

CONSCIENCE WITH THE POWER AND CASES THEREOF

Divided into Five Books

THE FIRST BOOK

Written by the Godly and Learned

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To the illustrious and mighty Lords the State of *Zeland*:

I purpose not (Honorable Lords) to insinuate my self, or my endeavors into your favor, by fine words, and feigned commendations of your virtues. For I do not think it will be acceptable unto wise men, who both suspect that art, and account it base, though of my self I am not apt to flatter, yet the very name of conscience that is set before this treatise, charges me to avoid it. Many indifferent good books are in the very beginning disgraced by it. I will only show the true cause, by which I was persuaded (though my name perhaps be more obscure, than to be known unto you) to set down you name in the forefront of this treatise.

It is reported over all places near hand, that the doctrine according to godliness, is both more practically preached by the pastors, and more put in practice by the hearers in your churches, than yet hath been marked in many others, though they hold the same doctrine.

That worthy servant of the Lord, Master William Teeling, who was by this means in great admiration, and famous throughout all the Low-Country churches, (to say nothing of others, that both have, and do take the same course) took such painful pains this way, both publicly and privately, by word and writing, that it may be truly said, The zeal of God's house has eaten him up: whereby also (Envy the follower of such a virtue, being now overcome) he hath obtained that crown, which God hath prepared for those that have instructed many unto righteousness.

Because I hope this treatise will more excite to this kind of study, it being also desired by many, who were not to be neglected, it's fittest it should be sent where it may find those running this race, who will be easily put on, and where others also may take example of that course which is taught here.

This being the true cause of the Dedication, gives me cause to hope, that this intention and service will not be unacceptable unto you, this only remains (Noble Lords): The good and great God in Christ, vouchsafe to bless you more and more, and your churches, with a true faith, a good conscience, and perfect happiness.

Your Honors' most addicted

W. Ames

To the Reader

I gladly call to mind the time, when being young, I heard worthy Master Perkins, so preach in a great assembly of students, that he instructed them soundly in the truth, stirred them up effectually to seek after godliness, made them fit for the kingdom of God, and by his own example showed them, what things they should chiefly intend, that they might promote true religion, in the power of it, unto God's glory, and other's salvation;

And amongst other things which he preached profitably, he began at length to teach, how with the tongue of the learned on might speak a word in due season to him that is weary, out of Isa 50:4, by untying and explaining diligently cases of conscience (as they are called). And the Lord found him so doing like a faithful servant. Yet left he many behind him affected with that study, who by their godly sermons (through God's assistance) made it to run, increase, and be glorified throughout England.

My heart has ever since been so set upon that study, that I have thought it worthy to be followed with all care, by all men. Since also (God's good providence so disposing it) that I lived out of mine own country. I did observe that in diverse churches, pure both for doctrine and order, this practical teaching was much wanting, and that this want was one of the chief causes of the great neglect, or carelessness in some duties which nearly concerns godliness and a Christian life. My mind was set on, as it were by violence, to try at least in private, whether I were able to prevail with some young men that purpose the ministry, small fruit was to be hoped for. Being afterwards called to a public charge of teaching in the university, I esteemed nothing better, or more excellent, than to go before those that were students for the ministry, in this manner of teaching.

This part of prophecy hath hitherto been less practiced in the schools of the prophets, because our captains were necessarily enforced to fight always in the front against the enemies to defend the faith, and to purge the floor of the church; so that they could not plant and water the fields and vineyards as they desired, as it used to fall out in time of hot wars. They thought with themselves in the mean while (as one of some note

writes), If we have that single and clear eye of the gospel, if in the house of our heart the candle of pure faith be set upon a candlestick, these small matters might easily be discussed: but experience hath taught at length, that through neglect of this husbandry, a famine of godliness hath followed in many places, and out of that famine a grievous spiritual plague; insomuch that the counsel of Nehemiah had need to be practiced; namely, that every man should labor in this work with one hand, holding in the other a spear or a dart, whereby he may repel the violence of the enemies. The same experience hath likewise taught, that these small matters (if so be that so necessary things may be so called) are despised with no less madness, than if one would suffer the fingers and toes of his hands and feet to be cut off as some small things, without which he hope to walk and use his hands well enough. All things therefore being rightly weighed, I have taken in hand (God also liking it, as I am persuaded) these instructions touching the power of conscience. Not that I hope that any perfect thing, in this kind, can come from me; for there are more kinds of things this way, than that certain answers can be given (by me at least) to every one) but that I might do something whereby the unlearned, and such as are destitute of better help, might somewhat be helped; and that the more learned might be excited to set forth some more perfect and exact thing. Of which duty the godly, learned, grave, ancient preachers are properly the debtors, whose daily labor it is to deal with the consciences of men; who though their experience have learned much better, what those questions are, in which the conscience useth most to doubt, and out of what grounds they may be best unfolded; then can easily be understood by one that lives privately in an academic profession. And indeed, if such things were handled in the meetings of preachers, according to the variety of cases that fall out; and the more remarkable decisions set down in writing; the children of Israel should not need to go down to the Philistines (that is, our students to popish authors) to sharpen every man his share, his mattock, or his axe, or his weeding hook, as it fell out in the extreme necessity of God's people, 1 Sam 13:20.

Furthermore if such as are addicted to the ministry, were first instructed in these things, and were seriously tried in them at the examination, before they were ordained, one might well hope, to have as well preachers as churches, more according to God's heart and Christ's, then now we have.

The papists have labored much this way, to instruct their confessors: and in a great deal of earth and dirt of superstitions, they have some veins of silver: out of which, I suppose, I have drawn some things that are not to be despised. But they are without the life of this doctrine: and death is in their pot. The things it self requires, that by others, other things be taught, and the same things, after another manner. I have gone about to perform this in part: and others I make no question, will endeavor it.

I follow here the same method, that I did in my Marrow of Divinity, of the second part whereof, the three last of these books are a full exposition: which perhaps, those did expect that desired importunately, even to daily reproving of me for not doing it, that the publishing of this treatise might be hastened. But (to make an end at length of my Preface) I will conclude many things in few words, and that in the words of G. Parisiensis; "Concerning these things, many things we have not written for unskilfulness, many for other necessary business, many for dullness, many through fear of being tedious, many more because of our sins, which most of all hinder both us and others in such things. We doubt not, but we are subject to the danger of slanderous backbiters, but by doing what we may, we have given some fit occasions to wise men, and we have set forth, not a dry sand ground of fruitless disputations, but a most profitable and healthful place for wits to exercise themselves in."

W. Ames

**A Summary Collection of the former Treatise,
according as it was set forth in a public Disputation,
to encourage and stir up to the study of Practical Divinity**

DIVINE POSITIONS CONCERNING CONSCIENCE

Knowledge puffeth up; Love edifieth: But greatest conscience ought to be made of edifying the Conscience. 1 Cor 8:1,10

2 Conscience is a man's judgment of himself, according to God's judgment of him, Isa 5:3.

3 There is a certain inclination of the will, whereby it can naturally both stir up the understanding to this kind of judgment, and also follow it: This inclination by some is named Conscience, by others a part of conscience, but not truly; For neither the name of Conscience, nor the acts thereof, which are mentioned in the Scriptures, import any other power of faculty, then the understanding, Rom 2:15.

4 Yet every act of understanding is not conscience, but only those which make up such a Practical judgment, as was before handled in the second Position.

5 By Judgment, is most properly meant the act of judging, and not the habit or faculty only, Rom 2:15.

6 The whole nature of conscience is contained in no other judgment, but what is Diametrical, or Discursive, because Accusing, Excusing, Comforting, and such like acts of conscience, cannot be, but by some

middle or third argument, whose strength appears in a Syllogism, only by the consequence, Rom 6:11. The word translated, Reckon your self, signifies, Reason out.

7 The Major of that Syllogism, wherein the whole judgment of conscience is laid open, treateth always of the Law, the Minor of the fact and state; and the conclusion of the relation that ariseth from our fact or state, by reason of that Law; which is either guilt, or spiritual Joy.

For example, He that liveth in sin, shall die,

I live in sin:

Therefore I shall die

Or thus, Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not die,

But I believe in Christ:

Therefore I shall not die, but live, Rom 8:13:33,34 1 Jn 3:19,20

8 Conscience in regard of the Major, is called a Law: in regard of the Minor and conclusion, a Witness; but in regard of the Minor, most properly, an Index, or Book: and in regard of the Conclusion, most properly, a Judge, Rom 2:14,15

9 The Major is given by the Synteresis, which the Schoolmen call Synderesis: the Minor is peculiarly called Syneidesis, or Conscience, the conclusion is the Krisis it self, or Judgment.

10 Synteresis is properly an intellectual habit, whereby we give our consent to the principles of moral actions. It differeth not therefore from the Law of nature which is naturally written in the hearts of all men: but in respect only.

11 Though therefore Conscience may be hindered from working for a while, yet can it not be fully extinguished or lost. No man is so desperately wicked, as to be without a Conscience altogether: No not the Libertines, who place their deadly perfection, in putting out the Conscience of sin:

12 To this part of Conscience Synteresis being largely taken, belong all Practical truths whereof we are persuaded; whether they be drawn out of natural principles, by consequence, or communicated by Divine revelation.

13 Hence ariseth the distinction of a natural and an enlightened Conscience. The Scripture sometimes doth appeal to this, as Rom 6:3 sometimes to that as 1 Cor 6:9&11:14

14 Hence the adequate or full rule of conscience is the revealed will of God, which both declares and prescribes man's duty.

15 Conscience therefore is properly subject to God's will and authority alone, Jam 4:12. Neither can it be subject to any creature, without Idolatry.

16 Hence also it is, that though men be bound in conscience before God, to obey and keep the just Laws of men after a just manner, Rom 13:5 Yet those Laws of men, as they are men's Laws, do not bind the Conscience.

17 Conscience so bindeth man, in all those things which it judgeth are his duty, by the will of God; that he cannot be free from it, by the authority of any creature, Acts 4:19. In this respect it is, that he that knoweth God's will, is said to be a debtor, Rom 1:14 a servant, Rom 6:16 bound, Acts 20:22 constrained, 2 Cor 5:14 to have necessity laid upon him, 1 Cor 9:16. So that he cannot do otherwise, Acts 3:20.

18 The power of Conscience is so great, that it maketh an action, which in its own nature is indifferent, to be either good or bad: and that which in its own nature is good, to be evil: although it cannot make that become good, which is evil in its own nature.

19 Yet no action is better or worse, for that Conscience that one hath, after he hath done it.

20 An erroneous Conscience bindeth always so far, that he that doth against the judgment thereof, sinneth. For formally, and by interpretation he doth it against God's will.

21 If the error of conscience about the action (that is, the object or matter about which the action is) be not sinful, the Conscience erring, binds as much as if it did not err.

22 Conscience, through error, judging that to be lawful, or necessary, which is unlawful doth so far bind, as that a man sins who doth contrary to it; and sins also, if he do according to the direction of it.

23 Yet this necessity wherein some are entangled, is not contrary to the equity of God's Law. 1. Because the sin is not the same on both hands: on the one hand a man sins in doing what is unlawful; and on the other, in doing it unlawfully: viz. Without or against Conscience. 2. Because it is not an absolute necessity, but upon supposition only, viz. if they keep still such a Conscience, which they ought to lay down, Eph 4:22 3. Because it doth not flow from the nature of the Law of God, but both is contracted and continued by man's sin. For no man is thus entangled but by his own fault.

24 Conscience judging that to be unlawful, which is lawful, bindeth to refrain from that lawful thing, Rom 14:14,15 He likewise that judgeth to be necessary which is but lawful, is bound to the doing of it: because a man may abstain from lawful things: and may also constantly practice them without sinning.

25 Nothing may be done whereof the Conscience doubts, Romans 14:23

26 In doubtful cases, the surest part is to be chosen; now that is the surest part, in doing which, its sure there is no sin.

27 It is lawful, and the best sometimes, to do against some scruple of Conscience.

28 The reviewing of our actions, or estate, which by our knowledge of the Law maketh up the Minor of that practical Syllogism, which the Conscience maketh. It is called in Scripture, a beholding of the mind, Ps 119:15. Understanding, Ps 50:22. A casting up one's ways, Ps 119:59. A laying of the heart, Hag 1:5. A saying to the heart, or in the heart of them, Hos 7:2. A turning again, unto the heart, Jer 12:11 Mal 2:2. And lastly, a proving and examining of our selves, 2 Cor 13:5.

29 In the conclusion of that Syllogism, a man applieth to himself the Law of God, which concerneth his actions or condition, and passeth sentence on himself: whence there followeth necessarily, either an Excusing, Absolving and Approbation; or an Accusation and condemnation, with affections answerable to them Rom 2:15.

30 Though this application in its own nature follow the former acts of Conscience; as a conclusion doth the premises: yet through man's wickedness, it falleth out oftentimes, that though Major be fully and firmly acknowledged, and the Minor also in a sort; yet the Conclusion and application is not made. Rom 2:18, 20:21, 2 Sam 12:5,6.

31 Hence it is, that a necessity lies upon all faithful Pastors, not only to propound God's Will in general, but according to their abilities, to help men, both in public and private to apply it according as their understandings, and consciences shall require, Rom 12:7, Mt 14:4.

32 A Conscience honestly good, is that, which judgeth rightly and powerfully. Heb 13:18. That which doth otherwise, is sinfully Evil, Isa 5:20, Rom 1:18.

33 A Conscience peaceably good, is that, which excuseth, absolveth, comforteth, Acts 24:16.

34 Conscience since the fall, is not both honestly and peaceably good, but by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, Heb 9:13,14 & 10:22. And the virtue of him in the sanctification of the Spirit, 1 Tim 1:5 Acts 15:8,9.

35 A Conscience peaceably good may be sinfully evil, and that which is evil through trouble, and accuseth, may be honestly good.

36 A weak Conscience differeth in kind from that which is evil through trouble, and accuseth, may be honestly good.

36 A weak Conscience differeth in kind from that which is acted, either by malice, or arrogance, or superstition.

37 There is but this one way, to pacify a Conscience troubled upon good grounds: to bring him that is troubled into such a state by true Faith and repentance, that the Minor of that Syllogism which troubleth him, may

upon good grounds become false, and prove such as may be lawfully denied.

38 When the Conscience of Believers are sinful in being troubled, the Major or Minor of that reasoning which caused the trouble, may always be denied and confuted. And this is the only way to heal such a conscience.

Corollaries

1. The greatest violation of Conscience is the greatest sin.
2. The greatest anguish of Conscience is the greatest punishment.
3. That uncertainty of God's favor, which the Papists hold, and that uncertainty of persevering in grace, which others teach, is clean contrary to that solid joy, and strong confidence, which proceedeth from a Conscience truly good.
4. The interpretation of the Scriptures, or a judgment to discern God's Will for a man's self, in his own Conscience, belongs to every man.

Chapter 1

The definition of Conscience

The Conscience of man (for I do not intend to treat of the Conscience of Angels) Is a man's judgment of himself, according to the judgment of God of him. Isa 5:3 *Judge* I pray you between me and my Vineyard: 1 Cor 1:31 If we would *judge* ourselves, we should not be *judged*, etc.

1 I call Conscience *Judgment*, First, to show that it belongs to the Understanding, not to the Will. The very name of Conscience sheweth it to be so, But this proveth it, because all those actions, which in the Scriptures are attributed to man's Conscience, do properly belong to the reasonable power, or faculty, (though the Will by some act or inclination can both command the Understanding to judge, and also follow that judgment). This inclination, by some, is Conscience; by others, a part of Conscience; but not rightly.

2 Conscience being referred to *judgment*, it is distinguished from the bare apprehension of truth. For Conscience doth always suppose an assent that is firm and settled.

3 By the definition of Conscience, it appeareth that Conscience is not a *contemplative judgment*, whereby truth is simply discerned from falsehood: but a *practical* judgment, by which that which a man knoweth is particularly applied to that which is either good or evil to him, to the end that it may be a rule within him to direct his will.

Seeing that this name of *judgment*, is sometimes taken for a power and faculty, sometime for an habit, sometimes for an act; this question ariseth; to which of all these *Conscience* is properly.

4 The most grave Divine, *William Perkins* (who only of our Countrymen hath set forth a peculiar Treatise of *Conscience*) doth place it among *Faculties*; and he doth define it, as he puts for the general nature of it a part of the Understanding, that is to say, as he explains himself, *A natural power or faculty*. He gives this reason of his opinion, namely because the act of accusing, comforting, terrifying, etc. cannot be ascribed to the

Conscience, if it self were an act. But this reason is weak: because in the Scriptures such kinds of effects are attributed to the thoughts themselves, which undoubtedly are acts, Rom 2:15. *Their thoughts accusing one another, or excusing.* The reason whereof is, because things done, are the effects not only of the Mover, but also of the motion it self. Besides, Master *Perkins* maketh Conscience, Understanding, Opinion, Knowledge, Faith, and Prudence, to be of one kind or sort; but none would define these so, as that they should be taken for distinct faculties of the soul.

5 Some of the Schoolmen will have Conscience to be an habit: as *Scotus, Bonaventura, Durand.* Which though it might be granted of some part: or of the principles of Conscience: yet it cannot be granted simply of all that which is signified by the name of Conscience: for the only office of an Habit, as it is an habit, is, *Inclinare ad promptę agendum*, to make one do a thing readily: but Conscience hath other operations, which belong properly to it, as to Accuse, Comfort, etc.

6 By *Judgment* therefore, in the definition of conscience, (I understand most properly with the best Schoolmen) an act of practical judgment, proceeding from the Understanding by the power or means of a Habit.

7 The acts of judgment are, either a simple apprehension, or a discourse. Whence it may be asked, to which of these belongs Conscience.

It belongs to judgment discoursing, because it cannot do its act of accusing, excusing, comforting, unless it be through the means of some third argument, whose force appeareth only in a Syllogism, by that which is deduced and concluded out of it.

8 The force and nature of Conscience therefore is contained in such a Syllogism.

He that lives in sin, shall die:

I live in sin:

Therefore, *I shall die.*

Or thus:

Whosoever believes in Christ, shall not die but live.

I believe in Christ:

Therefore, I shall live.

9 Conscience in regard of the Proposition is called a *Light* and a *Law*; in regard of the Assumption and conclusion, a *Witness*; but in regard of the assumption it is most fitly termed an *Index*, or a *Book*, and in regard of the conclusion, most properly a *Judge*.

10 That which doth dictate or give the proposition is called *Synteresis*, by the Schoolmen *Synderesis*. The assumption especially and peculiarly is called *Syneidesis*, the conclusion is the *Crisis*, or Judgment.

11 There be many other Syllogisms which belong to Conscience, as either they do prove the proposition of such a principal Syllogism, or illustrate the conclusion it self: but in the Syllogism alone is contained the whole nature of Conscience. The proposition treateth of the Law; the Assumption of the fact or state, and Conclusion of the relation arising from the fact or state, in regard of that Law; The Conclusion either pronounceth one guilty, or giveth spiritual peace and security.

Chapter 2

Of the *Synteresis* or Principles and rules by which Conscience judgeth

That *Synteresis* out of which the proposition of this syllogism or the Law of Conscience is taken, is most properly a habit of the understanding, by which we do assent unto the principles of *moral actions*, that is, such actions as are our duty, because God hath willed, or commanded them; whence it hath the name in Greek from conserving; for through the goodness of God the knowledge of many things which we ought to do or shun, are still conserved in man's mind even after his fall.

That exposition of *Durand* who dreams that the Greek word *Synteresis* signifies a Coelection, is too harsh and absurd.

2 Because this *Synteresis* is an habit, therefore many do call Conscience, an habit: but it is only the principle of conscience, neither doth it make up any part of conscience, but only as conscience is in its exercise.

3 This *Synteresis* is termed a *natural habit* in respect of the light whereby the understanding of man is fitted to give assent unto Natural principles; it is likewise called and *acquired habit*, in regard of the Species, or of the fuller understanding of that whereunto the understanding is naturally inabled, and can (as it were) understand presently.

4 This *Synteresis* differs only in respect or apprehension from the Law of Nature or from that Law of God, which is naturally written in the hearts of all men; for the law is the object, and *Synteresis* is the object apprehended, or the apprehension of the object.

5 This *Synteresis* may for a time be hindered from acting, but cannot be utterly extinguished or lost. Hence it is that no man is so desperately wicked as to be void of all Conscience.

6 To *Synteresis* being taken after a large sense, ought to be referred, not only general conclusions touching right or Law, which are deduced by

good consequence out of natural principles, but likewise all practical truths, whereunto we give a firm assent, through the revelation we have by faith.

7 From hence ariseth the distinction of Conscience into that which is *Natural*, and that which is *Enlightened*. *Natural* Conscience is that which acknowledgeth for law the principles of nature, and the conclusions arising from them. *Enlightened* is that which doth beside those, acknowledge whatsoever is prescribed in the Scriptures. The Scripture sometimes speaketh of this last: *Rom 6:3* and sometimes of the other as *1 Cor 6:8*.

8 From hence it appeareth that the perfect and only rule of Conscience is the revealed will of God, whereby a man's duty is both shown and commanded. For *Synteresis* in a more large sense consisteth, partly of moral principles that are naturally in us, together with their conclusions, & partly, of those which God besides them hath enjoined. But the revealed will of God whereby man knows his duty, containeth both these.

9 Hence it is that the *Law* of God only doth *bind* the conscience of man. By the *Law* of God we understand that revealed will of God, whereof we have made mention: *viz.* as it doth also contain those things which are commanded in the Gospel.

10 To *bind* (in this moral sense) is to have such an authority, as the Conscience ought to submit itself unto: And it were a sin to do anything contrary to it.

11 Hence it is, that though men be bound in Conscience by God to observe in due and just circumstances the laws of men, yet the same laws of men so far as they are man's laws, do not bind the Conscience.

12 The conscience is immediately subject to God, and his will, and therefore it cannot submit it self unto any creature without Idolatry.

13 God only knows the inward workings of the Conscience; he therefore only can prescribe a law unto it, or bind it by one,

14 God only can punish the Conscience when it sinneth; he therefore only can forbid any thing to it.

15 Even a promise (which in it self is sacred) thought it be confirmed by an oath: as it is an act of man doth not properly bind the Conscience, for the former reasons; though men are bound in conscience by God to a strict and faithful keeping of them. For as it hath been said before of the Laws of men, it may also in some sort be affirmed of all covenants and other conditions, which being made, a man is bound to keep out of Conscience to God; as for example, the sick person is bound in Conscience to obey the counsel of Physicians for his health; But the receipts prescribed by Physicians, do not bind the conscience. So again, Parents and children are bound to mutual duties; he that hath received a benefit is bound to show himself thankful, (and the like may be said of many other things) yet none of these, either Parent, Benefactor, relation, or benefit, do of themselves bind the Conscience, but the will of God in them.

Chapter 3

Of the Office of Conscience

The office of Conscience, (if we speak with respect to the *Synteresis* or Laws of it,) is one in necessary things; Another in things of middle and indifferent nature. In necessary things conscience hath two acts: 1. To bind, 2. To enforce practice.

2 Conscience bindeth according as it is informed of the will of God: for in it self it hath the power of a will of God, and so stands in the place of God himself.

3 God's will as it is understood, or may be understood, binds the Conscience to assent; As it is acknowledged and received by Conscience, it binds the whole man to obey and do it presently.

4 Conscience bindeth so straitly that the command of no creature can free a man from it.

5 Hence man, as he maketh conscience of the will of God commanding him some duty, is in that regard called a *Debtor*, *Rom 1:14* a *Servant*, *Rom 6:16* is said to be *bound*, *Acts 20:22* *contrained*, *2 Cor 5:14* to *have a necessity laid upon him* *1 Cor 9:16* so that he cannot do otherwise *Acts 4:20*.

6 Conscience enforceth to obedience by virtue of this its act of binding. For that is to the will an impulsive cause to make it carry itself conscientiously.

7 This enforcement is signified in the forenamed places and phrases: the strength and power thereof is declared, *Jer 20:9*. Wherefore I thought from henceforth not to speak of him, nor to preach any thing in his name, but the word of the Lord, was a very *burning fire in my heart*, and in my bones: *Amos 3:8*. The Lion hath roared, who will not be afraid? the Lord hath spoken, who *can* but *prophecy*? *Acts 17:16* his spirit was *stirred* in him.

8 If there be a constant disposition of will in a man consenting to this instigation of Conscience, they do together make up a Conscience morally good.

9 In indifferent things the actions and duties of Conscience are likewise two: 1. To discern, 2. To direct.

10 To discern, is to show and declare the differences of things what is necessary, what is free, what is lawful, and what is unlawful.

11 To direct is with regard had to circumstances, to order lawful actions unto a good end.

12 The ends which are always to be aimed at, even in indifferent things also, are the Glory of God, the edifying of our Neighbor, and the help of our necessary actions.

13 The power of this direction is so great, that it makes an action to be good, which in its own nature is but indifferent; as on the other side, not only an evil direction, but the want of a good direction, makes the same action to be bad.

Chapter 4

Of an erroneous Conscience

Touching this doctrine, of the first acts and offices of Conscience, diverse questions are moved, which being of great weight and moment, for the directing of our actions aright throughout our whole life, ought of necessity to be here cleared, though briefly.

Quest. The first question is, whether an erroneous conscience doth bind?

Answ. To unfold this question rightly, these five things are briefly to be opened: 1. What an erroneous Conscience is. 2. About what things it is conversant. 3. Whence the error of Conscience cometh. 4. The general differences of these errors. 5. The several ways of binding.

1 An erroneous conscience is either opposed *privatively* to a good conscience, so it comprehendeth every conscience that judgeth not rightly when it ought, even the doubtful and scrupulous Conscience also: or *positively*, so it signifieth only that conscience, that judgeth otherwise than the thing is, this kind of erroneous conscience is distinguished from a doubting and scrupulous Conscience, by the firm assent it giveth, though it erreth in giving it. In this question we speak of a conscience positively erring.

2 There are some principles so clear, and written in the hearts of all men, that they cannot err to obey and practice them: such as this is, *That God ought to be loved; Perjury ought to be eschewed*: no man's Conscience can err in such like things as these, or do them against Conscience. A man cannot love God against his Conscience, etc. Conscience therefore doth err properly about conclusions that are gathered from such principles.

3 The error of Conscience comes, either because that the particular conclusions are not rightly drawn out of the general principles: or because those things which God in the Scripture hath commanded us to believe, are not sufficiently understood: Or finally, because the assent of

Faith is not given to those things which ought to be believed, though they be understood. The cause of this (besides God's secret judgments) is either the not considering of those things which ought to be considered, or some evil disposition, which either keeps the mind from due inquiry, or averts it from judging rightly.

4 The error of Conscience is either about the *act*, or the *rule* of it. The error which is about the *rule*, is either after the action done, or before it. The error about the rule before the action be done consists: Either in that it judgeth that to be lawful, which is unlawful; Or in that it judgeth that to be unlawful, which is lawful; Or in that it judgeth that to be bounden duty, which either is unlawful, or but lawful.

5 To bind to a thing, and to bind, are distinguished by some; Conscience is said to bind to a thing (*Obligare*) when its not only a sin to do any thing against it, but also not to do according to it. Conscience is said to bind (*Ligare*) when one cannot lawfully do a thing, whilst he maketh such a Conscience of it. One shall sin in doing against it, and sin though he do according to it. The sense and meaning of this distinction is to be approved: as for the terms of it, let the Authors thereof answer.

To bind to a thing (*Obligare*) is by some in regard of the object, or thing bound to, distinguished thus. One is either bound to do according to Conscience erring, or to lay aside that Conscience. But this distinction is not exact, because Conscience bindeth not, but so far as it doth dictate, or declare a thing: now no Conscience while it erreth doth declare, that the error thereof is to be left. Or that itself is not to be regarded, because it is erroneous.

Others put a difference between that Obligation, whereby one is tied to do what Conscience commandeth and that whereby one is tied not to do the contrary. But neither is this distinction always good. For if a man's conscience told him he might lie to save his lie, he must either lie, or of necessity go against his Conscience.

6 Out of these grounds the question may be thus answered: First, conscience, though erroneous, binds always so, that he that doth against it, sinneth. The reason is, because he that doth against conscience, doth against God's will: though not materially, and truly; yet formally, and by

interpretation: because what the conscience doth declare, it declareth as God's will. As for example,

He that revileth a private man taking him for the King, and not to be a private man, he is interpreted and judged to have done it to the King himself; so likewise, he that contemneth Conscience, contemneth God himself, because that which Conscience saith, is supposed to be the will of God. Hence it is that he always sinneth who doth any thing against conscience: but if the conscience doth not err, but the thing is as erroneous conscience supposeth, then he sinneth doubly. First, in doing that which is ill in it self; and secondly, in doing it after an evil manner: evil it is in its own nature, and evil because of the despising of conscience: but if the conscience doth err, that which it doth is not evil, but it doth it after an evil manner; so that the evil is only this, namely, the contempt of conscience.

7 The error of conscience which is about an action (that is, the error which is about the object or matter, about which an action ought to be exercised) is either *unvoluntary and blameless*, or *voluntary and worthy of blame*. If it be *unvoluntary and blameless*, then conscience binds to do a things as much, as if it did not err. For example, If a man should verily believe some thing to make use of it as his own. If one do verily believe he is his Prince, that is in truth a Tyrant; or that he is a lawful Magistrate, who indeed usurps the title; he is bound to yield due obedience unto him. We have an example hereof in *Jacob* that went in to *Leah* that was none of his wife, whom he verily thought was his wife *Rachel*.

8 If the error be *voluntary*, then it is to be judged of, as an error which is of the *law* or *rule*.

9 Conscience erring touching the Law *after the fact*, (in believing that which it hath done well, to be sin; or contrariwise) hath no power to bind in regard of that action which is past: because *binding* and *obliging* have ever a regard to future actions: and a moral action (as the will itself) is always guided and informed by a foregoing apprehension, and not by that conscience which is after it. Yet doth this conscience so far bind (through occasion of that which is done) that one cannot lawfully go on to

do the like again, so long as he hath such a conscience, *viz. That he hath sinned* (though he hath not) *in doing so before*.

10 Conscience through error, judging that to be *lawful* which is *unlawful*; as that it is lawful for one to lie, to save his own, or his neighbor's life; *binds* indeed, but doth not bind *to do* so. It binds because one that hath such a conscience, can neither lie, nor abstain from lying, without sin. He cannot lie, because this is simply unlawful. He cannot abstain from lying, with such a conscience, because such manner of forbearance is forbidden by God, though forbearing itself be commanded. For God requires not only that we do good, and abstain from doing evil; but likewise that we perform both these with a good conscience, and not with a bad one. Such a conscience doth not *bind to do* what it saith. First because there is no obligation to unlawful things. Secondly, because Conscience bindeth not to do, but by virtue of some command of God; but such a conscience is not grounded upon any command: for the Law of God can neither incline nor bind any man to sin. Thirdly, because this error is always a sin, but a sin doth not bind to practice it. Fourthly, because such a Conscience hath never so sure a ground, as that there needeth not further examination and inquiry into things. Fifthly, because man is bound to lay down such a conscience; for although that be not exactly enough spoken which some do affirm, namely; *That such a Conscience bindeth a man to lay down it self*; yet it is most certain, that a man is tied to lay down such an erroneous Conscience, for it is a part of that old man, whom we are commanded to put off, *Eph 4:22*.

11 Conscience judging that which is lawful to be unlawful, bindeth to abstain from the practice and use of it. *Rom 14:23* The reason is, because one may abstain from lawful things without sin.

12 Conscience judging that to be bounden duty which is unlawful, binds, but not to the practice of it, for the reasons set down in the ninth Thesis.

13 Conscience judging that to be bounden duty which is only lawful, bindeth to the practice of it; as for example, If any man's conscience tell him that it is necessary to uncover his hands always when he prays publicly; He must pray so, because lawful things may be observed constantly without sin.

Object. If an erroneous conscience doth so bind that we may neither follow, nor not follow it without sin, then there lies a kind of necessity of sinning on those that do thus err, which cannot stand with the equity of God's Law.

Ans. This necessity of sinning when one is entangled by his own erroneous conscience, is not the same both ways, viz. Whether one do, or do not, according to conscience; for if one do according to his erring conscience, the sin is in the action done; If he do what is not according to it, the sin is in the manner of doing.

2 It is not an absolute necessity, but upon supposition; namely, if he keep still such a conscience, which he both may, and ought to lay down.

3 This necessity doth not flow from the nature of God's Law, but is contracted and continued through man's sin, for no man is thus intangled without his own fault.

Quest. Whether is it a greater sin to do against such an erroneous conscience, or to do according to it.

Ans. We ought to judge of the greatness of sin according to the quality of the thing which is to be done or omitted, as it is in its own nature, and as it is apprehended by us. If any man through error of conscience should hold it to be an unlawful thing to go to the Church, and serve God there (which otherwise he is tied to do) because he knows the Preacher to be a lewd and naughty man, and thinks that he shall be partaker with him in his wickedness; his sin is greater in staying away, then if he were present there: because it is a greater sin, to neglect God's service, than to communicate with an other's personal wickedness in that service. But if he should think it unlawful to be present at holy duties for Idolatry, which he judgeth will be committed there, he should sin more heinously if he should be present there: because the sin of Idolatry, is greater than a neglect of true worship. In the first instance; he sins more that follows his conscience, than he that doth against it; but in this, his sin is greater that doth contrary to it: No certain and general rule therefore can be set down in this matter.

Chapter 5

Of a surmising and doubting Conscience

Quest. 1 Whether a man may content himself with a doubting Conscience.

Ans. For the unfolding of this question, it is to be noted, that *Opinion* sometimes signifies a certain and settled judgment without all doubting. A certain judgment not arising from Sense, Knowledge, or true Faith, but Reason, Sometimes it is taken more strictly; For that judgment whereby indeed we assent to the truth of a thing, but not without suspicion, fear, or doubting of its being otherwise.

Upon this distinction, I answer: First, in such things as are necessary to salvation, and God's worship, no opinion can be sufficient, though it have never so great certainty of reason; because Faith is required to these, and Faith takes only the infallible word of God.

2 In such things which are more remote from their principles, diligent care is to be had, that we also get a certain persuasion, or belief of them out of the Scripture; but if that cannot be obtained, it is lawful in actions to follow some such *opinion*, as is certain and tried by the rule of Scripture.

3 Using all diligence to be certain (though we be not) it is lawful in many things to follow that opinion, which is most probable.

4 It is never lawful to do against our own opinion, whether it be certain, or probable, for respect to other men's authority.

5 No man can at the same time have two *contrary probable opinions*, concerning the same thing; so as he may lawfully leave the one, and follow the other.

Quest. 2. What shall one do when his Conscience is doubtful?

Ans. For the declaration of this question, we must observe: First, Conscience is said to be doubtful in a large sense, as when the assent even of Faith, or Opinion *prevaileth*; yet there is some doubting joined.

But strictly, and properly, that Conscience is named *doubting*, which yieldeth to neither part of the question in hand, but sticks and staggers between assent and dissent, not knowing which to do.

Touching the first sort of *doubting*, it hath partly been spoken in the former question, and shall partly be spoken of in the question following. Here we treat of that Conscience, which in a proper and strict sense is called *doubting*.

Secondly, *doubting* is either *Speculative*, or *Practical*. *Speculative* is that, which is *not immediately* conversant about some particular action, as whether this or that be to be done or avoided, etc.

Answ. These things being laid down, it is answered;

First, in all those *doubts* which do any way belong to our practice, diligent inquiry is to be made, that we may clearly perceive the truth and not *doubt*; because while the mind remains in *doubt*, the action must of necessity want that perfection which it would have, if it were done with Knowledge, and certainty of judgment. For the more certain our knowledge is touching those things which we do, the more *confident* we are in doing, and more *joyful* when we have done them.

2 Oft times it is lawful to do a thing, though a *speculative doubt* remain, because he that doth so, doth not necessarily do either against a *doubting* Conscience, not without a *persuaded* Conscience; for not withstanding that *speculative doubt*, he may assuredly conclude with himself; that, that which he doth, ought to be done. As for example, A man possesseth a piece of ground lawfully, and begins to doubt whether it be his own or not; yet if he know not, that it belongs to any other body, he may lawfully keep the same still, because other things being considered, possession is a better ground to keep it, than doubting is to leave it.

3 It is not lawful to do any thing against a *Practical* doubt; that is, a doubt whether the thing to be done be lawful: The reason is, 1. Because a man cannot do it of faith, *Rom 14:23* 2. Because, he that doth so, doth not sufficiently abhor sin: for willingly and wittingly he exposeth himself to the danger of sinning. 3. Because he is not fully enough addicted to God's

will; for as he that doth that willingly, whereof he doubts, whether it be acceptable to his friend or no, doth against the law of friendship: so he that doth that whereof he doubts, whether it be acceptable to God or not; doth against the law of love to God. 4. In things doubtful, the safest way is to be chosen; but that is the safest part, which if we follow, it is certain we shall not sin. As for example, A man doubteth whether *Usury* be lawful or not? The safest way is to abstain; for herein is no danger of sinning.

Some of the Philosophers had some knowledge of the equity of this rule, whose Judgment thereof *Tully* relates, and approves: Office: Lib. 1.

Those give good counsel (sayeth he) who forbid to do any thing whereof one doubts, whether it be just or unjust: the equity thereof is apparent in it self, because Doubting imports, thought, or fear of being hurt.

Chapter 6

Of a scrupulous Conscience

Quest. What is to be done when the conscience is scrupulous?

Answ. For the understanding of this question, we must consider.

1 That a *Scruple* is a fear of the mind concerning its practice, which vexeth the conscience, as a little stone that cannot be discerned in man's shoe, paineth his foot.

2 Every *fear* is not properly a *Scruple*, but that which ariseth from *sleight*, or *no* arguments.

3 One is *scrupulous* either in *examining* what he *hath* done, or in *ordering* what he is to do.

4 *Scruples* do arise, (God so ordaining) to the end he may either punish or try men: sometimes out of the suggestion of the Devil, sometime from want of knowledge, sometimes from Melancholy, or some such like constitution of body; sometimes from the society of scrupulous men.

5 A *Scrupulous* conscience differs from a *Doubtful* one, in this, that a *Doubtful* conscience doth assent to neither part of the question, but the *scrupulous* conscience doth assent to one, but is solicited to the other part, by a kind of fear.

These things being set down, it is answered to the question. 1. (God being instantly called unto for grace,) one must labour diligently to *remove* these scruples, which reason can take away by due trial of the grounds of them. For then is the conscience most quiet, when it hath most certain knowledge. 2 It helpeth much (if it may be conveniently) that the thinking upon those things be shunned, from which scruples may rise; for the fancy being once stirred, many thoughts arise, which cannot be suppressed again, without great difficulty. As we see in Tiles, that are linked together in order, if one happen to fall down, the rest will follow: and from hence are scruples multiplied in timorous consciences.

3 Many scruples when they cannot well be taken away by some contrary reason, ought to be laid down as it were by violence, refusing to think or consider of them. For so long as scruples are not actually applied, they are not troublesome: And some be so troublesome that the weaker and more unskillful sort, can by no other means be rid of them. The bending of the mind attentively to remove a scruple by reason, doth often either ingender or increase a scruple: as for example, All people know that the name of God ought to be called upon daily; yet one may be so vexed with impious thoughts, that this scruple may arise in a man, whether he ought to pray or not? Here it is not always a safe way to examine these thoughts, nor yet to dispute about this question long, but to throw away this fear, as it were with violence, and to fall upon the duty of prayer so well as one can. 4 If they cannot be so removed, but that they do still molest, it is lawful, and the best course, to do a thing against such scruples. As for example, If there be any man that is so molested through the consideration of his unworthiness, that he dare scarce be so bold as to come to the Lord's Table, though he find in himself true Faith and Repentance,; he may and ought notwithstanding this scruple come to the Lord's Supper. Neither is this to do against Conscience, but according to Conscience. For a scruple is a rash fear and without any ground, and so cannot bind to do according to it; yea through custom of doing against such like scruples, Conscience it self is made more strong and settled.

Chapter 7

Of the attention of Conscience to men's actions

Hitherto we have spoken of that *Synteresis*, or Proposition, whence Conscience telleth what is Law. Now follows the second part of the judgment, whereby a man's conscience *bears witness* of his fact according to that *law*. By reason of this act Conscience is named a *witness*, and in the common Proverb, *a thousand witnesses*. It is likewise called a *Book*, *Rev 20:12* because it is left written in man's mind, as it were in a register, what he hath done, and with what intent, and at length is read and spoken of by Conscience.

The assumption of that practical Syllogism wherein Conscience consists, is nothing else, but the *recognizing*; or considering of our action, or estate, as it hath respect to that *Law* which Conscience giveth. For the better understanding of the nature hereof, some things must be made clear concerning the action which is *recognized*; and some things concerning the recognizing it self.

The *action* is either *agreeable* to that which Conscience teacheth, or is *contrary* to it.

The *dictate of Conscience*, whereunto an action is to be conformed, doth some time *go before* and *accompany* the action, and sometimes *follow it*. Against the dictate of Conscience that *goeth before*, or *accompanieth* the action; we have an example in those, of whom the Apostle speaks, *Rom 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*. We have an example of an action committed against the judgment of Conscience, *following* the fact in those Jews which put *Christ* to death through ignorance, *Acts 3:17; 1 Cor 2:8* yet being afterwards better taught, they judged far other ways of their fact, than when they did commit it, *Acts 3:37*.

Quest. From hence ariseth a hard question, how a man can do any thing against the dictate of Conscience which goeth before, or accompanieth his action? the Question ariseth thus.

The *Will*, as it seems to many, cannot will or nill any thing, unless *reason* have first *judged* it to be willed or nilled; neither can it *choose* but *follow* the *last practical judgment*, and do that which *reason* doth dictate to be done: and by consequent, the *will* cannot move against the determination of *conscience*.

Answ. For the unfolding of this matter, these conclusions are to be laid down. It is so clear that no man can question it.

1 That many both may, do, and do against conscience, as it is an *habit*, or **Summary* of Principles: and in so doing, they do in some sense go against Conscience.

2 Against Conscience as it is an *act*, all those do, who do any thing against that judgment which they had *actually*, and yet have *virtually* or in the principle, though actually they judge not as they have done formerly.

3 The *Will* cannot *will*, *desire*, or *follow* after any thing, without a *speculative* apprehension of it, because the object of the will is *known* Good. No man was ever known to desire what he no ways knew.

4 A *bare* and *simple apprehension* of the object, without any *practical judgment*, that forthwith it must be prosecuted, or avoided, may be sufficient to draw forth the *act* of the *Will*. This appeareth sufficiently in mad men, Infants, and in every undeliberate motion of the *will*. The reason of this is, because a *good*, apprehended or known, hath all those conditions, which are required to the Object of the *Will*. The *Will* is as able about its Object, as the *sensitive appetite* is about its: But *sense* is stirred up at the apprehension of its Object, as the Eye at sight of Colours, the Ear at Sounds, etc.

5 The *Will* can at pleasure *suspend* its act about that which is *apprehended* and *judged* to be good; without any *foregoing act of judgment*, that it should do so; for if to *suspend* an act, and to leave off acting, an *act of judgment*, to be necessarily required; then to suspend that judgment, another judgment is requisite; and to suspend that, another; and so *in infinitum*.

6 The *Will* can turn away the understanding from the *consideration* of any object, which at present it apprehendeth and judgeth to be good, to

the consideration that it hath formerly apprehended and judged to be so. Be reason of this commanding power, the *Will* is the first cause of unadvisedness, and blame-worthy error in the understanding. When the *Will* doth first begin, to draw away the understanding from that, which it hath judged to be good, it doth it by its own inclination without any judgment that it should do so; otherwise these two judgments should be together; namely, this ought to be followed, and this ought not, which were absurd.

7 The Will can move it self, towards an object that is apprehended and judged good for profit or pleasure in some respect, though reason judge that it is not lawful but sinful. The reason is: 1. Because whatsoever good the understanding propoundeth to the will, in this life, it propoundeth it with a kind of indifferency of judgment, as not having any necessary connection, with the universal good. Upon which the will is naturally set and determined. Hence it is that *freedom* or *liberty* in an action, is said to be radically in the judgment and reason. 2. Though the will be determined by the understanding in regard of the *specification* or kind of thing to be willed, because it willeth nothing but that which the understanding hath first apprehended; yet in regard of *exercise* or act of willing, it moveth both it self, and the understanding with the rest of the faculties. And hence it is that *liberty* is in the will *formally*, which should not be true, if it were necessarily determined by the understanding. 3. If the judgment being right, the will could not but will aright; then before the first sin of Angels and men, (which was in the *Will*) there must necessarily be an error in the Understanding: and if so, then the punishment of sin should be before the first sin; for all Practical error in the understanding, is either sin, or the punishment of it. 4. If the will do necessarily follow the judgment of the understanding; then there should (in proper speaking) be no sin of *malice*, distinct from those sins, which are committed through ignorance, or passion. But it is manifest, that this kind of sin is found in Devils, and likewise in some men. 5. If the Will do necessarily follow the *Understanding*, then in Regeneration the *Will* it self need not be internally renewed by grace: for the enlightening of the Understanding would be sufficient. But this is repugnant to Faith and Godliness.

8 Though the Will doth not always follow the Judgment, yet doth it ever follow that command whereto it is subject; and that agreeth oftentimes with Judgment. But this command though as touching the direction, it doth belong to the understanding; yet as touching the power and efficacy, it belongeth to the Will. From hence we speak truly, and by the consent of all nations, say, I will Will.

Chapter 8

Of Conscience examining and reviewing actions

We are to treat next of that *reviewing*, which is conversant about our actions and state.

1 I call this a *reviewing*, rather than a *knowledge*; First, because a bare and naked *knowledge* is not sufficient for this act of Conscience, but things must be weighed over and over. Secondly, because there is a *knowledge* which goeth *before*, and accompanieth the action, but this *reviewing followeth* it.

2 This *reviewing* is a reflect act of the *understanding*, whereby a man understandeth, and with judgment, weigheth his own actions with their circumstances. It is commonly called, *Consideration or meditation on ways*. It is called in the Scripture, *A respect or beholding* by the mind, *Ps 119:15 Considering, Ps 50:22 Thinking, or thinking again, Ps 119:59 Laying of the heart, Hag 1:5 A saying in the heart, Jer 5:24 Saying to the heart, Hos 7:2 Returning to the heart, 1 Kings 6:47 A Laying to heart, Jer 12:11 Mal 2:2* and lastly, *A proving or examining of our selves, 2 Cor 13:5*.

3 The *cause* of the *reviewing* of our actions ought to be; First, a care to please God in all things. Secondly, a fear of sinning; for if we *review* our actions upon other grounds, it is not an act of *Conscience*: because it respecteth not the *judgment* of God, which without doubt, it is necessary an act of Conscience should do.

4 The *manner* of this *reviewing* doth consist in these two things; First, that we consider our own actions, not *materially* only, but *formally* also, that is, that we consider not only, what we have done, as it is an *action*, but likewise what, and after what manner it is done, as it is *good* or *evil*. As for example, It is not an act of Conscience, for a man to think, whether he hath overcome his Adversary, or not; but whether in so doing, he hath committed murder or not? whether it be just, or unjust, that he hath done? 2. The *actions* and the *rule* must be compared together. For as

he that speaketh the truth, knoweth not that he speaketh truth, unless he compares his speech with the thing it self; so he that doth well or ill, cannot know the same, unless he compare the fact with its proper rule. The rule of this trial or judgment, must not be our *natural reason*, the *custom of others* or the like; but the *Law*, or *revealed* will of God; For otherwise God's judgment is not respected (to which Conscience looketh) but men's.

5 The *time* which is to be allotted to this *Reviewing*; In regard of evil deeds, is in Scripture noted, sometimes to be before some *threatening* of God, 2 *Sam* 24:13 sometimes after a *threatening*, but before the *judgment* be executed, *Mal* 2:2 and sometime after that God hath *inflicted* his *judgments*, *Hag* 1:5. but the sooner we go in hand with it, the more acceptable it is unto God, and more profitable it is unto us. Hence it is, that this *Meditation* of what we do daily, is reckoned amongst the daily exercises of the godly, *Job* 1:5.

6 Through want of this *Reviewing*, comes 1. *Impenitency* in the greatest sins, *Isa* 44:18 *Eccl* 4:8. *Presumption* in greatest misery, *Rev* 3:17 and so great a *Stupidity*, and those which know many other things, are altogether ignorant of themselves, and what they do. Hence it is that some after they have sworn rashly, and are admonished of their sin, almost with the same breath affirm with an oath, that they did not swear.

7 The *peculiar effects* of this *Reviewing* of our ways, are, 1. In regard of God, A *right judgment* of our ways, *Ezek* 19:25 and *thankfulness*. 2. In respect of our selves, *Humility*: and 3. In respect of others, *Equity* and *Gentleness*, *Tit* 3:3,4.

Chapter 9

Of the application of the Law (by Conscience) to the person, upon the Reviewing of the Action

The Third act of Conscience followeth, whereby the conclusion is gathered from the premiss. This conclusion is an act of Conscience, whereby a man applieth unto himself the Law of God, which concerneth either his action or condition.

2 This conclusion therefore dependeth partly on that general Law, which is pronounced by the *Synteresis*, in the *major* Proposition; and partly, on that *Reviewing* of the action or condition which is contained in the *minor* Proposition. So that it gathereth together the strength of the former acts of Conscience, and maketh the judgment thereof perfect.

3 Like as therefore Conscience is a *Law* in the *major* Proposition, *Rom* 2:14, and in the *minor* a *Witness*, *Rom* 2:15. So in this conclusion, Conscience is most properly a *Judge*, *1 Jn* 3:20. For as in the Proposition God's *Law* is declared, and in the Assumption, the fact or condition of man is examined, according to that Law; So in the conclusion, the sentence concerning man is pronounced according to his *fact*, or *condition*, by virtue of the *Law* that hath been declared.

4 It is well defined therefore by *Application*, because in such a conclusion, God's Commandment and man's fact are mutually joined together, and as it were linked with man, whilst both pass sentence on him.

5 This *Application*, though in it's own nature it follow the former acts of Conscience, like as the conclusion of a syllogism is said to follow necessarily from the premises yet through man's fault it falleth out often, That Conscience doth not do it for a time. Both Proposition are granted, yet conclusion is not made; as for example; A man may in general know and grant that every man that worshippeth not God, is cursed: and may also be conscious to himself, that he is no true worshipper of God, and yet not judge himself accursed. One may also understand sufficiently,

that God is ready to pardon him who repenteth of his sins; He may likewise have witness in himself of his own repentance: yet cannot presently apply to himself pardon, and the mercy of God.

6 This staying, or hindering the conclusion, is more usual in passing Judgment upon evil actions, but happeneth sometimes also in such, as are good.

7 We have an example of the sort in those *Jews* of whom the Apostle speaketh, *Rom 2:18, 20, 21*. And in *David* himself *2 Sam 12:5, 6* who know well enough, what his most evil fact deserved by law, and likewise could not be ignorant of that which he had committed: but halted in the application of the conclusion.

8 An example of the latter kind, we have in all those Believers who repent truly, yet for a long time cannot apply God's mercy to themselves. The cause why Sinners do it not, are; 1. Because they do not consider seriously enough, God's law, and their own facts; for the conclusion proceedeth from the *power* and *efficacy* of the *premises*. 2. Because they have flat contrary conclusions in their Judgments to the Law of God. *Deut 29:19* 3. Because they are afraid of, and avoid these conclusion of Conscience, as most opposite to themselves and their purposes. *Job 3:20* 4. Because they are careless and forgetful of such things, *Jam 1:23, 25* From such like causes wicked men use to gather false conclusions, and deceive themselves, *Jam 1:22*.

9 The causes why believers, and godly men, oftentimes do not conclude for their own consolation, are 1. Some prevailing temptation. 2. The remnants of unbelief, which remain even in those that are regenerate. 3. The greatness of that mercy which they ought to apply unto themselves. And 4. The Conscience of their own unworthiness, especially, after they have committed some grievous sin.

10 Because of this slowness in men to conclude, and apply, there is a necessity laid on all Ministers, not only to declare God's will generally; but likewise so far as they are able, to help, and further, both publicly and in private, the application of it, so far as men's condition and consciences require.

Chapter 10

Of the effects of this Application, in the Conscience it self.

- 1 From the *conclusion* of Conscience, some effects follow, according as the judgment *thereof* is.
- 2 These *effects* are either *acts* of Conscience, which are virtually contained in the conclusion, or *affections* and *acts* of the will, which arise from those acts of Conscience.
- 3 Amongst the acts of Conscience, some there be that *respect* that which is *well done*: some respect *sin*.
- 4 Those that respect what is *well done*, are *Excusing*, *Absolving*, and *Approving*, *Rom 2:15*.
- 5 *Excusing* is an act of Conscience, whereby a man is freed from the guilt of sin in what he hath done: For *excusing* here is not taken in that stricter sense, whereby it signifieth a *lessening* or *extenuating* of the fault, but in that sense which importeth, a perfect taking away of the fault and guilt.
- 6 *Absolution* is an act of Conscience, whereby it pronounceth a man need not fear punishment for what he hath done.
- 7 These two acts are tied so closely and fast together with a bond that cannot be loosed, that they differ only in our *apprehension* not *really*, For *excusing* doth most properly respect guilt, and *Absolution* the punishment remaineth; neither doth the guilt remain, the punishment being once taken away.
- 8 *Approving* is an act of Conscience, pronouncing that a man in his action hath pleased God.
- 9 *Absolution* and approbation differ from *Excusing* in this, that in *Excusing*, Conscience doth the part of the *Law* and hath respect unto God, as he is a *Judge*, before whose judgment seat it excuseth a man as *witness*; but in *Absolving* and *Approving*, Conscience properly doth God's

part, and hath respect unto man, whom like a *Judge* it absolveth, and approveth.

10 The acts of Conscience, which respect sin, are *Accusation* and *Condemnation*.

11 *Accusation* is an act of Conscience, convincing and proving a man to be near unto punishment, because of his sin.

12 *Condemnation* is an act of Conscience, judging a man that is guilty to the punishment of eternal death.

13 *Accusation* and *Condemnation* differ in the same degree and manner, that *Excusing* differeth from *Absolution* and *Approving*.

14 *Accusation* and *Condemnation* sometimes follow presently upon the fact, as in David, 2 Sam 24:10. Sometimes a little while after it, as in Judas, Mt 21:3 Sometimes a long time after, as in Joseph's brethren, Gen 42:21,22. For a man is not free from them by length of time, but by repentance only.

Chapter 11

Of the affections which arise from the judgment of Conscience

1 The first affection that riseth in the heart, from excusing , absolving, and approving of conscience, is Joy, whereby a man taketh delight in that he hath done well, as in a true good that is come to him, *Prov 15:15, 2 Cor 1:12* Now this Joy differeth much from laughter, and vain Joy: 1. Because it maketh the heart glad. 2. Because it is a serious disposition of the heart, not a light stirring of it. 3. Because it hath a good ground and therefore grows stronger by right meditation. 4. Because it bringeth forth sound and good fruit. None of which things are to be found in common and ordinary laughter and joy, *Eccl 2:2*.

2 The second affection is *Confidence*, whereby the heart is settled and strengthened against the fear of evil, and the weak hope of good, *Prov 10:9&28* For all misery springeth from sin; and to those that do well, all good things are promised, *1 Tim 4:8*.

3 The first affection rising from the accusation and condemnation of Conscience, is Shame, whereby a sinner is displeased with himself, in and for that sin he hath done. For sin always changeth a man from better to worse, *Gen 5:7*. This shame if it be because of sin, and if it make a man forsake it, it is one of the signs of repentance, *Rom 6:21* as impudency in sin, is always a token of an impenitent and lost man.

4 The second affection is Sadness, or Sorrow, whereby the heart is troubled, because of the evil that is come upon it, *1 Sam 25:31 Acts 2:37* For the accusing and condemning of Conscience, doth not only make the sin, and the guilt thereof to be in a manner present, but likewise the punishment.

5 The third affection is Fear, whereby the heart flyeth from the evil that hangeth over it, and from God himself, as from a severe Judge, *Gen 3:10 Prov 28:1 Rev 6:16* because the fullness of misery is expected. The great degrees of this fear, are called trembling and horror.

6 The fourth affection is Despair, whereby the soul casts away all hope of escaping, *Heb 10:27*.

7 *The fifth and last, is anguish and vexation of spirit, because of the misery, which lyeth on it. This is that spiritual worm, that perpetually tormenteth the damned souls in hell. Mk 9:44 Isa 66:24.*

Chapter 12

Of a good Conscience

Hitherto we have spoken of the nature of *Conscience*, according as it was laid down in the *definition*: Now followeth the *distribution of Conscience*, according to its *adjuncts*.

1 Conscience is either *good* or *evil*:

2 Conscience may be called *good*, either for its *honesty* and *integrity*, or for its *quietness* and *peace*.

3 That Conscience is *honestly good*, whose judgment is Right and Powerful.

4 That the Conscience therefore *be honestly good*, it is required: 1. That it *uprightly* and *sincerely judge* that things to be good, which *God judgeth so*; and that to be *evil*, which *God judgeth evil*. This *uprightness* must first be in the judgment, of what is to be done, which belongeth to the *major* Proposition; and 2. In the judgment of what hath *been* done, which belongs to the *minor*.

5 To a Conscience *honestly good*, its 3. required that it *excuse*, *absolve*, and *approve* a man in what is *well done*; and *accuse* and *condemn* him, for what is *evil*.

6 Concerning the first office, which consisteth in *Excusing*, *Absolving*, and *Approving*, there is no controversy amongst Divines. But of the second, which consisteth in *Accusing* and *Condemning*, some doubt, and think that the *goodness* of Conscience doth no ways consist therein, but in *Excusing* only.

7 They bring two reasons: 1. Because *Adam's* conscience by creation, did only *Excuse*, and not *accuse*. 2. Because a good Conscience is troubled and wounded when sin is committed, and occasion is ministered to *accuse*. But the first reason is not good; because though Conscience in state of innocency, did not *accuse actually*, yet had it a *power* to

accuse, if there had been occasion. Neither could the Conscience be more blurred for *accusing* and *condemning* justly, then the *Law it self*, & the *chief Judge*, who did so after sin had once entered, and not before.

8 So far is the *just Accusation* of Conscience from being to be blamed, that Sinners have most need of it, as the only way to make them repent them of the sins which they have committed. For to the end a Sinner may escape God's *judgment*, he must *Judge* himself: that is, do justice and judgment upon himself, as in God's room, whom he hath offended, *1 Cor 11:31*. He doth this, by pleading God's cause against himself, that is, by *accusing* himself, *witnessing*, *allegding*, and *confessing*, or by *acknowledging* God's Law against himself, by revealing the secrets of his heart, and his hidden filthiness, to his own ignominy and shame. Then by *condemning* himself, that is, by declaring what torment and punishment God may justly inflict upon him; or by Proclaiming of himself guilty of everlasting death. Unto this judgment of Conscience, stirring up suitable affections; if God of his great mercy add a *change of mind*, with an *appealing* by Faith to the Judgment Seat of God's mercy in Christ; then is that true (which some use to say) that the *Judgment of repentance maketh void the judgment of punishment; that the accusation, witnessing, and condemnation to wrath to come, are prevented by these Actions which supply their rooms; Yea, that God himself, in Christ shall be an Advocate, a Witness, and Judge; for those that have pleaded against themselves, in the court of Conscience by repentance.*

9 Neither are we bound only to this *Accusation* and *condemnation* of our selves, as to a *means* of *Salvation*, but by *natural justice* also. For if we sin against a man, we ought to do him justice on our selves, by *Accusing*, *Condemning*, and *Acknowledging* our offence; much more then are we bound to do this to God. Besides, we are *related* to God as his *servants*, by which we are bound to take his part in all controversies, debates, or quarrels, that he hath against sin, and chiefly against our own sin, which doth us most hurt, and against which we are able to do much more, than against other men's. Add to these, the consideration of the *equity* of it, if we be bound (when it will be no hurt to us) to assist a brother, in any of his lawful and just suits, or judgments, either in appearing as a *Witness*, or as an *Accuser*, in his behalf: how much more are we bound to do the same for God? for without comparison, each person is more bound to

stick close to God, than to himself: and to assist God by *accusing*, *testifying*, *judging*, though it be in the controversy which he hath against himself.

These particular illustrations (which upon another occasion are propounded and urged by *G.P.*) I have thought good to relate, both for the light which they give to this present question, and for the excellent use, that they have in exhortations to the practice of repentance.

10 The second reason (wherein the *trouble* of conscience upon *accusation*, was brought to prove that an *accusing* Conscience, could not be *good*) is also of no strength: Because that trouble and wounding, is either the *accusation* it self, or an *affection* following it. The same Judge that condemneth rightly and justly, may, and useth to be sorrowful, that he hath occasion to do so: for he absolveth more willingly those that are good, than he condemneth malefactors.

11 To speak home to the matter; The act of *Accusation followeth* indeed from sin, not as a *sin*, but a *punishment*; Conscience therefore *accusing*, so far as it *accuseth* rightly, is *honestly good*, though in respect of the trouble it bringeth, it useth to be called evil, as all other punishments are. It may also be called evil, because the ground of it is always some sin committed.

12 Thirdly, that the Conscience be *honestly good*, it is requisite that by this upright judgment, it *stir up strongly to do good*, and *draw back strongly* from that which is evil, *Heb 13:18* but this cannot be done by Conscience alone, there must be also a good disposition, and bent of the *Will*, answerable to the judgment of Conscience.

13 A Conscience *peaceably good*, is that which *Excuseth*, *Absolveth*, *Comforteth*, *Acts 24:6*. Hence also unto a good Conscience, in this respect, do belong the affection of *Joy*, *Confidence*, *Security*, and *Freedom*.

14 A Conscience that is both *honestly* and *peaceably good*, is that which by the Apostle is called *pure* and *clean*, *2 Tim 1:3 Beautiful Heb 13:18 Without offence*, or *not offended*, which is the consolation and rejoicing

of the faithful, *2 Cor 1:12* To keep which, they are content to suffer all sorts of trouble *unjustly*, *1 Pet 2:19*.

15 Conscience since the fall, or after sin, is made good again: 1. By the blood of Christ applied through Faith; whereby the *guilt*, *accusation*, and *condemnation* of it, are taken away, *Heb 9:13,14* and *10:22*. 2. By the virtue of the same blood, in *repentance* and *sanctification* of the spirit, *1 Tim 1:5* *Acts 15:8,9* whereby believers have a settled and constant purpose to serve God. 3. By the *witness* of the *Spirit*, whereby we are assured of the grace of God. not only for the present, but also for the continuance of it, to the doing of every good work, *Eph 1:18,14*; *Rom 9:5* & *1 Pet 1:5,6*.

16 A good Conscience is maintained by that exercise, whereof the Apostle speaketh, *Acts 24:16*. Now this exercise doth chiefly consist in these things: 1. That the fear of God be always lively and fresh in our hearts, *Ps 36:2*. For this maketh us look what God's judgment is, in all things, *Ps 119:6*. 2. That we meditate on God's Law both day and night, *Ps 1:2*. For by this the Major Proposition or Rule whereby Conscience judgeth, is established. 3. That we examine our own ways with quick and sharp judgment, *Ps 4:5* For this inferreth the application in the Minor Proposition. 4. That by daily repentance and renewing of Faith, we wash off the filth that we contract, *1 Jn 3:3* For therein lies the strength of the conclusion or judgment of Conscience.

Chapter 13

Of a weak, and of a strong Conscience

1 A Good Conscience admits of degrees, for which cause it is by the Apostle distinguished, into a *weak* and a *strong* Conscience, *Rom 15:1*

2 A *weak* Conscience is that which is purged by unfeigned faith, but is troubled with these imperfections, which all believers, for the most part do outgrow by time.

3 True *Faith* is supposed to be in a *weak* Conscience, for he that is *weak*, is a *Brother*, *Rom 14:15,21* not to be *condemned or set at naught*, vs. 10 *One for whom Christ hath died*, *1 Cor 8:11* This Conscience therefore being good, differeth in kind from that which is weak through *malice, presumption, or superstition*.

4 The *imperfections* wherewith this weak Conscience is displeased, are,
1. Lack of knowledge, because as yet it understandeth not well what is lawful and pure, *1 Cor 8:7 Rom 14:14* This weakness of Conscience, is called the *weakness of Faith*, *Rom 14:1*

5 The second imperfection which dependeth on the first, is in *Affection*, because it easily is made *sorrowful*, and *disquieted*, when it seeth others do that which it self approveth not, *Rom 14:15. Because of meat thy brother is grieved*.

6 The third imperfection is in *Judgment*, because it quickly Judgeth and condemneth the liberty of others, *1 Cor 10:29 Rom 14:3,15 Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? Let not man that eateth despise him that eateth not*.

7 The fourth imperfection, is in the *purpose and settledness of heart*, being easily drawn to what is evil. *1 Cor 8:10. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idol's Temple: shall not the Conscience of him which is weak, be emboldened to eat those things, which are offered to Idols?* From this, a man is most properly said to be

offended, scandalized, wounded, destroyed. *Rom 14:21, 1 Cor 8:9,12 Rom 14:15.*

8 A strong Conscience, is that which is *established* in the truth. *Rom 14:5 Persuaded in his own mind. 2 Pet 1:12 Ye know and are established in the present truth.*

9 This stability consisteth in knowledge, yet not so much in the clearness thereof, as in the certainty, *1 Cor 8:4,7. We know that an Idol is nothing in the world, but there is not in every man that knowledge, & their conscience being weak is defiled. For certainty belongeth more to Faith, which we are here to understand by Conscience, than evidence or clearness, which belongs to knowledge, taken in the proper sense. 2. In such and affection, whereby it is always willing to bear with and bear the infirmities of others, Rom 15:1. We which are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. 3. In judging so, as that nothing be set before a brother, at which he may stumble or fall, Rom 14:13 but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. 4. In such a resolution and settledness of heart, whereby it is so strengthened in truth and godliness, that it cannot easily be removed, Heb 13:9 It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.*

Chapter 14

Of an evil Conscience

1 Conscience is said to be evil, either because its acts are sins, or because it brings *trouble* and *sorrow*.

2 A Conscience evil because of sin in its acts, is that which giveth not a right and powerful judgment; such is the Conscience of all men that are unregenerate, for it is in men according as original corruption is. Of this a *polluted Conscience* is not the smallest part. *Tit 1:15*

3 The first fault of an evil Conscience is *blindness*, whence it judgeth of *good* and *evil* no otherwise than one that is bodily blind useth to judge of colors: *He calleth good evil, and evil good, Isa 5:10.*

4 The second fault, is a kind of *spiritual dullness*, whence it neither stirreth up powerfully to that, which it seeth is good, nor draweth back from that which it acknowledgeth *evil, Rom 1:18. Which withhold the truth in unrighteousness.*

5 The third fault, is *false witness bearing*, which principally appeareth in *excusing*, and *accusing falsely*.

6 An *evil Conscience* doth *excuse falsely*, either when it doth not *accuse* where it ought, or *absolveth* and *approveth* where it ought to *accuse* and *condemn*.

7 The former fault is esteemed as a piece of Religion, by the dangerous Sect of Libertines, who place their chief happiness and perfection to have the sense of sin extinguished.

8 It prevaiileth also in all those, who being free from great and gross sins, do seem unto themselves to be as it were perfect, and not to be blamed for any sin, *Lk 18:20, Mk 10:20. All these things have I observed from my youth.*

9 The second sort of *excusing falsely*, when an evil Conscience approveth, where it ought to condemn; is chiefly to be found in those that

are superstitious. They *think to be heard through their much babbling, Job 16:2. The time commeth that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service, Rom 10:2. I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

10 A *false accusation* of an evil conscience is, when it accuseth and condemneth, where it ought to *excuse: viz.* For well doing: *Rom 14:22.* Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

[11] Conscience *evil*, through trouble and sorrow is that, which accuseth and condemneth. *1 Jn 3:20* If our heart condemn us.

12 When Conscience is evil in this kind, these affections follow. Sadness, Fear, Anguish.

13 This Conscience is honestly good, if it accuse justly: it is sinfully evil, if it do it unjustly.

14 A Conscience evil through trouble, and honestly good, is to be found both in believers and unbelievers. In such as believe not, it is a preparation unto true repentance and faith. *Acts 2:37*

15 A Conscience *evil, both through trouble and sin, is common also both to believers and those who believe not. But in those that believe, there is a principle of grace, by strength whereof they are upholden, they wrestle and withstand, and by little and little are healed of it.*

Chapter 15

Of diverse degrees and sorts of an evil Conscience

1 An evil Conscience may be distinguished into diverse degrees: 1. In respect of defect, into a benumbed, stupid, and feared. 2. In respect of excess, into a troubled and desperate one.

2 A benumbed conscience is that, which is so dull and heavy in its acts, that there follows no strong stirrings of heart after it; nothing to purpose comes of it. Those that have such a conscience, are oppressed with a kind of spiritual sleep, wherein the sense of conscience is so bound, that it is no more moved, than a man that sleepeth is by his own dreams.

3 This dullness appeareth, 1. In a *dull* or *faint pricking* on to good: We have an example in *Agrippa, Acts 26:28 thou almost persuadest me.*

4 It appeareth secondly in a *dull accusation* for the evil that is committed, we have an example in *Saul, 1 Sam 24:18.*

5 The cause of this *benumbedness* in many that are not apparently wicked, is a certain *carnal security*, which creepeth secretly upon them, form long peace and prosperity, *Jer 48:11.*

6 A *stupid Conscience* is that, which doth not its office in *accusing* and *condemning*, unless it be for the *greatest sins*, and when it is forced by most *grievous Judgments*. For like as men sick of a *Lethargy* or *Drowsiness*, are not wakened commonly, unless it be by the thunder of God's Judgments. We have an example in *Pharaoh, Ex 8:9.*

7 The cause of this *stupidity* is *unbelief*, and *custom* in *sinning*, which taketh away the sense of it.

8 A *seared or cauterized Conscience*, is that which no ways *can be moved*, no not by *greatest sins*, *1Tim 4:2.* Which have their *Consciences seared with an hot Iron*: This sort of Conscience is found chiefly in those, who after they have been *enlightened*, against their Consciences do give up themselves to a wicked life.

9 In these the *Synteresis* it self, or *Law of Conscience*, hath its course stopped, and for time it is in a manner extinguished, *Jude 10*.

Whatsoever they *know naturally*, as beasts which are without reason, in those things they corrupt themselves. This suppressing of the natural practical knowledge, which is ingrafted in all men, is by the Philosophers called *ajpoliqwsis* because such kind of men are changed as it were into stones, as in the Scripture they are said to have a *hard* and *stony* heart, by other Philosophers it is called *qhrioth* and *qhriwdria* because such men become altogether brutish. *2 Pet 2:2*. Or rather put on the nature of the Devil. *Job 8:44*.

10 The signs of such a kind of Conscience are, 1. If one rejoice in sin. *Prov 2:14*. 2. If after he hath sinned he will not be reformed, *Prov 24:22*. 3. If he give up himself to commit known sin, with all his might striving to sin more than others. *Eph 4:19*.