a remorseless and successful bandit acquires, who rushes desperately upon an armed traveler, and overcomes and kills him. Such a murderer may show great strength, dexterity, and daring; and among his own set of fellow-murderers, he would be applauded as having covered himself with glory. And it is just such glory, and nothing better, which a nation acquires, that conquers in an unjust war. But conscience is perverted, or beneath the mad outcry of glory, is not permitted to be heard.

In much the same way, that kind of blindness and insensibility to the requirements of justice and mercy is induced, under which corporations or hierarchies will burn human beings alive, or imprison them in dungeons, for their religious faith—a thing which no single man would ever have dared to do, except under the example and command of a conclave, without considering himself a murderer. If an adherent of the Church of Rome, having heard another man declare himself an unbeliever in that Church and against the Pope, should fall upon him in a lonely place and kill him, he could not accomplish this crime without being convicted of murder. But just let a corporation of intolerant inquisitors, such as a few years ago condemned men to death in Portugal for renouncing Romanism, meet to compass the destruction of a heretic, and then every individual conscience seems to be consigned to silence or insensibility, and the crime is committed in gloomy bigotry, without remorse.

Sometimes the blindness and silence of a perverted conscience continue almost uninterrupted even to the hour of death; but generally the light of truth breaks in upon the soul, and conscience shows her power in remorse, when remorse is all that the soul seems capable of. There are some striking and impressive instances in history, and one which is related by Hume himself, in a manner that would seem to indicate in his own mind some serious belief in that future existence and retribution at which he afterwards scoffed. It was the end of Henry VII., a monarch of England, distinguished for his insatiable avarice. "When he found he could live no longer, he began," says Hume, "to cast his eye towards that future existence, which the iniquities and severities of his reign rendered a very dismal prospect to him. To allay the terrors under which he labored, he endeavored by distributing alms and founding religious houses, to make atonement for his crimes, and to purchase by the sacrifice of a part of his ill-gotten treasures, a reconciliation with his offended Maker. Remorse even seized him at intervals, for the abuse of his authority by Empson and Dudley, but not sufficient to make him stop the rapacious hand of those oppressors." Poor rich monarch! beneath the terrors of an angry conscience, of what avail were all thine ill-gotten possessions? How gladly at that hour would the king have changed places with the beggar, for a mind at peace with God!

Such an instance reveals impressively one of the most undoubted laws under which conscience acts, and that is, the impulse of restitution, and the feeling of the soul's need of an atonement. The soul, indeed, that does not flee to Christ, endeavors to *make* an atonement *by* restitution; but that never gives peace, never can. The soul that rests on Christ's forgiving love, seeks to make restitution, not as an atonement, or for the purchase of pardon, but out of the impulse of love itself and humble sorrow. Thus we read of Zaccheus, that as soon as he came to Christ, he made restitution four-fold; but not as any purchase of peace to his conscience, or of acceptance with his Saviour, but as the fruit of a loving, repentant heart. So we read, from time to time, of instances of restitution performed secretly, money sent back where it has been fraudulently taken; but whether as the mere work of a guilty conscience, or the fruit of a contrite spirit, we cannot tell.

Without the light of God's Word, a man's conscience may easily become perverted, so as to be, in many cases, no safe guide; but it becomes so because of his own sin. Whatever light is disregarded, whether it be the light of nature or of the Scriptures, conscience is defrauded, and there will be a time of revenge. If light

admitted to the conscience arms it with present authority, light rejected, or voluntarily withheld, arms it with a future authority and terror, when that light shall be made to shine upon the soul. The light of nature and the light of God's Word may be so completely neglected, or so shut out by long habits of ignorance and sin, that the light of conscience itself may be turned into darkness, as in the cases supposed; and it is to such a state of the mind that Christ's words refer, If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! How dreadful that degree of wickedness, which could come to such a point!

A great multitude of men's sins are committed in the dark, or in the absence of that light, which would have condemned them beforehand, and perhaps prevented them, or rather we should say, without the notice of that light, for it is always shining, but men form the habit of disregarding it, the habit of insensibility to its presence. The fact, for instance, is always known, that the eye of God is upon us, but how few men remember this fact, and in their evil deliberations, or dealings, or neglects of duty, proceed under the consciousness of it. They become insensible to it, and live and act as if God did not see them. If every man proceeded in the direct beams of God's eye, if in the moment of temptation he saw and felt the light of God's countenance, the eye of God fixed upon him, he could not do that wickedness. If the evil deed before him were under the intensity of a direct flash of the Almighty's countenance, as the beams of the sun direct and intense upon an object before the physical sight, the most hardened man, it would seem, could no more advance to that evil deed, than he would take in his hand a coiled and deadly serpent, or a coal of living fire. But this sense of God, his presence, his light, his eye, upon the heart and on the life, most men do not possess, or endeavor to cultivate. Yet it does not follow from this that their evil deeds are committed in ignorance, darkness, or forgetfulness. There is a general light, in which all men live, and it is like the light of open day, which we do not particularly notice, it is so common, though if a shaft of light, direct light, were falling from the sun upon us, or an object in our path, we should notice it.

Now the point of importance in regard to the operations of conscience is this; that though those operations may not be active now, in the midst of the mind's insensibility, and voluntary blindness towards God, they will be as active, by and by, as they would or could have been, if the mind, even in the commission of sin, had been conscious of God's eye direct upon the deed. The light that is now dis-

regarded is to shine again; the evil thought, deed, word, is to be seen in that light; the neglect of duty, whatever it was, is to be judged in that light; and that light will be one of the materials for remorse. Men ought not, therefore, to comfort themselves in their wickedness, in their neglect of prayer, in their insensibility towards God and eternity, by the fact that they are not now convicted, do not see things now as God sees them, or that conscience sleeps; for conscience will awake, and all this light that has been rejected will be round about her, arming her with authority, while all this cloud, in which the soul had wrapped itself in a world of time and sense, will be dispersed, and everything will be seen as it is, as God has always seen it, as the soul would have seen it, if passion had not stood in the way.

The operations of conscience will be conducted in reference to four things. There will be a judgment of the mind, first, in regard to right and wrong in itself, and the sense of this distinction in the mind; second, in regard to the motive, the aim and disposition of the soul, out of which issued the course of a man's life and conduct; third, in regard to the law of God, the light which shone from it; and fourth, in regard to God himself and his own holiness. As to the first point, there is the idea with which we started, of the distinction between right and wrong in the soul, and it is eternal; there is a sense of right and wrong, and it can never be obliterated, though it may for a season be greatly obscured and perverted by sin. It is not factitious, not artificial, not dependent upon external teachings, being the very thing to which external teachings, even the teachings of God's Word, appeal. Thus, when Christ says, Do to others as ye would they should do to you, this precept has weight with us, not merely because he has given it, but because by the very constitution which he has given us beforehand, we feel and know that it is right. In teaching it to us, and giving it the authority of a special command, in addition to the authority of conscience, arising from our own constitution, he appeals to the sense of right and wrong within us. So when he says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, etc., here again, the precept is not *merely* authoritative, because it is his command, but because it is just and right, and we feel and know it to be so, by the very necessity of the constitution he has given us. We are not merely taught this from abroad, but this teaching makes its appeal to the sense of right and wrong, which God has made eternal in our own souls. Thus the most important external precepts for the regulation of our hearts and lives are merely a reproduction, in a direct external form, of the laws of our own being. Or if not such, they so appeal to the sense



of right and wrong, the idea of what is just and good within us, that this sense repeats and sanctions those precepts.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God is such a precept as grows inevitably out of the mind's own sense of its obligations of gratitude and love to the Author of our being and the Giver of all our mercies. Now the utterance of that precept in the mind, for example, of a heathen, may have been prevented, or rendered indistinct and dim by long habits of sin, but when it comes to be enforced by external teaching, when it comes as a command of God, it is sure, unless there be the most dreadful blindness and perversion, to meet a response in the soul's own sense of what is right. In some minds this sense seems to be stronger than others, but in all it is strong enough to form a basis for the operations of conscience, a fundamental rule, in regard to which this faculty will proceed in its judgments. And if this were all, if the operations of conscience stopped here, there would be still abundant material for condemnation, for conviction, for Remorse. If we all were to be judged merely for our violations of our own sense of right and wrong, it would be a fearful judgment that we should have to go through. And if Memory had no other business but to bring before us these instances, and Remorse no other materials to play upon, if the sight and sense of these things were continued with us, this alone would render us eternally miserable.

That there is within us this instinct and arrangement of self-retribution, no man can doubt, who calmly and impartially examines his own experience. But in the present state, it has been remarked by a profound writer, the infatuations of self-love defend every mind from the application to itself of the desire of retribution, just as the principle of animal life defends the vital organs of a body from the chemical action of its own caustic secretions. And we may add, just as all men think all men mortal but themselves. When these infatuations are quite dispersed in the eternal world, then the instinct of justice, perhaps the most potent of all the elements of spiritual life, will turn inward upon each consciously guilty heart, so that every such heart shall become the prey of a reflected rage, intense and corrosive as the most virulent revenge. Whoever is now hurrying on without thought of consequences through a course of crimes, would do well to imagine the condition of a being left without relief to breathe upon itself the flames of insatiable hatred.

Now it is doubtless the instinctive premonition, when men are on the verge of dying, that this process of judgment and of self-revenge is about to commence, together with all the retributive operations on

the part of God, ever predicted by conscience, that makes the terror of Remorse so active at the close of the sinner's life. It is one of the clearest, most invariable laws under which conscience acts, that the hour of dying for the mortal frame is the hour of quickened life and energy for this tremendous faculty. Conscience almost always rouses up at the approach of death, and resumes its power as the soul nears the eternal world, just as the master of a pirate ship, who has retired to the cabin in calm weather, takes the helm in a storm, when the vessel is rushing to destruction. So a storm is the element of conscience; the rapids, the breakers, the midnight tempest, the passage from time into eternity, are the scene of her command. If the soul be not sprinkled with atoning blood, it is the command of despair. All is hurry, confusion, wild outcry and unconquerable terror. And the revelation of the power of conscience at such an hour demonstrates its fearfulness as an eternal possession of the soul.

We have said that this penalty of conscience, if one man could visit it upon others, would be deemed a stern and awful vengeance; but no man accuses it of cruelty, no man accuses either himself or God of injustice, when writhing under the agony of a wrathful conscience. And this is a most instructive warning to those blind fools of an unbelieving philosophy, who would exclude the idea and the reality of punishment from human and Divine theology and government, calling it revengeful and unjust. And why do ye not, ye blind guides, ye fools of nature, and of the blinding god of this world, why do ye not accuse men themselves of vengeance and injustice, when the elements of their own being execute upon themselves a retribution more terrible than the energies, sagacities, and contrivances of the material universe could summon up! A retribution compared with which, if it could be removed, if conscience could be silenced and lulled, all the tortures that men or devils could inflict, would be nothing. Why do ye not accuse God himself of injustice and revenge, because he has made men so fearfully and wonderfully, with such inevitable powers and certainties of self-punishment and retribution? Ye blind guides! Reasoning against retribution, when retribution is at work within you! Reasoning against the government of God and eternal justice, when you are doing upon yourselves the very work of the Divine government, and the sorest part of retributive vengeance. Ye may heave up against this great doctrine of a judgment to come, and a final retribution, but ye cannot pass out from under it; it falls back upon you, and ye do its work upon yourselves. Ye may reason against retribution, but it is a necessity as inexorable as

the memory of sin. Ye might as well reason against the fact of your own existence, as the fact of a retributive punishment; there is no denying it; it exists, even in this world.

But, in this world, who does not know, who does not feel, that it is imperfect; that it is but a shadow, a forecasting, a prediction, of the judgment and the perfect retribution to come? It is real, because God would have us know, from experience as well as his Word, what is before us, and so be urged to flee from the wrath to come. It is partial and imperfect, because there is mercy, mercy in Christ for whomsoever it be who will avail himself of it; because it is meant not now as retribution, but warning, because the executed full righteousness of it, would be everlasting destruction—the experience of it would be hell itself. It is imperfect now, because this is a world of probation, in which salvation is offered on coming to a Redeemer, by whom God invites us to escape that great retribution, of which this lower one is but a type, a warning, a foretaste; that last, overwhelming evil, of which this small, imperfect shadow, is God's admonitory messenger of love.

This was our last point of consideration, the power of conscience eternal. And here there is no room for questioning, or doubt, or denial. There is no faculty of our immortal nature, which will not be a part of our immortal existence. As man was formed in the image of God, so will he come before God in judgment. Every intelligent being in the eternal world, will possess a conscience in the fullest, clearest light and power of its operation. Those operations will have a decisiveness, a majesty, a glory like the voice of God, and an irreversible certainty, admitting no possibility of mistake, or darkness, or alteration, or appeal. But a conscience at peace with God, and working in the light of God's countenance, in harmony with God's love, is not to be dreaded in the eternal world, nor in this world. It is a sinful conscience, the operations of which are so terrible, when eternal. But, admit the possibility of a man dying in his sins, and you have him dying with conscience for his enemy. You have him with his sins in the next world, and conscience there also doing the work of retribution. That men die in their sins, is a fact as well established, as that they live in sin here; and that some men die, knowing and declaring that the fire of conscience is an eternal fire, is a fact as well established as that men are ever convinced of sin at all.

Will conscience stop, because the soul, throwing off its covering of clay, has gone into the presence of a holy God? Will conscience

stop, because it has gone where all the witnesses of secret as well as open sins are gathered together, where every crime will be known, every step of life visible, every sin against God and man, with every aggravating circumstance? Or will conscience stop when the judgment goes on, and condemnation is pronounced, and the sentence is uttered, and the destiny of the soul is closed up forever? Will conscience stop, because despair takes the place of hope, because all is lost, and there is no more possibility of a remedy? Will not the triumph, and the power, and the retribution of conscience then be inexorable and eternal, when it has to say to the sinner, You have finished your work of self-destruction? You have gone beyond the limits, where God's compassionate forbearance had waited for you, and up to which you might have repented and been saved. You have made your last rejection of Christ, wasted your last opportunity of mercy, and ruined yourself beyond the power of conscience, or of providence, or of truth, or of grace itself to save you. O undone, undone soul! What would it not give to step back, one little hour, into this world of mercy, and hear Christ's voice of mercy, saying, Come unto me!

The faculty of conscience is eternal, its power is eternal; and yet, in this world that power is exercised in condemnation, simply that the soul may be induced to escape from its eternal exercise. The penal power of conscience in this world, inflicting such terror and distress, is God's own merciful arrangement to arouse the soul and send it to Christ, that in him it may find a refuge from the accusing power and penal operation of conscience through eternity. When the soul, fleeing' to him from the wrath to come, hears his gracious voice, Thy sins be forgiven thee, and is washed in the fountain of his atoning blood, then, and not till then, is the conscience at peace with God; then, and not till then, can conviction of sin be anything but anguish. In Christ it may be changed into gratitude and love; in Christ it may and must immeasurably deepen the sense of the greatness of his redeeming mercy; it may be the material, out of which his matchless dying love brings a living blessedness. It is God's school-master, with his own law, to bring the soul to Christ, and make it feel, as it never could otherwise do, the greatness, the preciousness, the glory of his love. Out of Christ, away from Christ, unforgiven, it reveals nothing but the righteous penalty of sin, the wrath of God, the misery of the soul, and no escape, no remedy. In Christ it reveals the depths of forgiving mercy, the love of God, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the boundless glory of redemption. **Amazing**

mercy! wondrous grace, which can thus change death into life, and make the assurance of being the very chief of sinners, the foundation of endless, inexhaustible bliss, of which the rule is, that the deeper the conviction of guilt, the greater the experience and knowledge of the glory and happiness of deliverance! Such was the experience of Paul; such is the experience of every redeemed sinner, now, and in glory everlasting.

---

## ARTICLE II.

### THE RELATION OF STYLE TO THOUGHT.

By Prof. W. G. T. Shedd, University of Vermont, Burlington.

In a previous article<sup>1</sup> we endeavored to specify the general relation of language to thought, and to maintain the truth of that theory which regards human language as springing spontaneously from the nature and wants of man. The connection that exists between language and the thought conveyed by it was conceived to be that which exists between any, and every, living principle, and the sensible form, in which it appears to the senses — a *vital* and *organic* connection. Although it was freely conceded that it would perhaps be impossible, to detect this *vitality* of connection with the particular thought expressed, in the case of every word in the language, it was yet maintained that language as a whole, is characterized by a propriety and fitness for the purpose for which it exists which must have sprung from some deeper and more living ground than custom and the principle of association. It was also thought that the theory is a fruitful one in itself, both for the philologist and the philosopher, and that it furnishes the best clue to that more vital, and consequently less easily explicable, use of language, employed by the poet and the orator.

Indeed, the truth and fruitfulness of the theory in question, are nowhere more apparent than in the department of rhetoric and criticism. This department takes special cognizance of the more living and animated forms of speech — of the glow of the poet, and the fire of the orator. It also investigates all those peculiarities of construction and form in human composition that spring out of individual

---

<sup>1</sup> Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. V. No. XX.