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ARTICLE I.

CONSCIENCE—ITS NATURE, OFFICE AND AUTHORITY.

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Has man a conscience? This is one of the most important enquiries in mental and moral science. It is not only a question respecting all moral duty, but concerning the nature of man himself. Man possessed of a conscience is certainly a very different being from man considered as destitute of such a faculty. Subtract from human nature the reason, and substitute in its stead mere brute intelligence or instinct, and how completely has man lost his character! So, if the conscience be obliterated from the list of mental faculties, an intellectual and social being may be left, but one utterly incapable of every moral act. This question then, affects the very nature of man, and

his *notion*, or *opinion*, or *conviction*, as in the other case. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. How is utility perceived? By the understanding. And how are moral relations and laws perceived? By the understanding. How is it, then, that the understanding can be infallible in one of these cases, and altogether erroneous in the other? Are we told that the general consequences of actions are more obvious than the relations that mankind sustain to each other? This we deny. Are not the relations of parent and child, sovereign and subject, as palpable to the understanding, as are the consequences that flow from obedience or disobedience, oppression or protection? Indeed, we consider the *relations* as decidedly more clear than the *utilities* arising from them. And if this be so, then is there likely to be far more difference of opinion among men, as to the utility of laws and actions, than there can be as to their essential morality. We do not then, consider the doctrine of utility as answering its purpose, either in furnishing a more obvious "external object" as the basis of morality, or in harmonizing the diversified opinions of men. It fails in both particulars; relations being fully as palpable to the mind as general consequences, and right creating not more controversy certainly, than utility.

ARTICLE II.

UNIQUENESS AND SUPERIORITY OF OUR LORD'S TEACHING.

The only panacea for our sin-disordered world is faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. If religion is worth anything, it is worth everything. So it has been regarded by the wisest and greatest, best and happiest men that have ever lived. The salvation of the soul is, therefore, the highest personal concern of every man. It is the great necessity of his nature. Even the trials and sorrows of the world teach us that we need higher consolation than this earth affords. The Gospel reveals to us this higher consolation. It leads us to a Rock that is

higher than ourselves. It introduces to us the Great Teacher, who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

For gaining confidence in God and the comfortable assurance of His good will, and that His government does not overlook or neglect any of His creatures, there are two great sources of information to be used. One is a close, attentive, intelligent study of the works of nature and the ways of Providence in nature and in human history; and the other and greater and more certain means is the reading of the Bible. There is nothing to be compared to the Bible as a source of consolation. In both the Old and New Testament we see the general guidance of God and the universal government of His Providence. And from patiently considering the facts and examples of the Old and New Testament, a religiously disposed mind gains the deeply fixed and ineffaceable conviction, that even the order of things under which we, ourselves, suffer, is the most wisely appointed, and the most beneficial, not only for the whole, but in consequence of that, for the sufferer himself. "In the New Testament itself especially, is there such a full predominance of the spiritual and the moral—everything is so completely rested upon and carried back to purity of mind, that whatever else external or internal may happen to man, if he but strive earnestly and eagerly after this, all the rest falls back into shadow."*—Misfortunes and sorrows thus lose their oppressiveness—at least their bitterness. The infinite mildness of the New Testament doctrine, which figures God almost entirely on the merciful side, and in which the self-sacrificing love of Christ for the human race is everywhere brought forward, joined with his own example, alleviates, like a healing balsam, our every pain, both of mind and body.

"The tongue is a little member, but it boasteth great things." And, indeed, it hath done great things. The success of the great Tempter in Paradise was owing in no small degree to the persuasiveness of his eloquence. In all ages, orators, generals, advocates, senators and preachers, or public lecturers and expounders of science and truth, have produced wonderful effects by their speeches.

* *Willhelm Von Humboldt.*

The prophets, apostles and first preachers of Christianity, and the early Reformers, are all examples of the wonderful power of the human voice when employed in preaching truth and righteousness. There is, however, no serious-minded man, I am persuaded, who contrasts the pulpit of modern times with the preaching of the Apostolic age, who does not earnestly wish that the ministry was now more effective. We are all ready to join in the prayer: Oh, that our preachers could pour more effectually upon the minds of their hearers the light of eternal truth, and throw around their hearts the cords of persuasion, and draw them from those seductions that threaten their everlasting ruin! Happily for us, we have found a Preacher equal to our highest conceptions and most ardent wishes. All our demands are more than fully met in Him, who was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord God to preach good tidings unto the weak—to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. And never man spake like this man.

Jesus as a preacher is incomparably the greatest and best the world has ever known. It is fit that in "all things He may have the pre-eminence." As the Infinite source of all that is excellent and admirable in the best of human characters, it was to be expected that He would discover infinite superiority in every character and office that He might assume for our sakes. As the Redeemer, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and his kingdom ruleth over all. As a Priest, He is greater than Aaron. Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice once for all—a sacrifice that needed no repetition, like that of ordinary priests, but was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. As a Prophet, Jesus is greater than Moses or Isaiah. God at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, but now hath spoken to us by His own Son, who is greater than them all. None of them ever spake as did the Son of God.

The *uniqueness and superiority* of our Lord's preaching will appear by considering—

1. *The Matter of His Preaching.* Originality in the

absolute sense of the term is not necessary to successful teaching. It is, indeed, not given to many of our race to have absolute originality in many and varied subjects. There is such a flux and reflux of ideas by means of the press, lecturing, and conversation, that it is impossible for a mind somewhat enlarged to know what and how much of its contents and furniture, ornamental and useful, is of home manufacture or imported. It is impossible for the most impartial and honest minds to draw definitely the line between *meum et tuum* in relation to their stock of ideas. In teaching others, the best method for an instructor is that of the bee, to extract the sweet from all that comes in the way.

The matter of our Lord's sermons was, however, such as became a teacher come from God. He revealed the Divine character. In his discourses there is none of that learned trifling which distinguished the teachings of the Scribes, and Pharisees, and Rabbi of the Jews, and the wise men of other ancient nations. It is not too much to say that there is more of the true knowledge of God displayed in one single discourse of Jesus than in all the volumes which heathen sages have ever produced.

Jesus Christ also gave the *true explanation* of what had been communicated to man by the prophets in former ages. God had spoken to the Patriarchs and Prophets. The ten commandments were from heaven; but the Jews failed to give them their true spiritual meaning. Our Lord, in his sermon on the Mount, and at other times, corrected their mistakes concerning the law of Moses, and instructed them in the nature of the worship God required. He taught them that God required penitence, faith and charity,—that true religion was *internal and external*,—that it was love to God and love to man.

Again, the Divine authority of our Lord as the great Teacher, is shown in the fact that He was the grand theme of all the Old Testament writers. The most important personages of antiquity were His types and forerunners. Enoch, the first who was exempted from death, and Noah, the second Father of our race, and the prophets, who were the organs by which the Divine will was made known to men, were all preachers of righteousness and types of Christ. The first preacher of the Gospel was Je-

hovah himself. The text was, "and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Gen. 3 : 15.

Paul also, tells us that "God preached the Gospel to Abraham." And to him all the prophets give witness. And the Apostles made Christ the great theme of all their discourses and epistles. They regarded Him as the fountain of truth and Head of all things for His church.

Again, Jesus Christ *unveiled the invisible and eternal world*. This He did in regard to the economy of salvation, and in regard to its coming realities, and the personal concern that every one of us has in these realities, a part of which every one of us must soon be and bear for himself. Jesus Christ was himself a living manifestation of the love of God to sinful men. He was the only begotten Son of God, who came into our world to die for us. He also declared himself to be "the Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which was lost." "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

He brought life and immortality to light. The future world which had been dimly disclosed to the patriarchs, He brought out clearly and plainly. He taught His followers not to fear them who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather to "fear Him which is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell." Thus plainly did He teach the future existence of the soul and the nature of the future world. How solemn, also, are our Lord's descriptions of the general judgment, of the resurrection, of the last day, and the final separation of the wicked from the righteous, as the tares are separated from the wheat—the bad fish from the good—the wise from the foolish virgins, and the eternal destiny of both.

2. The *uniqueness and superiority* of our Lord's character and teaching form one of the most strikingly original attributes of the whole Gospel narrative.

The unique superiority of Christ's character is a very strong evidence of the truth of His history. The term unique, though scarcely a word that belongs to our lan-

guage, is used because I am not acquainted with any other one word that so exactly expresses the idea I wish to convey, namely: that the history of Christ is so unlike all other histories, or biographies, that there is but one such in all the world. The life of Christ, taken in connection with his death, stands more completely apart from and above and superior to all other narratives, than the sun in the heavens does from all other created objects. We do indeed conceive of other suns, and with the telescope even see them in their vast orbits sweeping through the heavens of their respective systems; but there is no process by which we can bring to light another Jesus, or show to the world another such history. Whoever catches the true idea of this Divine story, even in childhood, commences a career of discovery, admiration and delight, that eternity itself shall not be able to diminish. He feels in a higher degree what we are sometimes conscious of on surveying a magnificent pile of architecture,—it grows upon our admiration the longer we view it, till we can scarcely refrain from thinking that the object itself swells and acquires new grandeur and new beauties with every step of the march of time. The birth, life, miracles, death and resurrection of Christ are all unique, original and superior. And it is certainly remarkable that we should find in Him the attributes of perfection which a heathen sage considered necessary to constitute his *ideal perfect man*. In the bodyings forth of his almost Divine imagination, he describes a perfect man as one who should possess the very attributes of character that the Evangelists have described as existing in the Founder of Christianity. Now, the simple history, much more the conception of such a unique, original and perfect human being as we have in the Evangelists, is a strong proof of His Divinity and of their inspiration. There is nothing sectarian, conventional, national or temporary and capricious in the character of Christ as drawn by the Evangelists. His character in itself and its description is as unique, original and superior, as his doctrines and manner of life were infinite in excellence and sublimity. We cannot conceive of a race of men, nor of a college of writers in any age or nation that could segregate themselves wholly from the prejudices of their education and from their nationality, and go out of and beyond their

own physical characteristics for their type of ideal perfection. For example, an Egyptian writer in the matter of beauty of human form could never, by any mere abstraction, have generated a style of art, in which the color, shape and features of his divinity, should be purely European. Nor could the Greek give to his hero the tawny hue, narrow eyes and protruding lips of the Ethiopian; for each to the other would have seemed deformity, rather than divine beauty. So, neither could the Evangelists, nor the men of any age or nation, much less uneducated fishermen of Galilee, have framed to themselves an ideal type or canon of moral perfection, which arose not from what to them seemed most beautiful and perfect. And if it were possible for them to have risen so wholly above all the impressions of early education and of nationality, as to have faintly conceived of such a character, they could not have executed it. Why have not our poets and fiction writers, whose domain is the "wide, wide world," possible, impossible, grotesque and supernatural, conceived an original, unique and perfect character like that of Jesus Christ? Their characters are all copies. A Hindoo does not conceive of his Brahmin saint otherwise than as possessing in perfection the silence, the abstemiousness, the austerity, and the minute exactness in every trifling duty, which he admires in his living model. Plato's Socrates, the perfection of a philosophical character, is composed of elements perfectly Greek, being a compound of all those virtues which the teachings of his school deemed necessary to adorn a sage. The same principle is seen in the pictures of Jesus Christ and of his blessed Mother, which are used in Italy and Naples, and other parts of the old world. The hair, features, complexion and *tout ensemble* of the pictures are in exact accordance with the prevailing tastes of the people. How comes it, then, that the Evangelists have both conceived and executed the history of such a life as that of Jesus Christ? A life that not only differs from, but is essentially opposed to, their types of moral perfection. We have in the writings of the Rabbins ample materials wherewith to construct a Jewish teacher. We have the sayings and doings of Hillel, Gamaliel, and Rabbi Samuel. And perhaps a large portion of their teaching and precepts is imaginary, never having had an

existence; but still all their sayings and doings bear the impress of national ideas. The character of Jesus Christ as drawn by the Evangelists is, however, not composed out of Jewish elements. How comes it, then, that such writers as Matthew and Mark, Luke and John, ignorant of the school learning of Greece and Rome, and of the profound teachings of the Rabbins, should represent a character absolutely inimitable,—a character perfect, and yet wholly different from their national and natural types?—How does it happen that they conceive and draw such a character, in spite of their national customs and education, and in contempt of their patriotism and religion? And what renders it still more difficult to consider such a character a mere human invention, is the fact that the Sacred historians, while recording, each in his own way, the same facts, and sometimes each one recording other and different facts from his fellow-writer, yet still all agree in bringing out the same Heavenly character. They go to work and chisel out each for himself his statue, and when they are presented at the exhibition, they are all alike, all unique, original, absolutely perfect. How can we explain this? Here is the key. If four artists were employed in different parts of the country, each to produce for the Crystal Palace in New York, a form embodying their ideas of perfect beauty,—and all four should exhibit at the appointed time, figures, equally shaped upon types and models differing from all ever seen before in this country, and yet at the same time, each figure unique, original and absolutely perfect, and perfect in their resemblance one to another; I am sure such a fact would be regarded as incredible, except on the supposition that these four artists had been educated by the same preceptor, and had all copied the same original. This is precisely the case with the Evangelists. They, each in his own way, copied from the living model. Mathew's Gospel is not John's, nor is Luke's that of Mark. The four Gospel narratives are but one picture, and yet they are four distinct, unique, original and perfect portraits. What then must have been the perfection of their model? Surely, He was not as other men, who was in the world, and yet infinitely above it. In His character we find nothing sectarian or national.—The Evangelists have borrowed nothing from the Egyp-

tian, Judean, Greek or Roman types, and yet the character they have drawn is the model of perfection for all nations and ages. Jesus Christ is the One altogether lovely to sinners of every hue and clime. Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, Europeans and savages of the desert and of the wilderness have heard his voice in the forgiveness of sin, and have followed Him in the regeneration, and have entered the kingdom of Heaven. His love moves alike the heart of the Hottentot and of the Islanders of the South Seas. He is the Saviour of the prince and the sage, the Redeemer of the slave and of the mighty of the earth.—“He is able to save to the uttermost all that will come to God through Him.

ARTICLE III.

ON THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF A CHRISTIAN PROFESSION, AND ITS CONNEXION WITH MEMBERSHIP IN THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

What is a Christian profession? What is implied in membership in the visible Church? These are solemn and important questions; but few, perhaps, have studied them with the attention they deserve. To most of our readers the views now to be presented will probably seem novel and objectionable.* They have not, however, been adopted hastily, or on slight grounds; and whatever may

* From the days of Pres. Edwards till now, they have had little currency in this country. That distinguished man, as is well known, contended that none but those who give satisfactory evidence of true conversion should be admitted to full communion in the visible Church; and this view, which caused his rejection by his people at Northampton, after having served them faithfully for twenty-three years, though it met with strenuous opposition in quarters hardly to be expected, has long prevailed in the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The arguments of Edwards, in his “Enquiry concerning qualifications for Communion,” and in his reply to Williams, have never yet been satisfactorily answered. The Church of Scotland, and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, however, practice on a different principle, and though dissenting from them, and the author of this article, it is but right that we should allow the discussion as he has ingeniously conducted it, a place on our pages.—EDS. SO. PRES. REVIEW.