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THE ROD AND THE CANDLE: CONSCIENCE IN THE ENGLISH
MORALITY PLAYS, SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH AND
TOURNEUR'S THE ATHEIST'S TRAGEDY

by

JEROME W. HOGAN

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date

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Samuel I. King

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

And I will place within them as a guide
My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,
Light after light well us'd they shall attain,
And to the end persisting safe arrive.

Milton, Paradise Lost, III, 194-97.

Cur tamen hos tu
evasisse putes, quos diri conscia facti
mens habet attonitos et surdo berbere caedit
occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?
poena autem vehemens ac multo saevior illis
quas et Caedicius gravis invenit et Rhadamanthus,
nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.

Juvenal, Satire XIII, 192-98.



Johannes Mannich, *Sacra Emblemata* (Nuremburg, 1624),
fol. 26^r (Reproduced with the permission of the
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To acknowledge my debt to Professor Frank Brady would only sound fulsome. I shall only say here that since I met

him as an undergraduate in 1965 he has been my true friend to whom, in Bacon's words, I have imparted my "griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it."

My greatest debt is to my wife Janden, who has always provided much needed encouragement and solace, but more importantly she has made sure that our love has increased even as our days do grow.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Because this study explores much unfamiliar ground, I have abundantly, but I hope not excessivley, documented my trails through the literature. I have normalized i:j and u:v forms, but I have retained contractions and the tilde. Although the writers I have studied used and quoted the various editions of the Bible available during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for the sake of uniformity I have quoted the Geneva Bible (1560).

INTRODUCTION

Every student of English Renaissance drama is familiar with the concept of conscience, because he finds it at almost every turn. Although few Renaissance writers could agree on what the concept exactly meant, they could not do without it. But, of course, in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, conscience was not a concept without a meaning, but one with all too many meanings. For example, the Renaissance dramatists spoke of different kinds of consciences. We hear of a "hard conscience,"¹ a "sear'd" conscience,² a "cheveril conscience,"³ a "good conscience,"⁴ a "wide conscience,"⁵ and a "wounded

¹ Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, ed. John R. Brown, 7th ed. (The New Arden Shakespeare: New York, 1955), II.ii. 27-28. See also Thomas Middleton, Women Beware Women, ed. Roma Gill (The New Mermaids: London, 1968), III.ii.94.

² Philip Massinger, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, ed. T. W. Craik (The New Mermaids: London, 1964), V.i.210. See also John Ford, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, ed. N. W. Bawcutt (Regents Renaissance Drama Series: London, 1966), V.iii.30.

³ Shakespeare, King Henry VIII, ed. R. A. Foakes, 3rd ed. (The New Arden Shakespeare: London, 1957), II.iii.32.

⁴ Thomas Middleton, A Trick to Catch the Old One, ed. G. J. Watson (The New Mermaids: London, 1968), IV.iv.266.

⁵ Thomas Middleton, Michelmass Term, ed. Richard Levin (Regents Renaissance Drama Series: London, 1966), IV.i.96. Cf. Jonson, Marston, and Chapman, Eastward Ho, II.iii.303-04 in John Marston, The Works, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1887, III, 308; Jonson, Every Man Out of His Humour, Induction,

conscience."⁶ Shakespeare and his contemporaries also attributed various acts to conscience. Conscience witnesses the murders of Shakespeare's Richard III,⁷ it brings peace to Sir Thomas More⁸ and to Shakespeare's Cardinal Wolsey.⁹ In John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi, it records the deeds of Bosola and then becomes an inner hell to torment him.¹⁰ And in Marston's The Dutch Courtesan, conscience dictates a "law" to Malheureux.¹¹ Furthermore, characters

11. 43-44, in Ben Jonson, eds. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford, 1927), III, 129, and Middleton, A Trick, III.i.183.

⁶ Philip Massinger, The Virgin-Martyr in The Plays, ed. W. Gifford (London, 1813), I, 59, and The Renagado, II, 176.

⁷ Richard III, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (The Pelican Shakespeare: Baltimore, 1959), V.iii. 194-200.

⁸ Anon., Sir Thomas More, V.iii.12, in The Shakespeare Apocrapha, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke (Oxford, 1908).

⁹ King Henry VIII, III.iii. 378-80.

¹⁰ The Revels Plays edition, ed. John Russell Brown (London, 1964), IV.ii. 357-58, 343. For the recording act of conscience, see also Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, The Changeling, ed. George W. Williams (Regents Renaissance Drama Series: Lincoln, Neb., 1966), III.iv. 133-34. For the inner hell of conscience concept, cf. Robert Greene, Selimus, ll. 1660-63, in The Life and Complete Works, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, XIV (London, 1881-86). The idea that conscience creates an inner hell in a sinner also appears in Renaissance prose and poetry. See, for example; Thomas Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveller in The Works, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London, 1904-10), II, 289, Thomas Lodge, Rosalind in Elizabethan Prose Fiction, ed. Merritt Lawlis (New York, 1967), p. 329, and John Milton, Paradise Lost, IV. 19-21, and 74-75, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1962).

¹¹ The Regents Renaissance Drama Series edition, ed. M. L. Wine (Lincoln, Neb., 1965), V.iii.17. Cf. Philip Massinger, The City Madam, ed. Cyrus Hoy (Regents Renaissance Drama Series: London, 1964), V.i. 18-19.

in English Renaissance drama express different attitudes towards conscience. At one extreme are Marlowe's Barabas and Massinger's Luke Frugal, who defy conscience because it impedes the easy acquisition of wealth.¹² At the other extreme is Cyril Tourneur's Charlemont, who values his conscience above all earthly pleasures.¹³

These bewildering varieties of conscience, the numerous acts that conscience can perform, and the extreme attitudes certain characters have towards it raise fundamental questions about the meaning of the concept of conscience that appears in English Renaissance drama. What is the "law" that conscience dictates? What authority do its dictates have? Is conscience self-consciousness, a moral sense, or a moral feeling? Does conscience reside in the intellect or the will? Or is it a separate faculty of the soul? Is conscience primarily a psychological, ethical, or spiritual concept? What are one's duties to conscience? Is there any spiritual significance in the good and terrifying conscience? How does it perform its acts? And also, what are the roles conscience plays in a man's life? I realize that this is an overwhelming number of questions to ask about a concept, the meaning of which

¹² The Jew of Malta, ed. Richard Van Fossen (Regents Renaissance Drama Series: London, 1965), I.i. 117-18, and Massinger, The City Madam, IV.ii. 131-35.

¹³ The Atheist's Tragedy, ed. Irving Ribner (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), V.ii.160.

the dramatists seem to take for granted. But each must be fully understood if we are to properly understand what they mean by conscience.

Fortunately, several studies, both theological and literary, provide partial answers to some of these questions.¹⁴ On the one hand, Walter Clyde Curry, Kevin Kelly, and Claus Uhlig have uncovered the ideas about conscience the Renaissance inherited from Scholasticism.¹⁵ Curry and Kelly in particular have asserted that the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have answered these questions basically the same way Aquinas did.

On the other hand, Alan Hobson has recently approached the concept of conscience in Shakespeare from the viewpoint of modern psychology in order to answer some of these

¹⁴ Besides those studies mentioned below, see: Paul Jorgensen, Our Naked Frailties: Sensational Art and Meaning in Macbeth (Berkeley, Cal., 1971), pp. 181-83, C.A. Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966), pp. 112-13, L. B. Campbell, "Dr. Faustus: A Case of Conscience," PMLA, 67 (1952), 219-39, and Harold Skulsky, "Pain, Law, and Conscience in Measure for Measure," JHI, 25 (1964), 147-68, and "Revenge, Honor, and Conscience in Hamlet," PMLA, 85 (1970), 78-87. In this regard two recent unpublished doctoral dissertations should also be mentioned: Coleman C. Markham, "William Perkins' Understanding of the Function of Conscience," (Vanderbilt University, 1968), and William C. Woodson, "Elizabethan Villains and the Seared Conscience: The Application of a Theological Concept to Suggest the Credibility of Barabas, Aaron, Richard III, and Iago" (University of Pennsylvania, 1969).

¹⁵ Seriatim: Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns (Baton Rouge, La., 1936), pp. 123-30, Conscience: Dictator or Guide? A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Protestant Moral Theology (London, 1967), and Traditionelle Denkformen in Shakespeares tragischen Kunst (Hamburg, 1967), pp. 8-42.

questions.¹⁶ He notes, for example, that the consciences of Henry VI and Richard III are "defective." On the basis of current psychological theories, he then argues that this condition is due to "maternal deprivation" (p. 102).

Still, other critics have discovered a similarity between the Elizabethan and the modern meaning of the concept of conscience. The Elizabethans and the people of today, claim W. H. Toppen and Eleanor Prosser,¹⁷ both use conscience in the modern sense of a faculty that judges what is right and wrong in one's particular actions.

Although there is nothing refutable about any of these statements on the Renaissance concept of conscience, from the point of view of this present study each is inadequate in two respects. First, they all assume that the concept of conscience meant the same thing to everyone during the Renaissance. But as I will show, there were at least four currents of thought on conscience at this time: the Scholastic, the Protestant, the skeptical, and the nominalist. Second, they all lack a central explanation of what seems to me to distinguish the concept of conscience often found in the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century

¹⁶ Full Circle: Shakespeare and Moral Development (New York, 1972), pp. 99-149.

¹⁷ Conscience in Shakespeare's Macbeth (Groningen, 1962), p. 1, and Hamlet and Revenge (Stanford, Cal. 1967), p. 167. See also the definitions given by Daniel E. Hughes, "The 'Worm of Conscience' in Richard III and Macbeth," EJ, 55 (1966), 845-46, and Robert E. Fitch, Shakespeare: The Perspective of Value (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 155.

English drama, and that is, its spiritual nature.

Because of the apparent limitations of the approaches tried by others, I hope to provide more satisfying answers to the questions I have raised by examining discussions of the concept of conscience in Renaissance moral theology and philosophy. Briefly stated, my thesis is this: During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Scholastic concept of conscience as an act of the practical reason that applies the laws of nature to particular human actions was altered by the intellectual developments that reached their fullest expression in the works of John Calvin, Michel de Montaigne, and Thomas Hobbes. These men attacked the Scholastic idea that conscience dictates the laws of nature. Calvin did this by identifying the moral law with God's will rather than with his reason; Montaigne by identifying the laws conscience dictates with local customs; and Hobbes by reducing conscience from a moral judgment to an "opinion" about right and wrong. Apparently because of the devastating impact of these arguments, many English Reformers declined to accept Aquinas' interpretation of conscience. Rather, they transformed conscience into an essentially spiritual concept. They argued that conscience is a divine faculty of the soul that can lead man to salvation if it is enlightened by the will of God as it is revealed in the Bible and if it is purified by God's grace. The Reformers also broadened the Scholastic concept, so that conscience became not just a judge of right and

wrong, but also a guide to salvation, an instrument of divine punishment to sinners, and a comfort to the godly. It is this Reformation concept of conscience, with its emphasis on the spiritual nature of the faculty, that one often finds in the English drama of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The first three chapters of this dissertation attempt to sketch this transformation of conscience into a spiritual concept. Any attempt to chart the various meanings of the concept of conscience during the Renaissance must first take into account Thomas Aquinas' definition of conscience, because many English Reformers, including William Perkins, William Ames, Jeremy Taylor and a myriad of less important writers, either quote it or show a familiarity with it. Therefore, the first chapter begins with an analysis of the Scholastic concept of conscience and concludes with a discussion of the theological and philosophical ideas that led many Reformers to alter it. The next two chapters anatomize the concept of conscience in the writings of the Reformers. They focus mainly on the works of English theologians and on those theological works that were translated into English during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their main argument is that although the Reformers retained some aspects of Aquinas' definition of conscience, they changed it to conform to Biblical teachings on the subject. Although those concerned with Renaissance theology and philosophy may find

much of interest here, this part of the dissertation primarily provides a background for the chapters that follow.

The next three chapters, four, five, and six, are concerned with the concept of conscience in six English morality plays, Shakespeare's Macbeth, and Cyril Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy. Although these plays were written over a period of at least a century and are different in style, genre, and content, they all explore the roles conscience plays in man's moral life. In their treatment of conscience, they reflect the transformation in the concept of conscience that was concurrently taking place in Renaissance moral philosophy. In these plays conscience is much more than an act of the practical reason. It is a spiritual faculty that acts as man's guide to salvation, tormentor, and comfortor. Although I must isolate and emphasize a few elements in each play, I do not attempt to reduce their polysemy to a single meaning. On the one hand, I have selected these plays rather than others in order to explore what the concept of conscience meant to the English Renaissance. But on the other hand, it is equally true that I have selected the concept of conscience to explore these plays.

In the chapter on the sixteenth-century English morality plays, I trace three definite shifts in the concept of conscience. Each seems to reflect the growing influence of Protestantism. First, in the earlier moralities the character of Conscience exclusively plays the role of spiritual

guide. But in the later moralities, he also is given the role of tormentor. Second, after the first extant English morality in which the character of Conscience appears, Mundus et Infans, written in the early sixteenth century, Conscience always dictates the laws of the Bible. Third, as the morality play declines towards the end of the sixteenth century, the effective operation of conscience comes to depend more and more on God's grace.

In the chapter on Macbeth, we again find conscience playing its two roles of guide and tormentor. But in his tragedy, Shakespeare uses the concept of conscience to show the limitations of Macbeth's belief that physical courage is the ideal of manhood. The tragedy develops from Macbeth's rejection of conscience as his spiritual guide. Furthermore, Shakespeare shows that this rejection of conscience reduces Macbeth's courage to bloody cruelty.

In the chapter on The Atheist's Tragedy, we again find conscience in its two familiar roles of guide and tormentor. But to these two, Tourneur adds a third, that of spiritual comforter. Unlike any of the other dramatists studied in this dissertation, Tourneur values the comfort of a peaceful conscience as the supreme kind of earthly happiness.

Four appendices conclude this dissertation. Each provides additional information about images of conscience that appear in English Renaissance literature.

PART ONE

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CHAPTER I

THE UNDERMINING OF THE THOMISTIC CONCEPT
OF CONSCIENCE

There's nothing simply good nor ill alone,
Of every quality Comparison
The onely measure is, and judge, Opinion.

--John Donne, The Progresse of the Soule, LII, 518-20.

It is no longer necessary to argue the continuity between Scholastic and Reformation moral theology. H. R. McAdoo and K. E. Kirk, for example, have pointed out that the Anglican divines like Richard Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, Robert Sanderson, and Joseph Hall developed moral theology along the lines laid down by Aquinas.¹ This view has been corroborated by other theologians and literary scholars who have focused on one area of Reformation moral theology--the concept of conscience. Walter Clyde Curry, for example, who claims that during the Renaissance Scholasticism was the standard by which all new ideas were measured, asserts that the concept of conscience in Macbeth is Scholastic.² Similarly, after his study of the concept of conscience in

¹ The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology (London, 1949), p. 31, and Some Principles of Moral Theology (London, 1946), p. xi.

² Shakespeare's Philosophical Pattern, pp. 123-30.

the writings of the Anglicans William Perkins, William Ames, John Sharp, Jeremy Taylor, and Robert Sanderson, Kevin Kelly concludes that these theologians preserved many major concepts of Scholastic moral theology, including conscience.³ Furthermore, Claus Uhlig has also noticed the centrality of the Scholastic concept of conscience to Shakespeare's time.⁴ Although the Scholastic concept of conscience was current during the Renaissance, as these scholars have indicated, it must also be recognized that the majority of English Reformers who wrote on conscience rejected essential aspects of Aquinas' definition. Apparently, they were led to do so by the influence of voluntarism, skepticism and nominalism.

Reformation moral theology owes much indeed to Scholasticism. But the conclusion that the Reformers inherited Aquinas' concept of conscience is highly questionable, because we find a very strong anti-Scholastic attitude on the part of many Reformers who wrote on conscience. For example, John Woolton, before proceeding to his exposition of conscience, tells the reader that he will "not follow the subtile and thronye maner of the Schoolmen, who with great curiositie of definitions and devisions, have altogether darkened rather than lightened this matter."⁵ Likewise John

³ Conscience: Dictator or Guide, p. 189.

⁴ Traditionelle Denkformen in Shakespeares tragischen Kunst, pp. 8-9.

⁵ Of The Conscience (London, 1576), sig. B₃^r.

Hughes, after giving Aquinas' and Medina's definitions of conscience, rejects them. "But I decline," he says, "the Casuists and Schoolmen of purpose, that I may speake to the people and to their consciences."⁶ And Richard Carpenter promises that he will pass "by the nicities and curious speculations of Schoolmen" in defining conscience.⁷ The feeling of anti-Scholasticism even persisted into the late seventeenth century because John Sharp remarks that the best way to discover the nature of conscience is not "so much to inquire into the Signification of the word Conscience or the severall Scholastical Definitions of it; as to consider what every Man doth really mean by that word when he has occasion to use it."⁸ These writers were not just attempting to dissociate themselves from Papist teachings on conscience; they were expressing a genuine dissatisfaction with Aquinas' concept.

But how much of this anti-Scholasticism was a condemnation of methodology and how much of it was a rejection of the Scholastic understanding of the nature of conscience? Like Bacon, who upbraids the Schoolmen for their method of framing objections to every assertion and then providing solutions to these objections which are more like distinctions

⁶ St. Pauls Exercise, Or A Sermon Of Conscience (London, 1622), p. 4.

⁷ The Conscionable Christian (London, 1623), p. 40.

⁸ A Discourse Concerning Conscience (London, 1684), p. 3.

than confutations,⁹ Wollton's objection is clearly based on methodology. Although he avoids subtle definitions and divisions, his ideas about conscience derive from Aquinas' Summa Theologiae. In Woolton's treatise, the Scholastic idea remains intact, but, as we shall see in Hughes' sermon, and in Carpenter's and Sharp's treatises, where the Scholastic method is also avoided, the influence of the Thomistic understanding of conscience is only vestigial. Thus, it seems that these Reformers rejected both the Scholastic methodology and the Scholastic concept of conscience.

The rejection of the Scholastic interpretation of conscience that is explicitly expressed by Hughes, Hammond, and Sharp is also evident in many of the other treatises on conscience that we will later consider in detail. To determine why and to what extent many Reformers challenged and modified it, it will be first necessary to understand the function of conscience in the ethical system of Aquinas' Summa Theologiae, and then to consider tendencies that converged during the Renaissance to undermine the vitality of the Scholastic concept.

Basic to Aquinas' ethical system is the idea that morality is a function of reason. "Now when we speak of 'good' and 'evil' in human acts," Aquinas says, "we take the 'reasonable' as our standard of reference" (ST, 1a2ae, 18.5).¹⁰

⁹ The Advancement of Learning in Selected Writings, ed. Hugh Dick (Modern Library: New York, 1955), p. 183.

¹⁰ All citations from the Summa Theologiae are to the

Furthermore, he calls actions "human or moral inasmuch as they proceed from the reason" (Ibid.). Therefore, Aquinas concludes that reason is the rule for judging morality; that which conforms to reason is moral; that which deviates from it is immoral and sinful.

Reason is a principle of action, and like all principles of action, it acts for an end (ST, 1a2ae, 90.1 and 94.2). The end has the nature of good, which Aquinas defines as "that it is what all things seek after" (ST, 1a2ae, 94.2).¹¹ Reason operates in two spheres, the speculative and the practical. These are not two distinct powers, but two types of reason that differ in their ends. The speculative reason (ratio speculativa) directs what it apprehends to truth, and the practical reason (ratio practica) directs what it apprehends to good. This does not mean, however, that truth and good are mutually exclusive. They contain each other, because if truth were not good, Aquinas argues, it would not be desirable and if good were not true it would not be intelligible. "The practical intellect," he sums up, "knows truth, just as the speculative, but it directs the known truth to operation" (ST, 1a, 79.11).

Blackfriars edition (New York, 1964-68). Hereafter cited as ST.

¹¹ See also ST, 1a, 5.1. For discussions of the teleological principle, see R. Garrigou-Lagrange, God: His Existence and His Nature, translated by Bede Rose (St. Louis, 1934-36), I, 199-204; and K. F. Reinhardt, A Realistic Philosophy (Milwaukee, Wis., 1944), pp. 87-89.

Law, the measure by which one is persuaded to act or not to act, pertains to the reason (ST, 1a2ae, 90.1). Just as reason is the principle of human actions, so in reason itself there is a principle. It is to this principle that law refers. The first principle in practical matters, which are in the sphere of practical reason, is the last end of man, which is happiness or beatitude.¹² Law, then, must properly concern itself "with the plan of things for human happiness" (ST, 1a2ae, 90.2).

Aquinas distinguishes between four kinds of law: eternal, natural, human, and divine, of which the first two will be discussed here because they directly relate to the function of conscience. In answer to the question whether there is an eternal law, Aquinas argues that just as law is a dictate of the practical reason emanating from the ruler for the common good, so the eternal law is a dictate of the divine reason of God, the ruler of the universe (ST, 1a2ae,

¹² Aquinas' use of "beatitude" here is unfortunately ambiguous. His main exposition on the question of happiness is ST, 1a2ae, 1-4, but he had previously expressed the idea that a rational creature is capable of twofold perfection. The first is that which one attains by his own powers, and is called "beatitude or happiness." The second is a supernatural happiness in which one "shall see God as he is" (ST, 1a, 62.1). But in ST, 1a2ae, 2.8, he says that the final end of man can only be the universal good (bonum universale), which is identical to God and that the universal good can only be achieved by the speculative intellect. If the universal good, that is, God, can only be achieved by the speculative reason, then the happiness which is the object of the practical reason must be of an inferior variety. It is possible that Aquinas means here that although the practical reason cannot itself know God, it can direct man's actions toward him.

91.1). God is the artificer of the universe and its governor; he rules all the acts and movements of each creature and moves all things to their proper end. The eternal law, accordingly, "is nothing other than the exemplar of divine wisdom as directing the motions and acts of everything," (ST, 1a2ae, 93.1).

All things, because they are ruled by eternal law, derive from it their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Man possesses a share of the eternal reason whereby he has a natural inclination to his proper end. "This sharing in the Eternal Law by intelligent creatures is what we call the 'natural law'." Not only does man possess a natural inclination to good like all other created things, but he also has the "light of natural reason" by which he discerns what is good and evil; this light of natural reason is nothing other than an "impression of the divine light." By the light of this reason, man can know the natural law, and because natural law is a participation of eternal law in man, man can possess a knowledge of the eternal law, which is the supreme law of conduct." Accordingly, it is clear", Aquinas concludes, "that the natural law is nothing other than the sharing in the Eternal Law by intelligent creatures." (ST, 1a2ae, 91.2).

The precepts of natural law relate to the practical reason just as the first principles of demonstration relate to the speculative reason, because both are self-evident.

The same procedure occurs in the practical and speculative reasons, for each proceeds from indemonstrable, self-evident principles to conclusions, the knowledge of which is not natural but acquired by reason. The first thing to come under the apprehension of man is being, and this is included in everything that he apprehends. Therefore, based on the idea of being and non-being is the first indemonstrable principle: "There is no affirming and denying the same simultaneously." Just as being is the first thing to come under one's apprehension, good is the first thing to come under the practical reason. Its first principle is based on the notion of good; that is, good "is what all things seek after." Thus, the first precept of natural law is "good is to be sought and done, and evil to be avoided." All other precepts of the natural law are founded on this.

The order of the precepts of natural law is in accordance with man's natural inclinations. First, man has an inclination to good in accordance with the nature he has in common with all substances; namely, every substance attempts to preserve its existence according to its own nature. Consequently, belonging to the natural law is the precept that man's life is to be preserved. Second, man has an inclination to good in accord with the nature he has in common with other animals; thus, belonging to the natural law is the precept that the species is to be propagated and the offspring educated. Third, man has an inclination to good in accordance

with his rational nature; thus, man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society. Belonging to the natural law is the precept that man should "shun ignorance, not offend others with whom he ought to live in civility, and other such related requirements" (ST, 1a2ae, 94.2).

These precepts of natural law are the same in all men, although the particular conclusions drawn from them may be different. Aquinas argues that in this respect the speculative and practical reasons differ. Because the speculative is concerned with things that cannot be other than what they are, its common principles and conclusions must be true. But the practical deals with contingent matters, matters in the sphere of human actions, and consequently, although the common principles are true and known to all, the nearer one gets to conclusions the more defects one finds. These defects occur, Aquinas says, because the principles themselves have been somehow obstructed or the knowledge of them has been perverted by passion, habit, or a naturally evil disposition (ST, 1a2ae, 94.3).

The natural power of man to make a moral judgment is founded on an intuitive knowledge of natural principles innate with reason. It has the same relation to the basic moral principles of natural law that intuition has to the speculative reason. The ability of every man to reach these precepts on any occasion suggests that they are in man in the character

of a habit. This habitual knowledge of the precepts of natural law Aquinas calls synderesis. He attributes synderesis to the intellect and makes it the basis for the judgment of conscience.¹³ The operation of synderesis has three basic characteristics. First, it grasps these principles with celerity. Second, it grasps them naturally, not through training. Third, it grasps them without error (ST, 1a, 79.12).

Conscience is an act of judgment which applies to particular situations the general and universal precepts possessed by synderesis. Aquinas raises the question whether conscience is an act or a power. He believes that Origen's definition of conscience as a "correcting and guiding spirit accompanying the soul by which it is led away from evil and

¹³ For a thorough study of synderesis during the Middle Ages, see O. Lottin, Psychologie et morale aux 12^e siècles (Louvain, 1942-60), II, 101-349. In order to avoid confusion, it should be pointed out that "scintilla conscientiae" is not conscience but synderesis. Jerome, in his commentary on Ezekial 1.10, cites the Platonic theory that the three parts of man's soul, the rational, the irascible, and the concupiscible are represented respectively by the man, the lion, and the bull: "plerique, juxta Platonem, rationale animae, et irascitivum, et concupiscitivum . . . ad hominem, et leonem ac vitulum referunt." The eagle corresponds to the fourth part of man's soul, which he calls "scintilla conscientiae." The "spark of conscience" is indestructable in man; it was not extinguished in Adam when he was expelled from the Garden: "Quartamque ponunt quae super haec et extra haec tria est . . . quae scintilla conscientiae in Cain [sic] quoque pectore, postquam ejectus est de paradiso, non extinguitur." This spark enables us to know that we sin, even though we submit to pleasure and rage: "et qua victi voluptatibus, vel furore, isaque interdum rationis decepti similitudine, nos peccare sentimus," PL 25,22.

made to cling to good,"¹⁴ indicates that conscience is a power because "spirit" designates a power, either the mind itself or the imagination. Furthermore, he continues, since only a power of the soul is a subject of sin, and conscience is a subject of sin because it is said that "their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1.15), it seems that conscience is a power. Finally, by process of elimination conscience seems to be a power because it cannot be an act for if it were it would not always exist in man, and it cannot be a habit for conscience is not one thing but many since one is directed in his actions by many habits of knowledge.

Against these objections, Aquinas argues that conscience is an act not a power because of its name and the common things that are attributed to it. The word conscience "implies the relation of knowledge to something; for conscience may be resolved into cum alio scientia. But the application of knowledge to something is done by some act." That conscience is an act is shown by the fact that it is said to witness, to bind, or to stir up, and to accuse, torment, or rebuke. "Now, it is clear that all these things follow the actual application of knowledge to what we do. Therefore, properly speaking, conscience denominates an act" (ST, 1a, 79.13).

When conscience applies the precepts contained in

¹⁴ Commentariorum in Epistolam . . . ad Romanos, PG, XIV, 902.

synderesis to a particular action, it does so by way of a syllogism. In this syllogism synderesis provides the universal principle such as good is to be done and evil avoided; this makes the major proposition. The dictamen rationis applies a more specific precept such as stealing is evil because it is against the Decalogue; this makes the minor proposition. Conscience approves a good action or condemns an evil one, such as stealing; this is the conclusion of the syllogism.¹⁵ The judgment of conscience is the proximate precept for human actions. Both synderesis and conscience provide man with precepts for actions, but synderesis provides general principles and conscience the judgment about a particular act.

This presentation of Aquinas' ethical system has revealed the relation of conscience to synderesis, reason, and natural law, but two more points about Aquinas' understanding of conscience remain to be made. The first concerns the relation of conscience to man's good. Aquinas thought of man as naturally tending toward the perfection of his nature on three levels; on the biological by preserving his species; on the animal by propagating his species; and on the rational by knowing God. By ordering acts which pertain to these ends and by prohibiting those which are incompatible to them, conscience moves man towards his good, which is the perfection

¹⁵ ST, 1e-2ae, 76.1. For another discussion of conscience and the practical syllogism, see D. J. O'Connor, Aquinas and Natural Law (London, 1968), pp. 41-45.

or fulfillment of his human nature. The second point is that Aquinas' concept of conscience is optimistic because it claims that conscience can arrive at a correct judgment about the morality of a human action by reasoning from universal principles of natural law which ultimately derive from Divine Reason. It is through conscience that man completes his participation in the eternal law.¹⁶

The essence of Aquinas' system of ethics is that natural law, which is the underlying basis of morality, proceeds from divine reason and can be detected by human reason so that by obeying natural law man may fulfill his role as an intellectual creature and attain his true end, which is to know God. The Reformers vigorously attacked Thomistic ethics by arguing that the law of good and evil resides exclusively in the will of God not in his reason, that natural law is only a dim manifestation of his revealed will and therefore by itself an inadequate guide to morality, and that the human reason, having been seriously debilitated by the Fall, cannot seek with certainty after the truth that is contained in the natural law. By so arguing, the Reformers struck a devastating blow at the basis of Thomistic ethics and consequently undermined the premises upon which Aquinas' understanding of conscience is erected.

The voluntarists taught that because morality is a

¹⁶ O'Connor also makes this point, Aquinas and Natural Law, p. 32.

function of the will of God, something is defined as good, not because it is in harmony with the nature of God or with the rational nature of man, but solely because God wills it. "The will of God," says Bishop Joseph Hall, "is the rule of Good; what need we enquire into other reasons, of any act or determination, when we heare it comes from Heaven?"¹⁷ By placing the law in the will of God, Calvin removes it from human understanding:

For whē we speake of Gods counsell, we may never dispute who moved him, as though we shoulde imagine reasons and say, This is ^{the} reason why God hath determined after this sort, this is ^{the} cause why hee woulde have it so: For on the other side, God wil have us use such such [sic] sobernesse, that his bare wil must suffice us, for al reson.¹⁸

And this law we must obey merely because it is God's "will and pleasure."¹⁹ Between God's will and man, except for God's works themselves, there exists no connection similar to the way man with his reason participates in the eternal law of God in Scholastic ethics. Hence, the moral law, which can

¹⁷ The Workes (London, 1625), p. 1108. For general introductions to the impact of voluntarism on the idea of natural law, see: A. P. D'Entrèves, Natural Law: An Historical Survey (New York, 1951), pp. 68-72, Henrich A. Rommen, The Natural Law: A Study in Legal and Social History and Philosophy (St. Louis, 1949), pp. 57-60, and George C. Herndl, The High Design: English Renaissance Tragedy and the Natural Law (Lexington, Ky., 1970), p. 110-17, 126-29.

¹⁸ Sermons . . . on the Epistles . . . to Timothie and Titus, trans. L. T. (London, 1579), p. 703.

¹⁹ John Downname, The Summe of Sacred Divinitie (London, [?1630]), p. 114.

change according to the will of God, is incomprehensible to man. William Perkins states that the will of God is a sovereign, absolute power by which God wills anything without impediment. Furthermore:

we are at Gods pleasure, as clay at the pleasure of the potter. This must teach us whē we thinke or speake of Gods workes & judgements, to thinke & speake with modesty & sobriety, with admiration & reverence, not daring to search into the reasō of them, or think hardly of them, when they sound not with our reason, contenting our selves with this, that we know God to have sovereignty in his will to be good.²⁰

Luther goes so far as to state that there may even be a discrepancy between God's revealed will (voluntas revelata) and his hidden will (voluntas abscondita), that is between his word and God himself. God wills and does many things that are not revealed in the Bible; thus, "He does not will the death of a sinner--that is, in His Word; but He wills it by His inscrutable will." Consequently:

we must keep in view His Word and leave alone His inscrutable will; for it is by His Word and not by His inscrutable will, that we must be guided. In any case, who can direct himself according to a will that is inscrutable and incomprehensible? It is enough simply to know that there is in God an inscrutable will.²¹

20 "A Treatise Of Gods free Grace And Man's Free-Will" in The Workes, 5th ed. (Cambridge, 1616-18), I, 723.

21 "Bondage of the Will" in Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings, ed. with an Introduction by John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y., 1961), p. 191. For other Reformation references to this Lutheran idea, see: Downname, The Summe of Sacred Divinitie, pp. 113-14, 117, Thomas Wilson, The Christian Dictionary, 4th ed. (London, [?1630]), sig. Eee^v, and Peter Vermigli, The Commonplaces, trans. Anthony Marten (London, 1593), Part I, p. 208. Luther may not have thought through the problem of the discrepancy between the two wills, as John Dillenberger suggests in God Hidden and Revealed (Philadelphia, 1953), pp. 16-17.

According to the voluntarists, God's justice depends only on his will, and God may rightly condemn anyone he pleases, even though that person may be without demerits of his own. For Calvin, "his will is the rule of all wisdom and right";²² his will is just; "yes, and a rule of all justice."²³ "For the will of God is so the highest rule of righteousness, that whatsoever he willeth," Calvin affirms, "even for this that he willeth it, it ought to be takē for righteous. When therefore it is asked, why the Lorde did it: it is to be answered, because he willed it."²⁴ Luther's idea of divine justice is similar to Calvin's. It maintains that God may damn the undeserving, "inasmuch as He is the one true God, wholly incomprehensible and inaccessible to man's understanding, it is reasonable, indeed inevitable, that His justice also should be incomprehensible."²⁵ Thus, within the framework of voluntaristic ethics, the arbitrary, incomprehensible will of God renders man helpless in working out his own salvation.

Although Calvin, Luther, and many of their English followers vigorously preached a voluntaristic ethics, they did

²² The Sermons . . . upon . . . Deuteronomie, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1583), p. 340.

²³ Sermons . . . on the Epistles . . . to Timothie and Titus, p. 703.

²⁴ The Institution of Christian Religion, trans. Thomas Norton (London, 1578), III. 23. 2.

²⁵ Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings, p. 200.

not repeal the natural law. But they interpreted it in a way that would have been unacceptable to the Scholastics and to the conservative Reformers like Richard Hooker and Philip Melanchthon, who resuscitated the Thomistic idea of natural law during the sixteenth century.²⁶ The opposition of the voluntarists to the Scholastic idea of natural law is based primarily upon their interpretation of what man is like after the Fall. Aquinas recognizes that sin diminishes man's natural inclination to virtue, but he maintains nevertheless that in man's reason there are present certain known principles of action which are the seeds of the moral virtues. These virtues, however, are inchoate, and their completion is not naturally present in man (ST, 1a2ae,

²⁶ Not all Reformers were voluntarists; both Hooker and Melanchthon wrote about natural law in Thomistic terms and accepted many of the basic assumptions of Aquinas' ethics. Melanchthon, who adopted the Scholastic idea of natural law and argued that man's reason had been dimmed by the Fall, is actually much closer on this point to Aquinas than he is to Luther. For his views on natural law, see Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555, trans. and ed. Clyde L. Manschreck (New York, 1965), pp. 128-29. Hooker's theory of natural law has been carefully studied, but because of the diversity of opinions on the subject during the Renaissance, it is somewhat careless to assert, as Herndl does, that Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity summarizes the Elizabethan belief on natural law. For commentaries on Hooker's views, see: Herndl, The High Design, pp. 22-28, Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1950), pp. 39-40, C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Oxford, 1954), pp. 459-61, A. P. D'Entreves, Natural Law, pp. 76-77 and The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought (New York, 1939), pp. 105-42, and Norman Sykes, "Richard Hooker" in The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, ed. F.J.C. Hearnshaw (London, 1926), pp. 63-89.

63.1).²⁷ Calvin and Luther, on the other hand, proclaim that the Fall ruined man's reason, the natural gift which judges good and evil, and destroyed the perfection of natural law so that all that remains of it is some measure of good and evil that is sufficient to make man inexcusable before God but inadequate to lead man to him. According to Calvin, in the state of his integrity, man, "according to the law of his nature," would serve and obey God. But after the Fall, he became so blinded by sin that he could no longer scrutinize the law written in his heart. This law shows what he owes to God and what he must do and avoid, and it makes him conscious of his guilt.²⁸

The efficacy of the reason, Calvin maintains, was severely limited by the Fall but not utterly destroyed. Although some sparks remain which reveal that man is a rational creature, they cannot "shine forth to any good effect." Because the reason is not perpetually blind, it seeks truth but always falls short of its goal.²⁹ Reason, therefore, cannot direct man to what is good. Man does not, Calvin asserts, "follow with diligence that thing which is in deede good for him, according to the excellence of his immortall nature, nor taketh reason to counsel, nor bindeth his minde, but without

²⁷ See also ST, 1a2ae, 51.1.

²⁸ From the 1536 edition of the Institution. Quoted from John Calvin: Selections from his Writings, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), pp. 269-70.

²⁹ Institution, II, 2.25.

reason, without counsel, like a beast, followeth the inclination of nature."³⁰

In defining the role of reason in human conduct, Calvin begins from the Thomistic premise that man is a rational creature who has an inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society. Although he grants reason some competence in civil matters, he denies reason the ability to know the truth about God. Since man is naturally a social animal, Calvin argues, he has a "naturall instinction" to preserve society. Accordingly, he is endowed with ideas of civil order and honesty. Thus, man understands that society is to be regulated by laws and comprehends the principles of those laws.³¹

But with respect to knowing the truth about God, reason is less perspicacious. Reason attempts to know three things about God: God himself, the way to salvation, and the way to frame one's life according to the rule of God's law. In respect to the first two men are "blinder than molles"; "mans reason neither approacheth, not goeth toward, nor ones directeth sight unto this trueth, to understand who is the true God, or what a one he will be towarde us."³² Natural reason may be endowed with some vague sense of God, but it does not possess knowledge of his true nature. Calvin bases this conclusion on

³⁰ Institution, II, 2.26.

³¹ Institution, II, 2.13.

³² Institution, II, 2.18.

1 Corinthians 1.21: "For seing the world by wisdom knewe not God in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishnes of preaching to save them that beleve." On this passage, Calvin comments:

Whereas therefore Paule in this place denyeth God to be known by his creatures, he meaneth that the pure knowledge of hym is not apprehended. For to the end all pretence of ignorance may be taken away, so far forth men profit in the universall schoole of nature, that they are touched with some feeling of the divinitie: but what God is, they knowe not, yea they perish in their owne cogitations . . . moreover there was never any man that attained so farre by the helpes of nature, as to come to the knowledge of God.³³

Concerning the third point, however, man's reason is somewhat sharper. In Romans 2. 14-15, Paul says that although the Gentiles have no law, they naturally do things contained in the law and are a law unto themselves; this law is written in their hearts and conscience bears them witness. Therefore Calvin concludes:

If the Gentiles have righteousness naturally graven in their mindes, surely we can not say that they are altogether blinde in the order of life. And nothing is more comon, than that man by the lawe naturall, of which the Apostle speaketh in that place, is sufficiently instructed to a right rule of life.³⁴

Although the Gentiles naturally possess the concepts of justice and rectitude, for if they did not they could not discern between vice and virtue, they do not have a full knowledge of the law; "but onely that there are certaine seedes of

³³ S. Paules Epistles to the
(London. 1577). fol. 16v.
A Commentarie upon S. Paules Epistles to the Corin-
thians, trans. Thomas Timme (London, 1577), fol. 16v.

³⁴ Institution, II, 2.22.

justice abiding in their witte, such as these bee, that all Gentiles indifferently institute religions, by lawes punish adulterie, theftes, and murder: that they commende a good faith in barganes and contracts."³⁵ However, if one compares what reason knows about the natural law to the law of God itself, which is the only true standard of righteousness, he will recognize the weakness of his reason. It cannot ascertain those "chiefe thinges in the First table [the first four commandments concern obligations to worship] as of confidence in God, of geving to him the prayse of strength and righteousness, of calling upon his name, of the true keping of Sabbath." But reason does show more understanding of the commandments of the second table of the law, which concerns one's relations with his neighbors. But there too reason often fails.³⁶

Just as the Fall weakened man's reason, so did it dim

³⁵ Commentarie upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romanes, trans. Christopher Rosdell (London, 1583), fol. 24r-v. For similar interpretations of the natural law, see: Peter Vermigli, Most learned and fruitfull Commentaries . . . upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes, trans. H. B. (London, 1563), fol. 43r, Wilson, A Christian Dictionary, sig. [Dd6v] and A Commentary upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes (London, 1614), p. 142, Nicholas Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters Of The First Epistle generall of St. Peter (London, 1637), p. 504, Edward Elton, The Triumph Of A True Christian Described (London, 1623), pp. 163-64, Andrew Willet, Hexapla: That is a Six-fold Commentarie upon . . . Romanes (London, 1620), pp. 117-23, and Antonio de Corro, A Theological Dialogue Wherein the Epistle of S. Paul the Apostle to the Romanes is expounded (London, 1575), fol. 14r.

³⁶ Institution, II, 2.24.

the natural law written in his heart. Richard Bernard says that the law of nature was once written perfectly in Adam, whereby he knew his duty to God, to himself, and to his neighbor, but since the Fall only a relic of its original perfection remains.³⁷ But for Calvin this is enough to condemn man before God. Since the Gentiles proved by their own actions that they possess some general rules of right and wrong, Calvin declares, it is vain for them to plead ignorance of the law as an excuse for their sins. Quoting St. Paul, he says:

. . . they which sinned in the lawe, are judged by the lawe: they that have sinned without lawe, do perish without lawe [Romans 2.12]. Bycause this might seeme unreasonable, that the Gentiles should perish without any judgement going before, he by and by addeeth, that their conscience is to them in steade of a lawe, and therefore is sufficient for their just damnation.³⁸

Luther's teaching on natural law and reason parallels Calvin's, but to understand why Luther depreciates natural law, we must keep in mind his distinction between law and the Gospel. He recognizes two kinds of knowledge of God: the knowledge of the law and the knowledge of the Gospel. God issued both so that he may be known through them. The law is inscribed in our hearts (Romans 2. 14-15), and by it reason knows right from wrong. Thus, all rational beings can determine for themselves that it is wrong to do such

³⁷ Christian See To Thy Conscience (London, 1631), pp. 43-44.

³⁸ Institution, II, 2.23.

things as disobey one's parent and government, and to murder. This knowledge, however, whether derived from the natural law or the Decalogue, is not true knowledge of God. This can only come from the Gospel, which teaches that the world by nature is corrupt and subject to God's wrath and that it cannot extricate itself without the Son of God. "This is the true and thorough knowledge of God," Luther asserts; "it is called the knowledge of grace and truth, the 'evangelical knowledge' of God."³⁹

The natural law, the Ten Commandments, and the Gospel have the same purpose because the end of every law is love, as St. Paul says in Galatians 5.14 and 1 Timothy 1.5, and as Christ says in Matthew 7.12. This law, which is known to all men, Luther, echoing Calvin, maintains "leaves no one from beginning to end with an excuse."⁴⁰ But the natural law alone is inadequate for salvation because it can only teach one what he should do, but it cannot give him the power to do it. For example, the law which commands one to love his neighbor as himself proves everyone to be a sinner for no one can fulfill it. When one recognizes this and realizes that salvation depends upon fulfilling the law, he despairs of himself and asks help from another source, but only the power of faith can achieve salvation. "That which is impossible for

³⁹ Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, 1959-67), XXII, 149-59.

⁴⁰ Luther's Works, XXVIII, 355.

you to accomplish by trying to fulfill all the works of the law--many and useless as they are--you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith. God our Father has made all things depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing."⁴¹ Thus, within Lutheran theology, man cannot use his naturally endowed reason or the remnant of the natural law written in his heart to do anything that would be acceptable to God.

Luther's remarks on reason and natural law are even more severe and derogatory at times. In his 1535 commentary on Galatians, he writes:

All men have a certain natural knowledge implanted in their minds (Romans 2. 14-15), by which they know naturally that one should do to others what he wants done to himself (Matthew 7.12). This principle and others like it, which we call the law of nature, are the foundation of human law and of all good works. Nevertheless, human reason is so corrupted and blinded by the malice of the devil that it does not understand this inborn knowledge; or even if it has been admonished by the Word of God, it deliberately neglects and despises it.⁴²

He even goes so far as to deny that natural knowledge and natural law are inherent in everyone. If everyone possessed natural law and natural reason, he argues in his commentary on Psalm 101.1, then fools, children, and women would be just as capable of waging war as David, Augustus, and Hannibal. As a result, all people would be alike, and no one could rule

⁴¹ Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings, pp. 57-58.

⁴² Luther's Works, XXVII, 53.

over the others. This would produce chaos and anarchy. But God created the world so that some should rule and some should obey. "The noble gem called natural law and reason" Luther scornfully concludes, "is a rare thing among the children of men."⁴³ The Thomistic interpretation of natural law and reason, therefore, seems to have been abandoned by Luther, as it was by Calvin.

Montaigne and Hobbes also assail the Scholastic assumption that conscience dictates the natural law, as did Calvin and Luther before them. They asserted that the laws of conscience are artificially devised by man and are therefore mutable. Montaigne claimed that conscience merely dictates established customs that vary according to time and place. Hobbes, on the other hand, also denies the existence of absolute ethical norms, and he argues that the proper rule of conscience is the law established by the civil magistrate.

Montaigne's skeptical theory of ethics amounts to a denial of the idea that conscience is a sure guide to morality, because it leaves no method for determining if an action is really good or bad. First of all, Montaigne rejects the idea that there is a set of universally valid moral principles from which conscience can deduce conclusions about the morality of one's actions. Like Aquinas, he recognizes that people in different cultures have different moral beliefs. But these diverse and myriad customs suggest to him that there is no

⁴³ Luther's Works, XIII, 160-61.

natural law universally and permanently imprinted in mankind.⁴⁴

Because he cannot find even one law or custom that has received universal approbation, he states:

Some things are here accounted abominable, which in another place are esteemed commendable: as in Lacememonia, the slight and subtlety in stealing. Marriages in proximity of blood are amongst us forbidden as capitall, elsewhere they are allowed and esteemed. . . . The murdering of children and of parents; the communication with women; traffick of robbing and stealing; free licence to all manner of sensuality; to conclude, there is nothing so extreame and horrible, but is found to be received and allowed by the custome of some nation.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cf. ST. 1a2ae, 94.4.

⁴⁵ "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond" in The Essayes of Montaigne, trans. John Florio with an Introduction by J.I.M. Stewart (Modern Library: New York, n.d.), pp. 524-25. See also p. 519. All references to Montaigne are to this edition. Montaigne's ethical relativism is based upon Sextus Empiricus' tenth mode for arriving at the suspension of judgment. It is mainly concerned with "Ethics, being based on rules of conduct, habits, laws, legendary beliefs, and dogmatic concepts." See Sextus Empiricus, trans. R. G. Bury (Loeb Classical Library: London, 1933), I, 85-93. This idea seems to have been popular among sixteenth and seventeenth-century skeptics. Agrippa says that right and wrong are judged:

. . . according to the use of time, and agreements of meene; whereof it commeth to passe, that, y whiche at one time was vice, an other time is accounted vertue: and that whiche in one place is vertue, in another is vice: that whiche to one is honeste, to another is dishoneste: that whiche to us is juste, to other is unjuste, according to the opinion, or lawes of time, of place, of estate, and of men."

See Of the Vanitie and uncertaintye of Artes and Sciences, trans. J. S. (London, 1589), fols. 71v-72r. For numerous examples of such diverse customs, see his chapter, "Of Morall Philosophie," fols. 71v-75v. And in his Dialogues Faits a L'Imitation de anciens, François La Mothe Le Vayer states:

L'empereur Claudius ayant epouse sa niece Agrippine les incestes furent permis par autorite du Senat. Et nous sommes contrainsts d'advouer que ce qui est inceste aujourd'huy, estoit innocence a l'naissance du monde. Les

He blames this multiplication of customs and opinions on the weakness of the human reason. Although he admits that there may be natural laws in other creatures, he states:

. . . in us they are lost: this goodly humane reason, engrafting it selfe among all men, to sway and command, confounding and topsi-turving the visage of all things, according to her inconstant vanity and vaine inconsistency Subjects have divers lustres, and severall considerations, whence the diversity of opinions is chiefly engendered. One nation vieweth a subject with one visage, and thereon it staies; an other with an other.⁴⁶

Montaigne's critique of natural law is tantamount to a rejection of Aquinas' theory that natural law is the same in all men and that only secondary principles, but not the primary, can be abolished by habit and custom. Furthermore, it repudiates St. Paul's claim that the Gentiles do by "nature," the things contained in the "Law" (Romans 2.14). For Montaigne, therefore, the laws of conscience do not proceed from nature. Further, he asserts that they "arise and proceed from custome: every man holding in special regard, and inward veneration, the opinions approved, as customes

voyages d'Americe Vespuce, nous ont appris qu'en toutes les Indes Occidentales il y'y avoit aucune acceptation de parente, pour cela; Marco Polo sousient le mesme des Indes d'orient, et les Druses du Liban vivent encore aujourd'huy de la sorte. Pour ce qui est semblables nous monstrent journellement le contraire.

Quoted in Louis Bredvold, The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1934), p. 37. See also the critique of Montaigne's Pyrrhonism in Richard H. Popkin, The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes (Harper Torchbooks: New York, 1964), p. 51.

⁴⁶ "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond" in Essayes p.525.

received about him, cannot without remorse leave them, nor without applause applie himselfe unto them."⁴⁷ Thus, within the framework of Montaigne's ethical relativism, conscience receives its laws from customs and tradition and not from the law of God as revealed in the natural law.

By asserting that conscience derives its rules from mutable customs that are peculiar to a particular time and place rather than from the revealed will of God, Montaigne in effect has denied the claim of many Reformers that conscience is a godlike faculty. He continues to detract from the divinity of conscience in his essay "Of Conscience."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ "Of Custome, And How A Received Law Should Not Easily Be Changed" in Essayes, pp. 80-81. Arguing that there are no innate practical principles, Locke echoes Montaigne when he remarks that men may assent to moral rules and their obligations to them "from their education, company, and customs of their country; which persuasion, however got, will serve to set conscience to work, which is nothing else but our own opinion or judgment of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions. And if conscience be a proof of innate principles, contraries may be innate principles; since some men, with the same bent of conscience, prosecute what others avoid." See An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. with an Introduction by John W. Yolton (Everyman's Library: London, 1961), I, 29-30. In his book Scientific Thought in Poetry (New York, 1931), Ralph Crum writes: "the idea that man was furnished with a sure guide in his conscience (i.e., a source of revelation of the divine will) was rudely shattered in 1690 with the publication of Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, which denied the doctrine of innate ideas, and which made sensation the only source of knowledge," (p. 61). Dussinger, "Conscience and the Pattern of Christian Perfection in Clarissa," PMLA, 81 (1966), 239, holds a similar opinion. It should be stressed, however, that although Locke's Essay had a more devastating effect on the traditional notions of conscience than Montaigne's Essayes, Montaigne anticipated Locke in arguing that the laws of conscience are not founded upon nature.

⁴⁸ Essayes, pp. 322-26.

This short essay considers the roles of conscience as tormenter and comforter. Characteristically, Montaigne's method of treating them is empirical. He draws only those conclusions about the effects of the guilty and innocent conscience that come from his own observations and experiences. Never does he comment upon their spiritual significance.

We can see his empirical method very clearly in his story about the stranger who belonged to the opposing faction during the French civil wars. Montaigne says this man:

. . . seemed so fearfully-dismaid, and at every encounter of horsemen, and passage, by, or thorow any Towne that held for the King, I observed him to be so strangely distracted, that in the end I perceived, and ghesed they were but guilty alarums that his conscience gave him. It seemed unto this seely man, that all might apparently, both brough his blushing self-accusing countenance, and by the crosses he wore upon his upper garments, read the secret intentions of his faint heart. Of such marvailous-working power is the sting of conscience: which often induceth us to bewray, to accuse, and to combat our selves; and for want of other evidences shee produceth ourselves against our selves.

In this case, Montaigne's conclusion that conscience unwittingly reveals the stranger's hidden crimes derives from his careful observation of the discrepancy between the stranger's behavior and his intentions, that is, between his fitful distraction and his attempt to hide his guilt. And as his numerous quotations from the classics show,⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Many of Montaigne's classical quotations on conscience circulated during the Renaissance in florelegii. One

Montaigne was also familiar with this power of conscience from his reading of Juvenal,⁵⁰ Lucretius,⁵¹ Ovid,⁵²

such as Nannus Mirabellius' Florilegii Magni, Sev Polyanthae Novissimus Sparsae Libri XXIII, first published in Florence in 1519, may have been his source for them. Of the numerous quotations Montaigne could have selected from the classics, he keeps with the secular spirit of his essay by ignoring any that suggest conscience is divine or that it provides a guide to the moral life by using reason and the natural law. For example, he does not use Epictetus' famous remark that God gave man a conscience to act as his guardian. This remark is recorded in Mirabellius' Florilegii, col. 575 (reference is to the 1659 Lyons edition, ed. Joseph Lang), and in Conrad Lycosthenes' Apophthegmata Ex Probates Graecae, Latinaeque Linguae Scriptioribus (London, 1635). This quotation is listed as Fragment 97 in Dissertationum ad Arriano Digestarum Libri IV. Eiusdem Enchiridion, et Ex Deperditais Sermonibus Fragmata, ed. John Schweighaeuser (Lipzig, 1799-1800), III, 98-99. Two other quotations on conscience from Epictetus appear in William Baldwin's A Treatise of Morall Philosophie, enlarged by Thomas Palfreyman, ed. Robert H. Bowers (Gainsville, Fla., 1967), p. 298. This is a facsimile of the 1620 edition, which was first published in 1547. Montaigne also passes by the many quotations on conscience from Cicero and Seneca, who uphold the idea that conscience is a guide to morality. Cicero's are found in Mirabellius, Florilegii, col. 574, Lycosthenes, Apophthegmata, p. 119, and in Sententiae Ciceronis, Demosthenis, Ac Terentii (London, 1584), p. 109. Seneca's are included in Mirabellius, Florilegii, cols. 574, 575, and in Lycosthenes, Apophthegmata, pp. 119, 120.

⁵⁰ Juvenal's remarks on the effects of a guilty conscience circulated widely during the Renaissance. See for example: Mirabellius, Florilegii, col. 573, William Chub, The True travaile of all faithful Christians, howe to escape the daungers of this wicked world (London, 1585), sigs. [D8^v]-[D9^r], Thomas Fitzherbert, The First Part of a Treatise Concerning Policy, and Religion (London, 1606), p. 159, and John Downname, A Guide to Godlyness, p. 67. These quotations are from Juvenal's thirteenth Satire, 11.192-249. For the entire section, see Juvenal and Persius, trans. G. G. Ramsey (Loeb Classical Library: London, 1965), pp. 260-65.

⁵¹ The Lucretius quote is from De Rerum Natura, V. 1156-61. But see also III, 1010-1023. I have not found this in any Renaissance florilegia.

⁵² The Ovid quotation is from Fasti, I. 484-85. It

Epicurus,⁵³ and Plutarch.⁵⁴ But unlike the Reformers, he treats this stranger's tormenting conscience exclusively as a psychological rather than a spiritual malady.

Similarly, when he says, "I have waded thorow many dangerous hazards, with a more untired pace, only consideration of the secret knowledge I had of mine owne will, and innocence of my desseignes," he neglects to draw any spiritual implications from his good conscience. Thus, in his observation of his own conscience and that of others, Montaigne takes conscience out of the theological realm and puts it in the psychological.

Montaigne challenged the Scholastic concept of conscience by incisively arguing that the mandates of conscience come from local customs not from the laws of God and by treating the tormenting and comforting consciences

also appears in Mirabellius, Florilegii, col. 572, and in Simon Harward, Encheiridion Morale: in quo Virtutes quatur (ut vocant) cardinales, ex clarissimis oratoribus et poetis Graecis, Latinis, Italicis, Hispanis, Gallicique . . . describuntur (London, 1596), p. 84.

⁵³ Epicurus' remark on the effects of a guilty conscience appears in Diogenes Laertius, The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, trans. C. D. Yonge (London, 1853), p. 478. Seneca quotes this passage with approval in Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Loeb Classical Library: Cambridge, Mass., 1953), III, 115. It was widely quoted during the Renaissance. See Lycosthenes, Apophthegmata, p. 119, and Taylor, Ductor Dubitantium, p. 10. In Mirabellius' Florilegii, col. 575, it is quoted over Seneca's name.

⁵⁴ The story of Bessus is related by Plutarch, and it appears again in Caesare Ripa's emblem on conscience; see Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery. The 1758-60 Hertel Edition of Ripa's Iconologia, ed. Edward A. Maser (New York, 1961), number 119.

as psychological phenomena. Another blow was struck as the Scholastic concept of conscience by Thomas Hobbes. He asserts that conscience is merely an "opinion of evidence" which is pernicious to a peaceful society because it divides people according to their private opinions of right and "wrong."⁵⁵

To understand his definition of conscience, we must analyze it in the context of his theory of knowledge. According to Hobbes, there are two kinds of knowledge, sense or "knowledge original" and science or "knowledge of the truth of propositions." Continually in our minds are "images" or "conceptions" of things in the world, so that if one were alive and the world destroyed, one would still retain conceptions of the things in it. All these conceptions are products of the senses.⁵⁶ Science, which derives from the understanding, is attained in two steps. First, it imposes names on things, and second, it methodically proceeds from the names to assertions, which are made by connecting

⁵⁵ Human Nature, or the Fundamental Elements of Policy in The English Works, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London, 1839-45), IV, 30. Unless otherwise stated, the following critique is based on Hobbes' theory of knowledge as it appears in the sixth chapter of Human Nature. I should call attention to the fact that here I am arguing against the respected opinions of some Hobbes scholars; see: Howard Warrender, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (Oxford, 1951), pp. 322-29, Leo Strauss, "On the Spirit of Hobbes' Political Thought," in Hobbes Studies, ed. K. C. Brown (Oxford, 1965), pp. 11-14, and A. E. Taylor, "The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes," in Hobbes Studies, pp. 39-49.

⁵⁶ Human Nature in The English Works, IV, 2-3.

one name to another, and then to syllogisms, which are connections of assertions, until "we come to a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand."⁵⁷

Necessary to this knowledge are truth and evidence. Truth is that proposition in which the former name is comprehended by the latter such as in "charity is a virtue." Evidence is the "concomitance of a man's conception with the words that signify such conception in the act of ratio-cination." Hobbes explains that if a man reasons with words unaccompanied by conceptions, then his conclusions are not evident; for this evidence, which is meaning with our words, is the life of truth."

After establishing that truth and evidence are necessary to knowledge, Hobbes can define science, a particular kind of knowledge, as "evidence of truth from some beginning or principle of sense." "The truth of a proposition is never evident," Hobbes says, "until we conceive the meaning of the words on the terms whereof it consisteth . . . nor can we remember those conceptions, without the thing that produced the same by our senses." Knowledge has four principles. The first is that one has conceptions. The second is that one has named the things of which he has conceptions. The third is that one has joined those names to make true propositions. The fourth is that one join those

⁵⁷ Leviathan, in The English Works, III, 35.

propositions to make true conclusions.

About the truth of these propositions one can make assumptions. If a proposition is not evident, that is, if there is no concomitance between the conception and the words that signify it, it is a supposition. If a proposition is not evident but probable, then it is called an opinion. Hobbes then explains that when men say something is true upon their conscience, they know or think they know it to be true, but they do not know for certain that what they are saying is true. They have an opinion, "not only of the truth of the thing, but also of their knowledge of it, to which the truth of the proposition is consequent. Conscience I therefore define to be opinion of evidence."

Because conscience is merely an opinion about the concomitance of words and conceptions, it is not the proper norm of the good. Hobbes distinguishes between two such norms; one exists in the state of nature; the other in society. The object of man's desire is called good; the object of his hatred evil. "For these words of good and evil," Hobbes says:

. . . and contemptible are ever used with relation to the person that uses them, there being nothing simply and absolutely so, nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves--but from the person of the man, where there is no commonwealth, or, in a commonwealth, from the person that represents it, or from an arbitrator or judge whom men disagreeing shall by consent set up and make his sentence the rule thereof.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Leviathan, in The English Works, III, 41; for similar definitions of good and evil, see IV, 32, and IV, 109.

In the state of nature there is no general measure of good and evil; men have no other law than their own appetites. But not only do men differ about what is good, the same man at different times may not agree about what is good. From these differences, disputes and eventually wars arise.⁵⁹

To let private appetite remain the measure of good and evil is to nullify the fundamental law of nature: "that every man ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war."⁶⁰ To avoid the condition of war and to strive for peace, man must "be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things, and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself."⁶¹ One of the rights that man has transferred to the commonwealth in order to promote peace is that of judging right and wrong. It belongs to the sovereign alone to determine what is good and bad.⁶² Hobbes believes that it is contrary to peace for individuals to judge right and wrong, not by law, but by conscience,⁶³ and that if every man were

⁵⁹ Leviathan in The English Works, III, 146.

⁶⁰ Leviathan in The English Works, III, 117.

⁶¹ Leviathan in The English Works, III, 118.

⁶² Leviathan in The English Works, III, 41.

⁶³ Leviathan in The English Works, III, 330-31.

allowed this liberty of following his conscience there would be such differences that people could not live in peace for an hour.⁶⁴ A man sins if he does something against his conscience, but in matters of human law, conscience is not operative. Because man has transferred the authority of judging right and wrong from his conscience to the commonwealth, he acts according to conscience when he obeys the laws of state, but not when he merely obeys his "private conscience." In his concern for securing peace, Hobbes has completely revised the relation of conscience to men's proper good. Instead of directing man's actions toward it, as the Scholastics maintained, Hobbes feared that it would turn them away from it.

This investigation of Renaissance voluntarism, skepticism, and nominalism indicates three possible reasons some Reformers like Woolton, Hughes, Carpenter, and Sharp, among others, found unacceptable the Scholastic definition of conscience as an act of the practical reason that applies the natural law to a particular human action. First, the Scholastic concept did not suit the voluntaristic ethics of Calvin and Luther. These Reformers maintained that the moral law is a function of the divine will not the divine reason. Furthermore, they argued that although the natural law contains some truth, the Fall made it impossible for the human

⁶⁴ De Corpore Politico in The English Works, IV, 164, and see also Leviathan in The English Works, III, 311.

reason to apprehend it. Second, the Scholastic concept was vulnerable to Montaigne's arguments against the existence of a natural law. Unable to find one universally accepted moral norm, Montaigne replaced natural law with local customs as the rules of conscience. Thus, as a result of his ethical relativism, Montaigne does not claim that conscience is a guide to salvation. Third, the Scholastic concept of conscience received its most devastating blow from Thomas Hobbes. As a nominalist, he argues that there is nothing universal except names and that without words man cannot have general ideas. Consequently, without words, there would be no "good" or "evil," because "good" and "evil" are attributes of speech. For Hobbes, then, conscience is only the concomitance of words and concepts; it does not dictate a universal moral law as it does for Aquinas.

The arguments of Calvin, Luther, Montaigne, and Hobbes seem to have had two broad effects on the concept of conscience. First, they caused the decline of the Scholastic concept of conscience. Second, they created confusion about what the concept of conscience means. But because the Bible stresses the importance of a good conscience for every Christian, the Reformers had to rehabilitate the concept and restore order to this confusion. How they did this will be examined in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE FACULTY: REFORMATION DEFINITIONS
OF CONSCIENCE

Sebastian: But for your conscience.
 Antonio: Ay, sir; where lies that? if 'twere a kibe,
 'Twould put me to my slipper: but I feel not
 This deity in my bosom.
 --The Tempest, II,i.270-73.

During the seventeenth century, many English Protestant theologians responded to what they considered their contemporaries' extensive misuse of the term "conscience" by accurately defining the word according to its use in Scripture. However, even within the ranks of the Reformers, universal agreement on the meaning of "conscience" was absent. During the earlier seventeenth century, some Reformers, such as John Woolton, William Ames, William Jones, and Henry Hammond, insisted upon retaining the Scholastic meaning of conscience as an act of the practical understanding, because they found Biblical authority for it. But the majority of Reformers who wrote on conscience followed William Perkins in rejecting the Scholastic meaning, because they believed that it did not accurately denote the term as it is used in the Bible. Although they retained the Thomistic notion that conscience is intellectual rather than conative, their definition differs from that of the Scholastics in two

essential respects. First, it proposes that the Bible, which contains a more exact version of God's revealed will than the natural law, is the only right rule of conscience. Second, it proposes that conscience is a divine faculty, superior to all others in the human soul, and uses the reason, will, and affections in the process by which it arrives at the truth. Thus, these Reformers rehabilitated conscience into a sure guide to morality by bringing their interpretation of it into conformity with Protestant teachings on volunarism and on the postlapsarian corruption of reason and natural law. But later in the seventeenth century, apparently during the fifth decade, both Aquinas' and Perkins' definitions of conscience lost favor among Protestant theologians, and essentially different definitions appear in the writings of Robert Sanderson and Jeremy Taylor.

Many seventeenth-century Reformers complained that people used "conscience" with gross imprecision. Robert Harris, for example, says that the term is used with too much "latitude."¹ Henry Hammond is appalled by those who speciously disguise their errors under the name of conscience.² Jeremy Taylor condemns those who pretend their pernicious actions proceed from conscience.³ Likewise, John Sharp declares that because there is nothing more talked

¹ "Saint Pauls Exercise" in Sixe Sermons of Conscience, 2nd ed. (London, 1630), p. 3.

² Of Conscience (Oxford, 1644), p. 1.

³ Ductor Dubitantium (London, 1660), pp. 26-27.

about and less understood than conscience, many espouse serious errors and engage in sinful practices, yet believe they are acting according to conscience.⁴

Several Scriptural passages seem to have induced the Reformers to restore order to this contemporary confusion surrounding the word "conscience." The Bible not only twice explicitly commands that one have a good conscience (Proverbs 4.23 and 1 Timothy 1.19), but it also indicates that knowingly and willingly going against conscience leads to despair. This happened, for example, to Pharoah, Saul, and Judas. Furthermore, it mentions the manifold benefits of keeping a good conscience. In sum, the Bible teaches that a good conscience can guide one to salvation, as Perkins states in an elaborate nautical metaphor suggested by 1 Timothy 1.19:

When a ship is on the sea, if it be not wel governed, or if there be a breach made into it: it drawes water & sinckes: and so both men, and wares, and all in liklihood are cast away. Now we are all passengers; the world is an huge sea through which wee must passe: our ship is the conscience of every man . . . the wares are our religion and salvation and all other gifts of God. Therefore it stands us in hand to be alwaies at the helme, and to carrie our ship with as even a course as possibly we can, to the intended port of happines, which is the salvation of our soules.⁵

⁴ A Discourse Concerning Conscience, p. 1.

⁵ A Discourse of Conscience in William Perkins . . . His Pioneer Works on Casuistry: "A Discourse of Conscience" and "The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience," ed. with and Introduction by Thomas F. Merrill (The Netherlands, 1966), pp. 77-78. Perkins' metaphor is a variation on the one traced back to St. Augustine by D. C. Allen, "Donne and the

But to acquire a good conscience, the Reformers taught, one must first understand the concept.

A good conscience can lead a Christian to salvation by sustaining his faith and assuring him that his actions are free from sin. Of the many benefits of a good conscience, including boldness, patience in affliction, and comfort in the face of death,⁶ these two seem to have been considered the most important by the Reformers. In 1 John 3. 19-22, the author writes: "For thereby we knowe that we are of the trueth and shal before him assure our hearts. For if our heart condemne us, GOD is greater then our heart, and knowesh al things. Beloved, if our heart condemne us not, then have we boldnes towarde God." According to Calvin, this passage shows that true faith is always accompanied by a good conscience and that it is vain to assume the name Christian if one has an evil conscience. These words, he says in his commentary, reveal:

that faith standeth not without a good conscience. Not that our assurance arise frō thence, or dependeth thereon: but because the we are perswaded truly of our conjunctiō w god, whē y^e efficacy of y^e holy ghost doth shew forth it selfe in our love . . . [the Apostle] cōdemneth in us a fained professiō of faith, he saith y^e we cā have a sound perswasio before God no other way, then if his spirit do bring forth in us the fruit of love. And albeit y^e a good conscience cā never be separate frō faith.⁷

Ship Metaphor," *MLN*, 76 (1961), 308-12, and discussed in relation to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, IX. 1121-26, by Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition*, pp. 111-12.

⁶ *A Discourse of Conscience*, p. 77.

⁷ *The Commentaries . . . upon the first Epistle of*

And on the other hand, he warns:

that they have the name and shew of Christians in vaine, who have not the testimonie of a good conscience. For if any man be guiltie in his own knowledge, and is convinced in the proper feeling of his owne soule, much lesse shall hee escape the judgement of God. It followeth therefore that faith is subverted with the disquiet of an evill conscience.⁸

No one, therefore, can stand before God who is not sustained by an upright conscience.

St. Paul discusses the alliance between faith and a good conscience in 1 Timothy 1.5, and he repeats it in 1 Timothy 1.19: "Having faith, and a good conscience, which some have put away, and as concerning faith, have made shipwracke." In these two passages, St. Paul warns Timothy that if he does not have a good conscience, his faith will be taken away and he will lose the grace of the Holy Ghost. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 1.19, Calvin stresses that one needs a good conscience to sustain his faith:

. . . that some have put it [conscience] away, and are perished from the faith, as if a ship were drowned in y^e sea . . . He taketh here a similitude of them that go by water, whether it be by ship, or boat. If they shoulde be sunke by reason of any tempest, they were utterly lost away. S. Paul saith, that they whiche turne away from a good Conscience, and uprightness, are sunke in the midst of the sea. Let us take good heede therefore, that we keepe faith: for that it is, that holdest us up, it is the prop of our salvation: if

Saint John, and upon the Epistle of Jude, trans. W. H. (London, [1580?], fol. 60^r).

⁸ The Commentaries . . . upon the first Epistle of Saint John, fol. 60^v.

we be not well grounded therein we are straight ways
sunke in the bottomlesse pitte of hell.⁹

Faith is a great treasure, Calvin says, and a good conscience is a coffer in which to keep it.¹⁰ Jeremiah Dyke, developing a similar image, incites one to get a good conscience because it is like an ark carrying the special treasure of faith.¹¹ Without the assurance of faith and a clear conscience one cannot draw near to Christ, the author of Hebrews says (Hebrews 10.22). On this passage Calvin remarks that we "are partakers of Christ, if beeing sanctified in bodie, and in soule, we come to him: besides, that this sanctification is an assured faith, a pure conscience, and a cleannesse both of bodie, and soule, which proceedeth from the holy Ghost, and is accomplished by him."¹² If one maintains a good conscience as God as commanded, these Reformers taught, he is assured of heaven and of God never forsaking him.

Closely related to the idea that faith and a good conscience must coexist is the Protestant belief that good acts

⁹ Sermons . . . on the Epistles . . . to Timothie and Titus, trans. L. T. (London, 1572), p. 104.

¹⁰ Sermons . . . on the Epistles . . . to Timothie and Titus, pp. 104, 616, 650-51, and 746. This image of conscience as a coffer can be traced back to the Middle Ages; see Rabanius Maurus, Allegoriae in Universam Sacrum Scripturam, PL, C II, 989.

¹¹ Good Conscience: Or A Treatise Shewing The Nature, Meanes, Marks, Benefit, and Necessities thereof, 2nd ed. (London, 1626), p. 238.

¹² A Commentarie On The Whole Epistle To The Hebrews (London, 1605), pp. 215-16.

can derive only from faith and a good conscience. As St.

Paul states:

Blessed is he that condemneth not him self in that thing which he alloweth. For he that doubteth, is condemned if he eat because he eateth not of faith: and whatsoever is not of faith, is sinne. (Romans 14.22-230)

Dyke says that without a good conscience all our actions are far from acceptance and goodness. The goodness of a man's action is to be judged by the goodness of his conscience; if the conscience is defiled, then the action is defiled.¹³

Calvin explains that every work, however splendid and excellent in appearance, is counted sin if it is not founded on a right conscience because God does not regard the outward display as an estimate of our works, but only the inward obedience of the heart.¹⁴ God would have us do nothing except that which we are sure is acceptable to him; therefore, whatever is done with even a doubtful conscience is vicious and sinful to God. Calvin writes on 1 Corinthians 8.6:

this common saying is true, They builde hell fyre, which buylde agaynst their conscience. For as the goodnesse of woorkes dooth spring from the feare of God, and from the sincerities of conscience, so on the other syde, no worke is so good in sight, which is not defiled with the wicked affection of the mynde. For he which dare take any thing in hande agaynst his conscience, dooth

¹³ Good Conscience, p. 233.

¹⁴ Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, fol. 186^r. See also Luther's commentary on Rom. 14.23 in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1954), p. 198 and Lectures on Romans, trans. and ed. Wilhelm Pauck, Library of Christian Classics, XV (London, 1961), 401.

thereby shewe some contempt agaynst God. For this is a testimonie of the feare of God, when we have regard to his wyl in al things.¹⁵

Calvin and Dyke notice that conscience determines the quality of our actions, but William Perkins develops this idea more thoroughly than either. He begins by stating that "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" means that whatever is done without the sure persuasion of conscience, regardless of how men judge it, is sinful. After following Calvin on this point, he further states that because God regards not the outward action but the obedience of the heart, conscience must approve the action to be good and agreeable to God's will. From this rule Perkins develops three others. The first (which again follows Calvin) directs one not to do anything with a doubtful conscience; the second warns that anything done with an erroneous conscience is a sin; and the third states that whatever is done against conscience, though it errs and is deceived, is a sin.¹⁶ For these reasons therefore a Christian was bound to acquire and keep a good conscience.

Because Scripture places such emphasis on the role of conscience in the Christian's moral life, it was imperative for the Reformers to establish the proper and adequate norm by which conscience makes its judgments about our behavior. Although the imprint of natural law may be of some help in

¹⁵ A Commentarie upon . . . Corinthians, fol. 96^V.

¹⁶ A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 41-42.

this matter, the Reformers taught that the light which comes from it was largely obscured by the Fall. A more perfect light, many argued, is the Scripture because it more accurately records the revealed will of God. The difference between the specificity of the natural law and that law contained in Scripture led the Reformers to distinguish between the natural and enlightened conscience.

In man's original state, both conscience and the natural law that ruled it were perfect. Thomas Morton says that before the Fall conscience gave Adam the confidence to commune with God.¹⁷ Richard Bernard also notes that conscience stirred up Adam "to all duties of holiness and righteousness."¹⁸ Nicholas Byfield agrees that man had a good conscience by creation and that it was perfectly good, excusing and comforting him,¹⁹ and Perkins adds that before the Fall, Adam's conscience only excused and did not accuse for anything, although it had the power to do so.²⁰

But the Reformers taught that the Fall destroyed this perfection of conscience and the natural law that ruled it. According to Richard Bernard, the only rule of conscience is God's law, which was once written perfectly in Adam's heart.

¹⁷ A Treatise of the Threefolde State of Man (London, 1596), p. 253.

¹⁸ Christian See To Thy Conscience, p. 43.

¹⁹ A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters Of The First Epistle generall of St. Peter (London, 1637), p. 503.

²⁰ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 44.

Now, only relics of this original law remain. For example, we know that there is a "law," as St. Paul explains in Romans 2.14, and we know that this law contains the "truth," as St. Paul says in Romans 1.18-19. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 11.14 informs us that this is a "teaching law": "in which place it is called Nature, that is, the Law of nature," by which men not only know sins generally but also many sins particularly and the judgment of God due for them.²¹

Bernard concludes that the natural law contains infallible, durable, and common principles of truth and the general notions of good and evil. Some of these are: that there is a God who knows all things and who must be worshiped and served; that it is good to please God; that the soul of man is immortal; that men must love one another; and that one should do as he would be done by.²² And Robert Bolton asserts that even though the natural law is no longer perfect, it still teaches that all good should be done and evil avoided; that one should do as he would be done by; that one's kind should be propagated; that a man's life should be preserved; and that God is to be honored.²³

Bernard maintains that those who live outside the Church

²¹ Christian See To Thy Conscience, p. 44.

²² Christian See To Thy Conscience, p. 45. See also Robert Abbots' list in Four Sermons (London, 1639), pp. 37-38.

²³ Helpes To Humiliation, 3rd ed. (London, 1633), pp. 11-12. This list derives directly from ST, 1a2ae, 94.2.

may use these precepts of the natural law to direct their consciences, and to preserve their societies. But as Romans 1.20 states, they also make them inexcusable before God. By the light of these precepts, the pagans wrote their ethics and politics, and they are the rules by which God will judge them.²⁴

One whose conscience is governed solely by these natural precepts is called a natural man. The pejorative connotations of the phrase derive from 1 Corinthians 2.14: "but the natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishnes unto him: nether can he knowe them, because they are spiritually discerned." Opposed to the Scholastics who believed that nature gives man his inclination to the good, the Reformers taught that if man follows nature, he deviates from his proper end. Joseph Hall says:

It is a wonder how full of shifts Nature is; ready to turne over all good purposes. If we thinke of death, she suggests secretly; Tush, it shall not come yet: If of judgement for sinne; This concernes not thee; it shall not come at all: If of heaven; and of our labour to reach it; Trouble not thyselfe; it will come soone enough alone. Adresse thyselfe to pray; It is yet unseasonable: stay for a better oportunitie: To give almes; Thou knowest not thy owne future wants . . . Every good action hath his let: He can never be good, that is not resolute.²⁵

According to this point of view, nature is morally decadent and cannot lead man to salvation because it has been impaired

²⁴ Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, p. 46.

²⁵ The Works, p. 143.

by the Fall.

There are several kinds of natural men and each is inferior to the man who possesses the Spirit of God. Calvin distinguishes between the natural man who is addicted to gross sensuality, about whom St. Paul speaks in Romans 8.5 and 8, and he who is endowed only with the gifts and powers of nature.²⁶ In a variation on Calvin's division, Perkins lists three kinds, the natural man who is destitute of grace, the one who is regenerate yet weak because the flesh is still stronger than the spirit, and the one who is governed only by reason and nature.²⁷

Perkins notes that because the natural man has a body and soul united in one person, a soul with a will, understanding, and affections, and the ornaments of strength, memory, knowledge of the arts and sciences, and the virtues, he is like the man gifted with the Spirit of God. But in that he lacks grace, there is as much difference between him and a Christian as there is between a beast and a man.²⁸ Hall, with characteristic zeal, says:

For, whereas man lives but one life of reason, above the beast; a Christian lives foure lives, above a naturall man: The life of inchoate regeneration, by grace; the perfect life of imputed righteousness; the life of glory begun, in the separation of the soul; the life of perfect glory, in the society of the body, with the soule in full happinesse: The worst whereof is better by many degrees,

²⁶ A Commentarie upon . . . Corinthians, fols. 28^v-29^r.

²⁷ The Workes II, 348-49; III, 574-75.

²⁸ The Workes, III, 574-75.

than the best life of a naturall man.²⁹

According to the Reformers, the natural man offends God because his nature has been ruined by the Fall and has not yet been renewed by Grace.

The natural man directs his conscience only according to reason and the laws of nature which have been implanted in his mind but have been dimmed by the Fall, but the man with the Spirit of God also directs his conscience according to Scripture. Thus, some Reformers took synderesis in a large sense to refer to the natural habit which not only knows the general principles of the natural law but also the practical truths which we know through revelation. From this arises the distinction between the natural and enlightened conscience. The former acknowledges for law only the precepts of nature and the conclusions deriving from them. The latter, besides these, acknowledges for law whatsoever is prescribed in Scripture.³⁰

The law of nature and the practical truths of Scripture are the same in substance but differ in specificity. Both, however, are necessary for a good conscience. The law of nature contains general principles according to which one should frame his life, but Scripture presents the particulars of those principles and shows how God is to be worshiped and how

²⁹ The Workes, p. 27.

³⁰ William Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof (n.p., 1639), pp. 5-6; and Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . .) p. 500.

good is to be done to others. The Old Testament is more specific than the law of nature and the New Testament is more specific than the Old. For example, the law of nature condemns adultery; the Decalogue forbids one to covet his neighbor's wife; but the Gospel is even more specific on this point for Christ says that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). And concerning murder, Christ also refines the general principle of the natural law. In this case, both the natural law and the Decalogue forbid killing, but Christ extends this commandment to include anger towards one's brother (Matthew 5:22).³¹

Conscience receives its efficacy from its knowledge of the law of God, and if it possesses this knowledge only as it is revealed in the natural law and not as it is more specifically revealed in the Scripture, it is liable to error. The natural conscience is weak, Immanuel Borne explains, because:

. . . according to the nature and strength of this knowledge the sense or stroke of Conscience is felt in the hart, either by joy or griefe, by peace or trouble, by feare or boldnesse, or the like. If the knowledge be naturall, arising from the light of nature, or those sparkes of knowledge (both of God and of his Law) not quite extinct by Adams fall, but left in man, to make him voyd of all excuse, then is the stroke or force of Conscience not so powerfull, making answer onely to that knowledge with which it is enlightened: But if, besides this light of nature, our understandings are informed with the knowledge of God, and of his will (as God in sacred Scriptures hath revealed himselfe unto his Church)

³¹ Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 47-51, and Abbot, Four Sermons, pp. 37-38.

then is the force of Conscience much more powerfull.³²

The "natural" and "enlightened" consciences are both set against sin, but differ in their approach. Ephraim Huit enumerates five differences. First, in its contest against evil, the natural conscience, which dislikes sin, is in conflict with the will and affections which are fighting for evil. In its struggle with sin, the enlightened conscience is involved with the will and affections, but each is partly renewed. Conscience partly demurs, and partly approves the object; the will partly accepts and partly rejects it; the affections partly embrace and partly retire from it. Man, having two contrary natures, one corrupt and the other renewed by grace, partakes of both and chooses freely what he likes. Second, they differ in the objects about which they contend. The natural conscience struggles only with sins of a gross nature such as violations of the Ten Commandments, but the enlightened struggles with all sins. Thirdly, they differ in their motives in their fight with sin. The natural conscience stirs up man against sin for the shame of the world and the terror of hell, but the enlightened provokes man to avoid sin because it displeases God and gives scandal to religion. Fourth, they differ in their means. The natural conscience subdues sin by proposing the discomfort of sin, and the enlightened calls upon God to subdue it. Fifth, they differ in the duration of the contention. After seeing that its labor is in

³² The Anatomie Of Conscience (London, 1623), p. 9.

vain, the natural conscience either desists wholly or fights without effect, but the enlightened conscience is always triumphant.³³

Christopher Lever makes two distinctions between a Christian's and an infidel's conscience. First, the infidel's only remembers his great offenses, and them sparingly and with favor, but the Christian's is more severe because it remembers all sins. Second, the infidel's does not often provoke him to repentance, but a Christians' pricks him until he pursues his own reformation.³⁴

Likewise, Robert Bolton says that these general notions of right and wrong lead a man no further than to "the executions of morall honestie," but cannot lead him to heavenly mysteries or to divine knowledge. However, those who add to these practical principles the rules taken from Scripture are assured of godliness.³⁵

Therefore, by asserting that the will of God as revealed generally in the natural law and particularly in the Scripture is the only adequate norm by which the enlightened conscience directs human actions, the Reformers could not accept Aquinas' optimistic view that conscience can lead man to salvation by only following the law of nature. But they

³³ The Anatomy of Conscience (London, 1626), pp. 229-39.

³⁴ The Holy Pilgrime, Leading the way to Heaven (London, 1618), pp. 110-11.

³⁵ A Discourse About The State Of True Happiness (London, 1614), pp. 113 and 115.

still had to determine the apparatus and processes conscience uses to judge the morality of an action. The Scholastics had taught that the practical reason recognizes the basic moral truths through synderesis and syllogistically applies them by an act of conscience to a specific act. But because the Reformers maintained that as a result of the Fall rational inquiry into the laws of God would either end in error or fall short of its goal, many of them could not accept this Scholastic interpretation.

Many Reformers solved this problem by dissociating conscience from the fallible reason without denying that conscience is intellectual rather than conative. These Reformers asserted that conscience is not an act of the practical reason but a separate power or faculty of the soul (both terms were often used synonymously) which God placed midway between him and man to advise about the nature of good and evil and to pronounce sentence either for or against man. Therefore, these writers claimed that conscience is also divine. This interpretation was first advanced by William Perkins and was accepted by the majority of the early seventeenth-century English Reformers who wrote on conscience. However, a small group of Reformers that includes John Woolton, William Ames, William Jones, and Henry Hammond perpetuated and defended the Scholastic notion that conscience is an act of the practical reason.³⁶ These writers, however,

³⁶ Because it is essentially a reiteration of ST, 1a,

failed to revive this medieval idea.

As we have seen, Woolton rejects the methodology of the Scholastics, but he does accept their interpretation of conscience as an act of the practical reason. Conscience, he says, is:

a certaine naturall intelligence of the law, ingrafted in the minde or power understanding [sic], whereby we allow good actions and disallow evill actions.³⁷

This definition does not seem to reflect any influence of Scholasticism, but the exposition of it is strictly Thomistic. Woolton says that in the contemplative understanding, which is the purer part of the mind,³⁸ is synderesis which conserves notions bred in us by nature and examines what is expedient to do. Synderesis administers prepositions to practical syllogisms.³⁹ In the practical intellect, which concerns itself with action, the conscience is properly placed; this provides the assumption of the syllogism. In the mind there is also judgment which pronounces whether an

79.13 without a commentary, I have not found it necessary to discuss the definition of conscience given by Thomas Milles in The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times (London, 1613), I, 891.

³⁷ Of The Conscience, sig. [B4^V].

³⁸ Cf. Richard Huloet, Huloets Dictionarie, corrected, amended, and enlarged by John Higgin (London, 1572), who defines conscience as the "pure parte of the mynde," sig. K3^V, and John Veron, A Dictionary in Latine and English, newly corrected by R. W. (London, 1575), who defines "synteresis" as the "pure part of conscience," sig. S

³⁹ Of The Conscience, Sigs./B4^V/-C. In the margin of sig. C^r he quotes the Scholastic definition of synderesis: "sinteresis est habitus innatus cōservans principia moralia et pracrica sicut sinesis conservat principia speculabilia."

action is praiseworthy, and this is the conclusion of the syllogism.⁴⁰

Woolton's restatement of the Scholastic interpretation of conscience as an act of the practical reason was perhaps a small part of the rejection of the voluntarism of Calvin and Luther which received its greatest thrust from Hooker's revival of Aquinas' concept of natural law. But the presence of only three other neo-Scholastic interpretations of conscience by English Reformers during the seventeenth century testifies to the general failure of this revival. The most sophisticated of the two is by William Ames, who was a student of William Perkins. Ames defines conscience as: "A mans judgement of himselfe, according to the judgement of God

⁴⁰ Woolton feels it is incumbent upon him to defend Aquinas' description of how conscience makes a moral judgment against John Rivius. Rivius divides reason into two parts, the superior and the inferior. The former is concerned with things divine and eternal; the latter with things temporal and profitable. Conscience then puts down the minor proposition and the conclusion of the syllogism. He gives this example to illustrate Rivius' division of reason and the relation of conscience to it: when Caesar deliberated with himself about attacking his own country, conscience said he should not do it; the superior reason confirmed it because it is contrary to God and the law of nature; and the inferior reason says the same because in this world it is infamous and reproachful. Out of this argument, synderesis infers that it should not be attempted. Woolton's objection to this seems to be that in this type of syllogism reason examines moral actions by the law of nature and by principles derived from it. But he calls principles "those Notices or knowledge which are planted & graved in our minds by good sentences comon & knowne unto al mer, whereunto we without gainesaying doe wyllingly and naturally assent." The principles, he continues, which appertain to our life are called practical and their habit synderesis (sigs. C₃^r-[C₄^r]).

of him."⁴¹ Following Aquinas, he first shows that conscience belongs to the understanding not to the will. As evidence he does not cite the authority of Aquinas, as Woolton undoubtedly would have, but he demonstrates from Scripture that all those actions which are attributed to conscience properly belong to the reason. The will, he says, by some act or inclination, can both command the understanding to judge and also follow judgment. This inclination some call conscience or a part of conscience, but Ames does not agree.⁴² He asserts that the judgment of conscience is distinguished from the bare apprehension of truth for it does not always assert something that is firm and settled. Therefore, conscience is not a contemplative but a practical judgment which reaches its conclusion by a syllogism.⁴³

By defining conscience as a judgment, he means "an act of practicall judgement, proceeding from the Understanding by the power or means of habit." For Ames, conscience is not a faculty but an act because in Scripture the effects such as

⁴¹ Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 1.

⁴² The Reformers always followed Aquinas in assigning conscience to the intellect rather than to the will. The Franciscans taught that conscience was part of the will, but this was never accepted by the Reformers. See St. Bonaventure, Sent., II, xxxix, I,1 in Opera Omnia (Florence, 1882-1902), II, 898-92. Lottin, "Syndérèses et conscience aux xii^e et xiii^e siècles," II, 203-08, summarizes Bonaventure's position. On p. 235 he shows the difference between Bonaventure's and Aquinas' interpretation, and on pp. 236ff. he points out the influence of Bonaventure on the later Scholastics.

⁴³ Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 1-3.

accusing, comforting, and terrifying are attributed to thoughts, which are themselves acts. "The reason," he says, "is because things done, are the effects not onely of the Mover, but also of the *notiō* it selfe." Conscience, however, is only partly a habit in that it inclines one to do something readily, but it is not completely a habit as Bonaventure⁴⁴ and Duns Scotus⁴⁵ maintain because other operations such as accusing and comforting are ascribed to it.⁴⁶

William Jones' definition of conscience is as Scholastic as both Wollton's and Ames', but it is not as elaborately developed as theirs. He defines conscience simply as "a function of the understanding, whereby wee apply the generall knowledge that is in us, to our particular thoughts, words, and actions."⁴⁷ He assigns conscience to the intellect, and

⁴⁴ In *Sent.*, II, xxxix, I, 1-2, Bonaventure says conscience is both an innate and acquired habit: "Conscientia dicit habitum innatum ratione tum luminis animae inditi, tum primorum principiorum moralium, dicit autem habitum acquisitum ratione specierum ipius cognoscibilis, tum respectus specialium operationum," *Opera Omnia*, II, 902.

⁴⁵ In *Reportata Parisiensia*, II, xxxix, II, Scotus says: "Conscientiam esse in intellectu, quia est conclusio, vel habitus ad sic concludendum, cui conformanda est electio recta. Differt a synderesi, quia haec est habitus principiorum practicorum. Probatur, quia talis conclusio praecedit electionem voluntatis, et gignit uno actu habitum. Explicat quomodo majorem habentes scientiam habitualement, quandoque minus habent conscientiam," *Opera Omnia* (Paris, 1894), xxiii, 205.

⁴⁶ Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁷ A Commentary Upon The Epistles Of Saint Paul To Philemon, And To The Hebrewes, Together With A Compendious Explication Of The Second And Third Epistles Of Saint John (London, 1635), p. 636.

to the practical rather than the theoretical part and identifies conscience as an act and not as a habit or power.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he follows the Scholastics in adding that conscience means "scientia cum alia scientia," the conjunction of the general knowledge of the law written in our hearts with the particular knowledge of our specific acts.⁴⁹

Henry Hammond also proposes a Scholastic definition of conscience in his treatise Of Conscience (Oxford, 1644). Like Woolton, he begins by assuming an anti-Scholastic posture. He declares that he will clarify the true meaning of conscience not by referring to the Scholastics but by observing the meaning of the word as it is used in Scripture, particularly in the New Testament (p. 2). Although he does rely upon the authority of the Bible, his definition of conscience is unmistakably Scholastic. In Titus 1.15, St. Paul says: "Unto the pure are all things pure, but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mindes and consciences are defiled." Because St. Paul here distinguishes between the mind and the conscience, Hammond concludes that "mind" refers to the speculative reason and "conscience" in 1 Peter 2.19 means the practical judgment (pp. 2-3). Therefore, Hammond has simply read the Scholastic meaning of conscience into these two Biblical passages.

William Perkins, one of the most popular Reformers of

⁴⁸ A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon . . . , p. 636.

⁴⁹ A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon . . . , p. 385.

Shakespeare's time and certainly the most influential Elizabethan to write on conscience,⁵⁰ derives some of his ideas about conscience from Aquinas, just as do Woolton, Ames, Jones, and Hammond, but unlike them he moves beyond the Scholastics in defining conscience as a separate, divine faculty of the soul. Furthermore, he challenges the Scholastic assertion that the word conscience is best understood as "cum alio scientia" (ST. 1a, 79.13).⁵¹

Perkins begins his exposition on conscience by explaining the bipartite division of the soul. Accepting the Scholastic rather than the Franciscan point of view, he places conscience in the understanding rather than in the will, because the "actions thereof standes [sic] in the use of reason." Of the two parts of the understanding, the theoretical, which contemplates truth and falsehood, and the practical, which considers the goodness of every particular action, he

⁵⁰ Perkins' Discourse of Conscience was first published in 1596 and was reprinted in each of the eight editions of The Workes published before 1640. Kelly, Conscience: Dictator or Guide?, p. 85, and Thomas Wood, English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century (London, 1952), p. 34, have recognized the influence of the Discourse on Seventeenth-Century Anglican moral theology, but no one seems to have noted that its influence also extended to Scotland where it had the dubious honor of having been plagiarized by John Howesoun in his Short Exposition of the 20. and 21. verses of the third Chapter of the first Epistle of S. John (Edinburgh, 1600).

⁵¹ Unless otherwise stated, references here to the Discourse are to William Perkins . . . His Pioneer Works on Casuistry: "A Discourse of Conscience" and "The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience," ed. with an Introduction by Thomas F. Merrill (The Netherlands, 1966), pp. 5-7.

places conscience in the latter because it properly judges the goodness of actions.

This, however, is the extent of his agreement with the Scholastics, for Perkins argues that conscience "is not a bare knowledge or judgement of the understanding (as men commonly write) but a natural power, facultie, or created qualitie, from whence knowledge and judgement proceede as effects." Scripture confirms that conscience is a faculty because it ascribes "sundrie workes and actions to conscience, as accusing, excusing, comforting, terrifying: which actions could not thence proceede, if conscience were no more but an action or acte of the minde." He grants that conscience may be taken for a kind of actual knowledge. But this knowledge, he says, proceeds from a power in the soul, the property of which is to take principles and conclusions and apply them for the purpose of accusing and excusing. To the objection that conscience may not be a faculty or power because it may be lost, Perkins replies that conscience itself cannot be lost but its use can be, just as reason is lost in a drunken man. Although conscience resides primarily in the understanding, it does partake of the memory and affections. Assisted by the memory, conscience remembers actions which a man has done so that it may judge them. After judgment has been passed, it stirs up the passions which either comfort or condemn the man.⁵²

⁵² A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 38-50.

Only the rational creatures, men and angels, possess conscience, Perkins continues. Beasts do not have it because, although they do have life and sense, they do not possess the intellectual faculties. And God does not possess conscience because he is perfect righteousness and does not need it to govern his actions.

Perkins then distinguishes conscience from all other intellectual gifts. Intelligence apprehends being. Opinion judges whether a thing is probable. Science judges whether something is certain and sure. Faith is a persuasion whereby one believes. Prudence discerns what should be done. Conscience, however, passes sentence on human actions, determines whether an action should be done or if it was done well, and concerns itself with particular actions not general principles.

Having established that conscience is a faculty, Perkins asserts that it has a divine nature; it was created by God and placed between him and man in order to judge whether an action is good or evil. It speaks for or against man directly to God, and it knows what the mind thinks so that if a man would try to hide his sinful thoughts from God, his conscience would be his Lord. Having asserted that conscience is a divine faculty, Perkins then derives the etymology of the word "conscience." It differs from the one Aquinas gives. Perkins notes that Scire means "to know" and refers to the knowledge one has by himself, and conscience therefore means to know

something with another person. Since man and man or man and the angels cannot know something unless it is revealed, it remains that this knowledge can only be shared between man and God. "God knows," says Perkins, "perfectly all the doings of man, though they be never so hid and concealed: and man by a gift given him of God; knowes together with God, the same things of himselfe: and this gift is named Conscience."

Perkins profoundly influenced later English writers on conscience. Although each one develops and elaborates upon conscience in his own way, most accept Perkins' theory that conscience is a divine faculty and adopt his understanding of the etymology of the word.

John Downname's definition of conscience is essential Perkinsian:

. . . is such a faculty in the soule, as taketh notice of all our actions, and bearesh witnesse of them before Gods judgement seate, eyther with us, when they approve them as good; or against us, when as they condemne them as evill. So that the conscience is a certayne divine power, which is placed by God in the soule of man, as a third party indifferent betweene him and us, sometime speaking for us, and sometime against us, as the equity of the cause requireth. It is Gods monitour, which he hath set over us, to take notice of what we doe, that hee may either reward our well-doing, or punish that which done amisse.⁵³

Following Perkins, he asserts that conscience is not a bare act of the practical understanding but a distinct faculty God has placed in the soul to reflect the understanding upon itself causing it to apply the general principles of morality

⁵³ A Guide to Godlynesse or a Treatise of a Christian of a Christian Life (London, 1622), p. 66.

to particular actions by means of a syllogism. Furthermore, he asserts that the nature of conscience can be known by its name, which means "to know together, or with another".⁵⁴

John Hughes' definition of conscience also reflects the influence of Perkins, although less so than Downname's. At the outset of his exposition, Hughes announces that he is rejecting the Scholastic definition as inadequate and accepting the current Protestant one. Conscience, he remarks:

. . . doth belong unto Reason, and is thus defined by Aquinas; Actus rationis applicans scientiam ad opus [la, 79.13]: An act of reason, applying our knowledge to our workes, and jusging of the lawfulnessse and unlawfulnessse thereof. Medina saith, that it is, Dictamen rationis applicatum ad opus; which is the same in effect. Some call it a Habite, others a Facultie.

It is this last definition, the one associated with Perkins, that he prefers. He defines conscience as:

a noble and a notable faculty in the soule of man, working upon itselfe, and determining of all our particular thoughts, words, and workes, either with us, or against us.

Although he believes conscience is a faculty rather than an act of reason because it produces acts and is inseparable from its subject, he does not call it a divine faculty. But he does, like Perkins, place it midway "betweene man and God," thus implying it has a quasi-divine quality. The manner in which conscience operates is both "noble" and "notable," he continues, because it makes the mind reflect upon itself. The reason first conceives a thought, and then the conscience

⁵⁴ A Guide to Godlynesse, pp. 65-67.

reflects on it to determine whether it is good or bad. In this respect, conscience is like a looking glass in which the eye sees itself. He also asserts that conscience is not confined to one part of the soul, but functions in the intellect, where it prescribes what is to be done, in the will, where it registers and witnesses our actions, and in the affections, where it comforts or torments.⁵⁵

Hughes' derivation of the etymology of the word "conscience," however, is much broader than Perkins' or Aquinas'. He follows Perkins in rendering conscience as "scientia cum alia," meaning "a knowledge joined with our knowledge, whereby it knowes that of us, which God onely knowed with us." Therefore, he says conscience "is a co-witness with God, for no man knowes what is in man but God onely, & the spirit of man, which is his conscience." But he also offers another interpretation that derives from St. Bernard,⁵⁶ according to whom conscience means "cordis scientia." Hughes' acceptance of Bernard's definition of conscience provides more evidence that there was a diminution of Aquinas' influence during the seventeenth century.⁵⁷

Like Hughes, many other Reformers accepted the idea that

⁵⁵ St. Pauls Exercise, pp. 4-7.

⁵⁶ Tractatus de Interiori Domo, PL, CLXXXIV, 516. The rendering of conscience as "cordis scientia" was also given during the Middle Ages by Peter Cellinsis, De Conscientia, PL, CCII, 1090, and Hugo St. Victor, Miscellanea, PL, CLXXVII, 506.

⁵⁷ St. Pauls Exercise, p. 7.

conscience means "cordis scientia" but their authority was the Bible, not St. Bernard. In the Scripture, the Reformers believed, the word heart often means conscience, especially in the Old Testament, because the Hebrew has no word for conscience.⁵⁸ According to William Jones, "heart" means conscience in 1 Samuel 24.5 and in Ecclesiastes 7.4 and 7.⁵⁹ In his commentary on Ecclesiastes 7.22, Michael Jermin says: "thine own heart is thine own conscience; according to the saying, Conscientia est cordis scientia And indeed the Hebrew hath no other word to expresse conscience but only which properly signifieth the heart."⁶⁰ Richard Bernard interprets "heart" in Job 27.6 and in 2 Samuel 24.10 as conscience.⁶¹ And "heart" in Proverbs 15.15 was often taken to mean conscience.⁶²

⁵⁸ The Vulgate foists "conscientia" into the text of Genesis 43.22: "Non est in nostra conscientia quis posuerit eam in marsupiiis" and into that of Proverbs 12.18: "Est qui promittit, et quasi gladio pungitur conscientiae: lingua sapientium sanitas est." In Wisdom 17.10 and Ecclesiasticus 7.22 it appears, but these works were written in Greek.

⁵⁹ A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 636.

⁶⁰ Commentary: upon . . . Ecclesiastes (London, 1639), p. 229.

⁶¹ Christians See To Thy Conscience, p. 2.

⁶² See: Michael Jermin, Paraphrasticall Meditations, By Way Of Commentarie Upon . . . The Proverbs (London, 1638), p. 314, John Denison, A Three-Fold Resolution, verie necessarie to salvation (London, 1608), pp. 455-56, John Clarke, Holy Oyle for the Lampes of the Sanctuarie (London, 1630), p. 79, Michael Day, A Monument Of Morality (London, 1630), p. 60, John Denison, Beati Pacifici, The Blessednes of Peacemakers: And the Advancement of Gods Children (London, 1620), p. 9, and Simon Harward, The Solace for the Souldier and Say-lour (London, 1592), sig. B^r.

According to the Reformers, the New Testament also sometimes uses "heart" for conscience. Richard Bernard chooses this reading for Acts 2.37.⁶³ On 1 Thessalonians 3.13, John Jewel writes that "nothing [should] moove or trouble you: that your heartes and consciences [should] bee quiet."⁶⁴ On 1 John 3.20, Theodore Beza comments: "if an evill conscience convinceth us, much more ought the judgement of God condemne us, who knoweth our hearts better then we our selves doe."⁶⁵

Richard Carpenter incorporates the Bernardine interpretation of conscience into his definition, and like Perkins, he insists upon the divinity of the faculty. Conscience, he claims, is either:

a cordis scientia, in reference to the soule, reflecting and recoylng upon it selfe, or a scientia cum alio, in respect to God, with whom it is a co-witnesse of whatsoever is in man, is a noble and divine power and faculty, planted of God in the substance of mans soule, working upon it selfe by reflection, and taking exact notice, as Gods Viceroy and deputy, Judge of all that is in the mind, will, affections, actions, and whole life of man.

Carpenter asserts that conscience is properly a faculty rather than a bare act, because various actions such as testifying,

⁶³ Christian See To Thy conscience, p. 2.

⁶⁴ An Exposition upon the Epistles of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians (London, 1594), p. 95.

⁶⁵ The New Testament Of Our Lord Jesus, trans. L. Tomson (London, 1576), fol. 416v. See also Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 6, and Edward Leigh, Critica Sacra: Or Philo-logicall and Theologicall Observations, upon all the Greek words of the New Testament (London, 1639), p. 292.

accusing, and comforting are attributed to it. On the authority of Proverbs 15.15 and 1 John 3. 19-21, where "heart" stands for conscience, he places conscience in the whole soul rather than circumscribe it within the practical reason, as the Scholastics did. And finding the mutual dependency of the mind, will, and memory in the "illative discourse" of this faculty, he affirms that conscience is a "divine power" compounded of all of them.⁶⁶

In his treatise on conscience, Immanuel Bourne gives the standard Protestant definition. Having summarily dismissed various Patristic and Scholastic definitions as weak and unprofitable, he states:

Conscience is not barely as Act or habit of the soule, or will, or understanding, (for it produceth acts, and acts may cease to be, as habits may bee lost; but Conscience can never cease to be, nor can it be lost, though it may lose the use (for a time) as a man may lose the use of reason in the time of Drunkennes. It is therefore rather an office, or faculty, or power of the soule, created in man by God, and set within him both as a witness and a Judge.⁶⁷

Although he never calls conscience divine, he does maintain that it is "an excellent part of the Image of God in man."⁶⁸

Ephraim Huit cannot decide whether conscience is a power or a faculty, as Perkins would have it, but he employs both terms interchangeably. However, he rejects the Scholastic idea that conscience is an act, because conscience has a

⁶⁶ The Conscionable Christian, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁷ The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 10.

⁶⁸ The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 8.

disposition to do something which it does not always exercise, as when Adam's conscience in the state of innocence was able to accuse but did not. Furthermore, Huit declines to accept the definition of conscience as a habit, because man does not acquire conscience but has it from nature. Therefore, he says conscience "is a Relative power in the reasonable creature, which by reflection determines with or against it selfe through the divine light it hath." He calls conscience a power rather than a faculty only because Scripture leaves the point in doubt in 1 Corinthians 2.11, where conscience is expressed as "the spirit of man," and in Ephesians 4.23, where it is called the "spirit of the mind of man."⁶⁹ But he is convinced this power is divine. "It is most like God," he asserts, "as man hath the precedency herein above the rest of the creatures, to have the Impress of Gods Image stampt upon him; so in man, Conscience hath the like prioritie." Although the Fall defaced much of man's divine nature, "no facultie retained halfe that puritie Conscience did."⁷⁰

Following traditional Protestant teaching on conscience, Robert Harris, in his sermon "Saint Pauls Exercise," rejects the Scholastics and takes conscience "to bee a facultie, and a distinct facultie too of the soule." His justification for this definition is that in 1 Timothy 1.15 St. Paul distinguishes

⁶⁹ The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 87-89.

⁷⁰ The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 102-03.

conscience from the will and in Titus 1.15 he distinguishes it from the mind.⁷¹ According to Harris, conscience is not just distinct from the other faculties but also "somewhat higher, under God . . . yet still sheathed in the body."⁷² Harris' thoughts on conscience are highly conventional, but they indicate the wide circulation of Perkins' ideas on this subject.

Jeremiah Dyke also prefers to call conscience a faculty rather than an act of the practical intellect. He defines conscience as:

a power and faculty of the soule taking knowledge and hearing witsnesse of all a mans thoughts, words & actions, & accordingly excusing or accusing, absolving or condemning, comforting or tormenting the same.

His evidence that conscience is a faculty comes from the Bible. In 1 John 3.19-21 and Ecclesiastes 7.22, conscience is called the "heart," and in 1 Corinthians 2.11 and Romans 8.16, it is called "the spirit of man." That conscience takes knowledge is indicated by Ecclesiastes 7.22, and that it bears witness to our actions is indicated by Romans 2.25 and 9.1 and 2 Corinthians 1.12. He does not, however, accept Origen's idea that conscience is distinct from the soul.⁷³

⁷¹ Sixe Sermons of Conscience, pp. 3-4. This distinction is also made by Edward Leigh, Critica Sacra, pp. 546-47.

⁷² Sixe Sermons of Conscience, p. 5, and "S. Pauls Confidence," pp. 3-4. Except for the first and second, all sermons in this collection are paginated separately.

⁷³ In his commentary on Romans 2.15, in PG, XIV, 892, Origen defines conscience as "rector et paedagogus animae sociatus" which accompanies the soul and leads it to good and

So that his reader can properly understand the testifying office of conscience he explains the meaning of the word conscience. He believes that the meaning of conscience as "knowledge together" is corroborated by Isaiah 59.12: "For our trespasses are manie before thee, and our sinnes testifie against us: for our trespasses are with us, and we knowe our iniquities." He interprets "knowledge together" three ways. First, he says this knowledge is joined with another person, namely God; when a man's heart and God know something together, there is conscience. This is the meaning developed by Perkins. Second, he mentions the Scholastic interpretation of conscience as a knowledge joined together with another knowledge. Dyke accepts this because he sees conscience as a double act of the understanding. The first act is whereby we think of or know a thing. The second is reflective whereby we think what we think and know what we know. This too is conscience. Third, he notes the Bernardine interpretation. Conscience is also a knowledge of the heart, but this knowledge is passive, Dyke says. It knows what the heart knows, or in other words, conscience "is the recoyling of the soule upon itselfe."

away from evil. This definition was well known during the Renaissance; see: Bolton, A Discourse About The State Of True Happiness, p. 113, Milles, The Treasurie of Auncient and Modern Times, p. 891, Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 7, Hughes, St. Pauls Exercise, p. 8, Anthony Cade, A Sermon of the Nature of Conscience (London, 1621), p. 20, Jones, A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 636, and John Weems, Exercitations Divine. Containing diverse Questions and Solutions for the right understanding of the Scripture (London, 1632), p. 35, where the quotation is mistakenly attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus.

Thus, when St. Paul says that "I knowe nothing by my self" (1 Corinthians 4.4), he means that he knows nothing that he has done against himself because his conscience does not witness against him.⁷⁴ His definition of conscience and his exposition of the meaning of the term reveal that Dyke, like many of the seventeenth-century English Reformers, drew very little of his inspiration from Scholasticism, and was profoundly influenced by Perkins.

Following these numerous precedents, Richard Bernard defines conscience as a "divine thing in the soule, lesse then God, and above Man, as a middle betweene both," which is a distinct part of the soul but operates in all of the other faculties.⁷⁵ Bernard, however, is less concerned with the definition of conscience than he is with the kind of knowledge conscience possesses. His treatment of the problem and his conclusions indicate that he was influenced by Perkins to move far beyond the Scholastic understanding of conscience as the conjunction of the universal knowledge of the Law with the particular knowledge of our actions.

The word "conscience," he asserts, has two meanings: a knowledge and a knowledge shared with another. That conscience possesses knowledge is evident in two ways: from its etymology and from Ecclesiastes 7.22. This knowledge of

⁷⁴ Good Conscience: Or A Treatise Shewing The Nature, Means, Marks, Benefit, and necessitie thereof, 2nd ed. (London, 1626), pp. 11-18.

⁷⁵ Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 6-9.

conscience differs from the mere understanding of a thing but is not separate from it. The understanding apprehends and judges, but conscience informs the person of what he apprehends and judges. The understanding knows things without reflection, but the conscience works by reflecting upon the intellect. The intellect apprehends afflictions and can discourse about their nature, but it cannot discover if a man deserves them. For example, by the power of conscience, Jonah acknowledged that his sins caused the tempest (Jonah 1.12) and David knew that he was the cause of the pestilence (2 Samuel 24.27).⁷⁶

Bernard defines this knowledge of conscience as a "certaine, particular, applicatorie knowledge in Mans Soule, reflecting upon himselfe, concerning matters betweene God and him." It is certain, because it is grounded upon God's Word and speaks with God's authority; particular, because it considers only the circumstances of an action, and applicatory, because it is applied to ourselves.

The "reflecting" nature of this knowledge is so complicated that Bernard finds it easiest to explain by a simile. What conscience knows, it turns back upon a man's self to make him know himself as he is. In this way, conscience is like a mirror in which a man sees himself. The understanding, which must see clearly to judge and discern, is like the seeing eye. The act of understanding, which takes in knowledge and things and informs the conscience about them, is like the eye looking

⁷⁶ Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 10-14.

into the mirror. God's law, which the understanding apprehends, is like the mirror. This knowledge of conscience, the application of God's law, is like a reflection in the mirror. Taking the law of God and his Word in their proper sense is like the opaque back of the mirror which causes the reflection. There are two benefits to this opaque back: it limits the understanding so that it cannot go beyond the rule of God's Word, and it makes conscience truly show a man to himself.⁷⁷

This mirror simile raises two questions about man's tendency to resist reformation. The first is, how does man, although he understands his duties, neglect them? To this there are three answers. First, although man looks into the glass of God's law, yet he has his mind on things of this

⁷⁷ Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 15-26. Bernard's mirror of conscience metaphor has a long history that goes back at least to Augustine. In St. Pauls Exercise, Hughes reports that Augustine said conscience is "speculo similis" (p. 8). In his Tractatus de Interiori Domo, Bernard calls the good conscience a "speculum mundum, clarum et purum totius religionis" (PL, CLXXXIV, 517). The metaphor was also current during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Fulke Greville, Selected Poems, ed. with an Introduction by Thom Gunn (London, 1968), p. 128, Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 8, and John Trapp, Gods Love-Tokens, And The Afflicted Mans Lessons (London, 1637), p. 126. Jeremy Taylor also uses the metaphor in Ductor Dubitantium, p. 10. One of his sources is Plautus' Epidicos, although Plautus does not use the word "conscientia" there. See Plautus, trans. Paul Nixon (Loeb Classical Library; London, 1932), II, 318. His other source is James 1.21-24, although other Reformers differ with him in interpreting the "glasse" as conscience. See for example: Niel Hemmingsen, A Learned and fruitfule Commentarie upon the Epistle of James, trans. W. G. (London, 1577), fol. 42v, and Richard Turnbull, An Exposition Upon The Canonically Epistle of Saint James (London, 1591), p. 72.

world like profit, pleasure, and reputation. Second, although he sees it and stays with it for awhile, he unties the bonds of conscience by distorting and perverting the sense of the law. The second question, which is really a variation upon the first, is, if conscience makes a man reflect upon himself why isn't he reformed? To this there are two answers. First, sometimes memory fails to inform a man what he is really like, and when memory fails understanding cannot work. Second, one cannot reform himself if he lacks the sanctifying spirit of God.⁷⁸

The final point Bernard makes about the knowledge of conscience is that it is about matters between man and God. Whatever conscience takes knowledge of, it knows it with respect to God and his laws. Because conscience is placed between man and God, whatever is done for the sake of conscience is done for the sake of God. For this reason one is substituted for the other in Romans 13.5 and 1 Peter 2.13.⁷⁹

After dealing with the kind of knowledge that conscience possesses, Bernard proceeds to illuminate how one is to understand that conscience is knowledge joined with another. He says that this may be understood five ways. First and most important, conscience is knowledge with God. Conscience has acquaintance with God because it knows with God. For this reason, St. Paul links them in Romans 8.16 and 9.1, and

⁷⁸ Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 26-30.

⁷⁹ Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 30-31.

St. John in 1 John 3.19-21 says that if conscience accuses and condemns us, God will also. Second, conscience knows with the help of the understanding. The understanding first apprehends truth and falsehood, good and evil, and then propounds it to the conscience for approbation or disapproval. Thus, St. Paul links conscience and mind in Titus 1.15. Third, conscience knows with the help of memory for memory retains information given to it by the understanding. Fourth, conscience knows with the rule of God for it observes the rule and the action at the same time. Fifth, conscience knows with a framed conclusion because it arrives at its conclusion syllogistically. These five ways in which Bernard considers conscience to be knowledge joined with another are not startlingly ingenious, but they do show how exhaustively one could develop Aquinas' notion that the word conscience derives from "scientia cum alio."⁸⁰

The last definition we will consider extensively which employs most of Perkins' ideas is the one given by Nicholas Byfield, for whom conscience is nothing less than one of the ways in which God reigns in the mind of man. Like other followers of Perkins, he defines conscience as "a divine faculty in the soule of all reasonable creatures, applying the principles or propositions of their minde, in their particular actions, either with them or against them." He explains that conscience is more properly considered a faculty than an act

⁸⁰ Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 32-42.

of the practical understanding because Scripture shows that conscience itself acts, such as excusing and accusing, and therefore must be a faculty itself. Furthermore, he maintains that "conscience is so of God and in man, that it is a kinde of middle thing betweene God and man: lesse then God, and yet above man."⁸¹

Byfield's analysis of the functions and properties of conscience explains what conscience does in this intermediate position where it serves both man and God. It is employed by God as a "spy" to watch man and as a "notary" to set down what he has done. It also diverts man from evil, directs him to good, and makes him endure grief for God's glory. On the other hand, conscience serves man by viewing and surveying his actions, particularly those he attempts to keep hidden, and by guiding his life.⁸²

Most of the properties and prerogatives of conscience also testify to its divinity, Byfield asserts. It eternally keeps court in the heart, where it is subject only to God, who has commanded obedience to conscience, even if it is erroneous. Furthermore, God has given so much honor to conscience that he permits his Holy Spirit to bring evidence to conscience. Thus we are told by St. Paul in Romans 8.15 that the spirit of adoption bears witness before our spirits that

⁸¹ A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . .,
p. 500.

⁸² A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . .,
p. 501-02.

we are the sons of God.⁸³

Other writers during the early seventeenth century advocated Perkins' interpretation of conscience as a separate faculty of the soul, but they did not accept the notion that conscience is divine. For example, Thomas Wilson calls conscience "a faculty of mans soule."⁸⁴ William Cowper holds a similar view; he states that conscience is different from the understanding and will, but operates in both; it is not only an "understanding power, as in the minde, but also an agent or working power, as in the will: so that it is not a faculty Theoricke onely, as the understanding; not practice onely, as the will; but compounded and mixt."⁸⁵ And Anthony Cade maintains that conscience is a "power or faculty of the Soule."⁸⁶ Although these brief definitions add little to our understanding of the Reformation concept of conscience, they do indicate that during the middle decades of the seventeenth century many writers preferred the Perkinsian definition of conscience to the Scholastic.

This survey of the definitions of conscience from Downname's to Cade's makes clear that Perkins' ideas about the nature of conscience dominated the minds and imaginations of

⁸³ A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 503.

⁸⁴ A Christian Dictionary, sig. [H₈^r].

⁸⁵ The Anatomie of a Christian Man (London, 1613), pp. 89-99.

⁸⁶ A Sermon of the Nature of Conscience, p. 19.

the moral theologians who wrote on conscience during the first four decades of the seventeenth century. But when we come to the Oxford lectures given by Robert Sanderson, Regius Professor of Divinity, in 1647, we find signs that Perkins' influence was beginning to wane by the middle of the century.

In his first lecture, Sanderson defines conscience as:

a faculty, or a habit of the practical understanding, by which the mind of Man doth by the discourse of reason apply that light with which he is indued to his particular moral Actions.⁸⁷

Naming conscience a "faculty" seems to reflect the continuing influence of Perkins, but within the context of Sanderson's definition, the term has lost its meaning of a distinct power of the soul. Here it signifies a "habit," or as Sanderson more specifically says in his exposition of the definition, "Habits innate."⁸⁸

To prove that conscience is a habit, he first attacks the Thomistic notion that conscience is an act by borrowing Perkins' argument. He contends that in conscience there are many acts, such as dictating, forcing, holding, testifying, excusing, accusing, comforting, gnawing, and tormenting. "But of Acts," he declares, "there are no Acts, but of Forms, Potentia's [sic] and Habits." Therefore, conscience must be

⁸⁷ Several Cases Of Conscience (Oxford, 1660), p. 3.

⁸⁸ Several Cases Of Conscience, p. 21.

one of these three, but certainly not an act.⁸⁹

Then, siding with Scotus and Durandus against Aquinas, he demonstrates with three proof that conscience is a habit. First, he places conscience under the species "scientia," which is a habit. Second, he points out that the capacity a man acquires by the "illumination" of conscience to do something which he was unable to do before is not a new power of the soul but a new habit. Third, he affirms that a man is regarded as good or evil because of his habits and not because of his powers. Therefore, he concludes that conscience is a habit. But he somewhat muddles this definition by adding that in some respects conscience may also be a "potentia."⁹⁰

Sanderson also differs with Perkins over the etymology of the word conscience. He notes that it has two meanings. First, it signifies knowledge with another. Thus, conscience is so called "because the deeds of Man are known unto God, as well as to himself." As we have seen, this is the meaning Perkins and many of his followers give to the word. Sanderson, however, prefers the second meaning, which is the one favored by Aquinas and other Schoolmen: "Conscience is so called, because it addeth Science unto Science, that is, the universal knowledge, or the knowledge of Law, and Right, to the particular knowledge, or the knowledge of the fact by applying one

⁸⁹ Several Cases Of Conscience, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁰ Several Cases Of Conscience, pp. 19-20.

unto the other."⁹¹ Thus, Sanderson disagrees with Perkins on the two main points we have been investigating, the definition of conscience and the etymology of the word.

Thirteen years after Sanderson delivered his Oxford lectures, Jeremy Taylor published his huge work on conscience, Ductor Dubitantium (London, 1660). By this time, it seems that neither Perkins' definition of conscience as a faculty nor his understanding of the etymology of conscience was any longer current. But unlike Sanderson, who provides an alternative definition to Perkins' by returning to the ideas of Scotus and Durandus, Taylor fashions one which is substantially new in the history of seventeenth-century moral theology.

In writing Ductor Dubitantium, Taylor did not dismiss an entire line of thought on conscience that had been popular for more than sixty years. Although his definition of conscience does not derive from Perkins, Taylor does accept the Elizabethan theologian's argument that conscience is divine. But typically, he does not mention Perkins and appears to draw his inspiration for this idea from both classical and Christian authors. Taylor asserts that conscience is the substitute by which God governs in the hearts of men. Thus, it has a divine nature, and for this reason, St. Bernard calls it "speculum sine macula Dei Magestatis," Menander and Tatianus, "θεὸς," and an anonymous writer, "εὐοικος θεὸς," "the

⁹¹ Several Cases Of Conscience, pp. 4-7.

domestic God." Based on these precedents, Taylor asserts that conscience is nothing less than the image of God in man. He calls it a "guard and guide, a rule and law set over us by God," "God's watchman and intelligencer," and "God's deputy." Even in its tripartite nature, Taylor finds a likeness to the Trinity (pp. 1-2).

Taylor, however, cannot accept either Perkins', Aquinas', or Sanderson's definitions of conscience. He says conscience is:

the Mind of Man governed by a Rule, and measured by the Propositions of Good and Evil, in Order to Practice; viz. to conduct all our Relations, and all our Interchange, between God, our Neighbours, and ourselves: that is, in all moral Actions (p. 1).

This definition is unfortunately vague, and a long commentary on it does little to clarify what he means by "Mind." Evidently, Taylor means something different from faculty, act, or habit. Upon Biblical authority, he identifies conscience with the mind, the heart and the spirit. For example, in Hebrews 10.16, which echoes Jeremiah 31.33, the author writes: "saith the Lorde, I wil put my Lawes in their heart, and in their mindes I will write them." Taylor interprets this passage: "You shall be governed by the law of natural and essential equity and reason, by that law which is put into every mans nature: and besides this, whatsoever else shall be superinduc'd, shall be written in your minds by the Spirit, who shall write all the laws of Christianity in the Tables of your consciences" (p. 4). Furthermore, he finds evidence that

"mind" means conscience in Romans 1.28, 7.23, and 12.2, and Ephesians 4.23. Sometimes, he continues, Scripture calls conscience "heart," as we have already noticed, and "spirit," as in Proverbs 18.14. This evidence leads him to assert that "Our mind being thus furnished with a holy Rule, and conducted by a divine Guide, is called 'conscience'" (p. 4). Therefore, it seems Taylor means that the conscience is the storehouse of divine rules or laws that we are commanded to obey. Apparently, he distinguishes this storehouse from "the practical intellective faculty," the "habitual persuasion and belief of the principles written there," and "any single operation and action of conscience" (p. 3). But his definition of conscience as the "Mind of Man" seems to closely approach what the Scholastics and Reformers called synderesis.

We can be certain, however, that in defining conscience as the "Mind of Man," Taylor is placing conscience in the intellectual rather than the conative side of human nature. This is clear in his critique of St. Bernard's theory that a good conscience is build upon seven pillars: a good will, a memory of God's benefits, a clean heart, a free spirit, a right soul, a devout mind, and an enlightened reason.⁹² He

⁹² See Tractatus de Interiori Domo, PL, CLXXXIV, 511-15. This work was translated into English at least three times during the seventeenth century. See for example: Stephen Jerome, A Serious Fore-warning to avoide the Vengeance to come . . . Together with S. Bernards holy Meditations teaching rightly to build up the inwards Conscience, and the forme of an honest life (London, 1613), pp. 77-114, and his Seaven Helpes To Heaven, 3rd ed. (London, 1620), pp. 59-80, and A

dismisses all but the fifth and the seventh as perfect foundations of the good conscience because they too closely associate conscience with the will (pp. 5-8). But in a "right soul" and an "enlightened Reason," Taylor concludes:

. . . we have all that by which the conscience is informed and reformed, instructed and preserved, in its measures, strengths, and relations. For the Rule of Conscience is all that notice of things and rules, by which God would have good and evil to be measured, that is, the will of God communicated to us by any means, by reason, and by enlightning, that is, natural and instructed. (p. 8).

Thus, although Taylor's definition is new but somewhat ambiguous, it does conform to accepted Protestant teachings on the intellectual nature of conscience.

Having established that conscience is the mind of man, Taylor goes on to explain that although conscience contains a knowledge of the law, it differs from plain knowledge, which is concerned with speculation, and faith, which is a collection of "propositions" one must know to live well, because conscience holds its knowledge together with another.

Hive Of Sacred Honie-Combes Containing Most Sweet And Heavenly Counsel: Taken Out Of . . . S. Bernard, trans. Fr. Antony Batt (London, 1631), pp. 257-325. Except for popularizing the idea that conscience means "cordis scientia," this work apparently had little influence on the Reformers' understanding of conscience. For other references to the house of conscience metaphor, see: Bonaventure, Opera Omnia, IX, 225 and 572, Gregory the Great, Moraliu Libri, sive Expositio in Librum B. Job, PL, LXXV, 670, and Jermin, Paraphrasticall Meditations, By Way Of Commentarie Upon . . . The Proverbs (London, 1638), p. 307. Cf. The Abbey of the Holy Ghost in Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse, ed. George G. Perry, EETS, O.S. 26 (London, 1914), p. 51, and Hope E. Allen, Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hanpole, and Materials for his Biography (New York, 1927), pp. 335ff.

In his exposition on the meaning of "conscience" he again disagrees with Perkins. This knowledge, he asserts, may be of the heart ("cordis scientia"), but this was not the original meaning of the word conscience. Although this meaning of conscience is partially true, it is not adequate for it only signifies conscience as a witness not as a guide. Having challenged this widely accepted interpretation, he maintains that Aquinas had a better understanding of the word: "a conjunction of the universal practical law with the particular moral action." Unlike Perkins and his many followers, Taylor does not claim that man and God share this knowledge of conscience (pp. 9-10). Thus, Perkins' interpretation of the word conscience had no more influence on Taylor than did his definition.

This examination of the definitions of conscience that were published in England from John Woolton's in 1576 to Jeremy Taylor's in 1660 indicates a vigorous and continuous movement away from Aquinas' notion that conscience is merely an act of the practical reason that applies one's innate knowledge of natural law to a particular act. Because many Reformers believed that the Fall corrupted both the reason and the natural law and that the moral law resides in the will of God not in his reason, they could not accept this definition without limiting the efficacy of conscience. Some however, like Woolton, Ames, Jones, and Hammond, accepted it because they found it consistent with the use of the word in

the Bible. But the majority of seventeenth-century English Reformers who wrote on conscience sided with William Perkins, who rejected it because he believed that the Bible taught that conscience is a faculty of the soul. They argued that conscience is much more than an act of the practical reason. They claimed that conscience is an intellectual faculty that can accurately distinguish good from evil when it is enlightened by the Scripture, which contains the revealed will of God. They further asserted that this faculty is divine and shares its knowledge with God. Thus, for Perkins and his many followers, conscience functions as a guide to salvation because it contains the knowledge of God's will. However, Perkins' influence seems to have diminished after 1640, because it is not found in the writings of Robert Sanderson or Jeremy Taylor, although these writers stressed the intellectual nature of conscience. But during the time Shakespeare and Tourneur were writing their greatest plays, Perkins' ideas highly influenced many of those who wrote on the subject of conscience.

CHAPTER III

THE HOLY COURT: THE FUNCTIONS OF CONSCIENCE

"Conscience is a thousand witnesses."

--Morris P. Tilley, A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1950), C601.

The Reformers, even those who maintained that conscience is an act of the practical reason, assigned multiple functions to conscience, including dictating the law of God, testifying, accusing and excusing, tormenting and comforting. There is both Biblical and Scholastic authority for these functions. In Romans 2.14-15, St. Paul states: "For when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, they having not the Law, are a Law unto them selves, Which Shewe the effect of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witnes, and their thoghts accusing one another, or excusing." Aquinas also recognizes these acts of conscience although he says very little about them. He states that "conscience is said to witness, to bind, to incite, and also to accuse, torment, or rebuke. And all these follow the application of knowledge or science to what we do" (ST. 1a, 79-13). Perhaps because St. Paul says that conscience

concerns itself with the "Law," the Reformers conceived of conscience as being like a court in which conscience pronounces the law, bears witness to our actions and judges them according to the law, then accordingly accuses or excuses, and finally punishes or pardons. They also used Biblical examples to corroborate their theory that conscience does have all of these functions. But the Reformers recognized that conscience performs these functions with varying degrees of perfection. Therefore they also classified conscience according to how well it carries out its assigned duties.

In terms of the court of conscience metaphor,¹ man

¹ Among the many references to the court of conscience metaphor in the theological literature of the Reformation are: William Burton, Dauids Thanksgiving for the Arraignment of the Man of Earth, set forth in two Sermons (London, 1598), pp. 69-74; Richard Sibbs, The Soules Conflict with it Self, and Victory over it selfe by Faith (London, 1635), p. 68; Christopher Lever, A Crucifixe: Or, A Meditation upon Repentence, and The holie Passion (London, 1607), sigs. Br-BV, [C₄^r], and The Holy Pilgrime, pp. 105-06; Michael Scott, The Philosophers Banquet, 2nd ed. (London, 1614), p. 198; Carpenter, The Conscionable Christian, p. 42; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 502; Richard Sibbs, The Saints Cordials (London, n.d.), pp. 41-42, and Richard Bernard, The Isle of Man (London, 1626), pp. 122-287. The currency of the metaphor of conscience as a judicial figure is also apparent in the title of Humfrey Crowch's play Loves Court of Conscience (London, 1637). The court of conscience is dramatized by Thomas Mabbes in Microcosmus. A Morall Maske (London, 1637). Physander, a grown man, the microcosmus, is taken to the court of conscience where Conscience acts as the judge, and Hope argues for him and Despair against. In his speech Conscience, conflating the ideas of Aquinas and Bonaventure, announces that he is neither a power nor habit, but an act and that synderesis is the instigation of the will to good and honest things. At the end of the mask, Conscience declares Physander happy;

himself is both the court hall and the party to be tried. Conscience is the judge, witness, and jury, and it acts according to the allegations and proofs presented in the case and imposes the law on man. It resides in the spiritual part of the soul, which is like the Chancery and officiates as Lord Chancellor with synderesis acting as Master of the Rolls. Conscience presides over the intellectual part of the soul, that is, the King's Bench, and the sensitive part, the Court of Common Pleas.² Conscience keeps its court throughout the whole soul and exercises every part of it. In the understanding, it is a monitor which guides our actions and teaches us our duty. In the memory it is a register to witness what is done or not done.³ And in the affections it punishes or rewards.⁴

in Old English Plays, New Series, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1887-90), I, 211-12.

² Harris, "Saint Pauls Exercise" in Sixe Sermons, p. 5.

³ For this reason conscience is often called a thousand witnesses. See: John Calvin, A Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, fol. 25^r; The Commentaries . . . upon the Actes of the Apostles, trans. Christopher Fetherstone (London, 1585), p. 545; and The Sermons . . . Upon The Fifth Booke of Moses called Deuteronomie, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1583), pp. 637, 900, Anthony Gilby, A Briefe Treatise of Election and Reprobation (n.p. [1575?]), sigs. C₃^f-C₃^r, and Jeremias Bastingius, An Exposition or Commentarie upon the Catechisme of Christian Religion . . . (Cambridge, [1593]), p. 123.

⁴ Elizabethan psychology has been thoroughly studied but except for some misleading and familiar statements not much has been said about the faculty of conscience and its relation to the rest of the soul. The following are the most comprehensive surveys of Elizabethan psychology: Murray W. Bundy, "Shakespeare and Elizabethan Psychology," JECP, 23 (1924), 516-49; Ruth L. Anderson, Elizabethan

This court is held for two reasons. First, it provides God with an account of the state of man from man himself. According to Robert Abbot, God has created the mind to be the throne above all else in man; he has set the heart in the middle to receive information from the mind in order to direct itself and man's desires or suppress them if they rebel. And the desires God has set lowest because they should be corrected by the heart and governed by the mind. In order to discover how well the mind rules, God has appointed conscience to keep a court. Second, conscience prepares man for the Last Judgment.⁵

The offices of conscience may be distinguished by their different objects, which are either God or man or both. Conscience has four offices towards God. It is God's register which takes notice of man's actions, either good or bad, so that nothing will escape him, his controller which quiets a stubborn will and suppresses violent headstrong actions, his witness because it shows man his sins and at the Last Judgment it will be the witness of

Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays (Iowa City, 1927); Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes (Cambridge, 1930); John W. Draper, The Humors and Shakespeare's Characters (Durham, N. C., 1945); and Lawrence Babb, The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholy in English Literature from 1580 to 1642 (East Lansing, Mich., 1951). Anderson's belief that Shakespeare thought conscience was a "fleeting thing" is highly doubtful (p. 92). Campbell realizes that the Elizabethans believed that conscience immediately punishes the sinner, pp. 21-22.

⁵ A Hand Of Fellowship To Helpe Keepe Out Sinne And Anti-Christ (London, 1623), pp. 63-65.

all that he has done in his life, and his harbinger because it prepares God's way into the heart of a Christian.

Towards man, conscience has six offices. It is his sentinel which discovers sins that are masking as virtues, such as covetousness masking as frugality, his patron who justifies his actions, his apologist who pleads for his innocence before God, his treasurer that keeps the principles of reason and religion, his surety that undertakes the performance of religion to God and justice to men, and it is his guide that directs him through the intricate ways of the world.

Towards God and man conscience has two offices. First, it makes up a covenant between God and man. Although man makes promises to God about his obedience, he would like him to have as sincere a heart as he professes. Thus, God is not satisfied by promises until he hears conscience affirm man's belief. Second, conscience is a mediator between God and man. When man has violated one of God's commandments, conscience beseeches God to have clemency towards man because of his frailty and at the same time conscience entreats man to humble himself before God.⁶

In the understanding, before an act is committed, conscience is a monitor that tells what is to be done and left undone. Henry Hammond believes that it is evident from Romans 13.5, 1 Corinthians 8.7, 10, 12, 1 Corinthians

⁶ Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 112-29.

10.25, 27-29, and 1 Peter 3.21 that conscience is a monitor because these passages show that it possesses a sense of duty.⁷ Conscience performs this office by beholding the rule, which is God's law, simultaneously with the act. For example, David's conscience, which he expressed by the word "reins" (Psalms 16.7), taught him to set the Lord's commandments before him as the rule for his actions. If the rule and the action happen to be severed, man is not led by conscience but by something else such as sense, will, appetite, fancy or imagination.⁸

As man's monitor, teacher, and director, conscience operates in three areas: things commanded, things forbidden, and things indifferent. In the first two areas, conscience binds to action according to the informed will of God because it has in itself the power of the will of God and so stands in the place of God himself. The conscience commands something to be done by provoking man with the help of the information possessed in the understanding. This we know from Isaiah 30.21: "This is the way, walke ye in it," where reason is understood to point out the way and conscience to issue the commandment. In things forbidden, conscience restrains one from evil. If it apprehends something to be sin, it prohibits it. For example, Reuben knew it was not lawful to kill Joseph and

⁷ Of Conscience, p. 5.

⁸ Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 69-71.

commanded that he do not it but deliver him from the others (Genesis 37.21). And Joseph knew adultery was sinful, so conscience forbid him to do it (Genesis 39.8, 12).⁹

About things indifferent conscience must discern what is necessary and what is allowed, and it must order actions to lawful ends, which are always "the Glory of God, the Edifying of our Neighbour, and the Helpe of our Necessarie Actions."¹⁰ About the use of indifferent things Scripture prescribes certain rules, of which the most important are:

1 That the act be expedient and profitable (1 Corinthians 6.12, 10.23).

2 That it not cause the loss of Christian liberty (1 Corinthians 6.12).

3 That it is not a stumbling block to the weak and cause them by example to do that which otherwise they would not approve (Romans 14.13 and 1 Corinthians 8.9, 10, 13). This is called wounding a conscience (1 Corinthians 8.12).

4 That the act tend to edify (Romans 14.19 and 1 Corinthians 10.23).

5 That it be done decently and orderly (1 Corinthians 14.40).

6 That it tend not to grieve others or make them speak evil (Romans 14.15 and 1 Corinthians 10.16, 30).

7 That God may be glorified (1 Corinthians 10.31).¹¹

The only absolute rule by which conscience directs man's actions is the law of God which is revealed partially in the natural law and completely in the Gospel. There are also, however, three relative laws which conscience is

⁹ Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 74-76.

¹⁰ Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 9; and see also Hammond, Of Conscience, pp. 14-15.

¹¹ Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 78-79.

bound to observe, the judicial law, the human law, and oaths. Perkins argues that the judicial law of Moses is of two sorts: that which prescribes justice according to the particular condition of the Jewish nation such as the law which requires one to fertilize his brother's wife, if the brother has died (Genesis 38.9) and those which are made according to the nature common to all men. Of the two, only the latter binds the consciences of Gentiles. The judicial laws which are common to all men can be identified as those which have been discovered by wise men of all nations and judged by natural reason and conscience to be just and those which explain and confirm the precepts of the Decalogue.¹² Huit supports Perkins' distinction between the two kinds and affirms that Christians need follow only those which agree with the law of nature, (such as old age should be honored, [Leviticus 19.32]), appear just to the reason, and maintain some of the moral precepts given by God.¹³

Human laws bind conscience not by their own power but only by virtue that God has commanded that we obey every ordinance of man. St. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: and the powers that be, are ordained of God." (Romans 13.1), and St. Peter instructs us to submit

¹² A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 12-13.

¹³ The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 152-55.

ourselves: "unto all manner [of] ordinance of man for the Lords sake, whether it be unto the King, as unto the superiour. Or unto governours, as unto them that are sent of him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do wel. For so is the wil of God, that by wel doynge ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2.13-15). On the authority of these two passages, Perkins sets down the rule: "Wholesome lawes of man, made of things indifferent" bind conscience because God has ordained the magistrates' authority. He restricts obedience to "wholesome lawes," by which he means laws that are not against the laws of God and tend to promote the common good of man. Furthermore, he limits these laws to those which only concern "things indifferent"; namely, those which deal with matters neither expressedly commanded nor forbidden by God.¹⁴

Oaths and vows, also bind because God has decreed that the heart must be bound to truth and justice. Whenever one calls upon God to witness the truth of a case, the oath binds conscience. God has expressed this commandment in Numbers 30.3, Matthew 5.33, and Exodus 20.7, and it is carried out by David when he pardons the fault of Shemei and swears that he will not die (2 Samuel 19.23). Vows too bind conscience when they are made to God for lawful and

¹⁴ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 33. See also Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 155-59.

possible things.¹⁵

If conscience is not led by the absolute law of God or the relative bonds, the judicial law, the human laws, and oaths and vows, then it receives its direction from something which is not its proper guide. According to Hammond, those things which often undertake to direct our actions but which do not have the power to obligate us are humor, fancy, passion, diabolical suggestion, and false doctrine. Humor often makes us think that we have to do something because we have a strong inclination to it, but one must learn to distinguish between the natural and spiritual inclinations, between the motions of the sensitive appetite and the higher faculties of the soul. Men may also confuse conscience with fancy, "which is a kind of irrational animal Conscience" and has the same relation to the laws of the body that conscience has to the laws of the intellect. Because some do not have to will not have a conscience, fancy often assumes its place. Passion may often advise us to do things, and diabolical suggestions such as rebellion, sedition, and murder often appear under the name of conscience, and false doctrines may produce the effects of conscience. But none of these has the power to properly bind us and should not be followed.¹⁶

¹⁵ Perkins, The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience, pp. 127-28, 140-53. See also Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 159-65; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., pp. 510-11.

¹⁶ Of Conscience, pp. 9-10.

In order to discharge its duty as man's mirror, conscience must be rightly informed about God's laws. If it is not, then conscience is either erroneous, doubtful, or scrupulous. In any case, conscience could not properly lead man to the good, and the Reformers had to establish rules governing each case. An erroneous conscience is one which does not understand God's laws and misapplies them. There are multiple reasons for these errors. First, although the general precepts of the natural law are so clear that no man can err in the obedience or practice of them, the particular conclusions drawn from them may not be right. Second, those things which God commanded in the Scripture may not be sufficiently understood. Third, although these laws may be well understood, the assent of faith necessary to practice them may not be present.

The erroneous conscience presented a difficult moral problem to the Reformers because they believed that conscience is sacred and sovereign and that to disobey it is to sin against God. They attempted to solve this problem by teaching that although an erring conscience does not make the transgression of the law right for it is not possible for conscience to make an action lawful which is not reconcilable to God's law, one cannot disobey an erring conscience without sin, even though the law or God commands the contrary. Their justification for this doctrine

was that he who sins against his conscience sins against God's will.¹⁷

The doubtful conscience presented a similar problem to the Reformers, but in its solution they had the guidance of Scripture which states: "he that doubteth, is condemned" (Romans 14.23). In order to determine what one should do about his doubtful conscience and escape damnation, Ames tries to ascertain in what way conscience is doubtful. He says that conscience may be doubtful when the assent of faith is absent or opinion prevails. But in a stricter sense, it may be doubtful when it cannot assent to either part of a question. He then distinguishes between two kinds of doubting: speculative, which is not immediately concerned with a practice or action, and the practical, which is. Having set down these distinctions, he can then proceed to answer the question. First in all these doubts which belong to practice, one should seek out the truth because while the doubt remains the action must lack the perfection it would have it if was done with complete knowledge. Second, it is often unlawful to do anything against a practical doubt for four reasons: a man cannot do it with faith; he does not sufficiently abhor

¹⁷ Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 9-16; Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 314-16; Jones, A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 385. Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 14; Carpenter, The Conscionable Christian, pp. 61-62; and William Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, Lively representing its Estate before God: with a Treatise of Conscience (London, 1640), pp. 78-82.

sin; he is not fully addicted to God's will; and he must choose the safest way, which is to abstain from the act.¹⁸

The doubtful and scrupulous consciences differ only slightly. The doubtful hangs in suspense between what is lawful and sinful, and the scrupulous inclines to the lawful but it has some doubts. To solve this problem one should either do the lawful action and labor to suppress the doubts, or, if this is impossible, he should follow the lawful course notwithstanding the doubts. This would not be acting against conscience because a scruple is a rash fear and cannot bind one to act according to it.¹⁹

After dictating what is to be done or avoided, conscience performs its second function, which is to testify whether our actions are in accordance with the law. By virtue of this function Scripture calls conscience a witness (Romans 2.15, 9.1, and 2 Corinthians 1.12) and a book (Revelation 20.12). In bearing witness conscience considers our action as it has respect to that law which conscience has given. For a better understanding of the

¹⁸ Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 16-18. See also Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, p. 85-88.

¹⁹ Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 19-21, and Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 88-89. Nicholas Crussin, The Holy Court. The Command of Reason over the Passions (m.p., 1638), pp. 149-50. A treatise on the scrupulous conscience written slightly beyond the period covered by this dissertation is by Benjamin Calamy, A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience Containing some Plain Directions For the Cure of it (London, 1684).

nature of this function, I will separately consider the action which conscience considers and the method of its judgment.

Conscience witnesses four things: what has been done, what is being done, what one intends to do, and what one is. Each of these is verified by examples in Scripture. That conscience bears witness to actions done in the past and perhaps forgotten is evident in the cases of the chief butler who forgot his promise to Joseph but whose conscience reminded him of it two years later (Genesis 41.9) and Adinobezek who had forgotten his great cruelty but was reminded of it by his conscience (Judges 1.7). That conscience will testify to every purpose and project, even though it was never acted is implied in Romans 2.16. And conscience also bears witness to the inclination of our hearts for it told David that his delight was in the law of the Lord (Psalms 119.77) and it revealed to Jehv that for all his apparent zeal he was not upright. (2 Kings 10.31).²⁰

The manner in which conscience judges the conformity of the act to the law is a practical syllogism.²¹ In

²⁰ Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 57-59.

²¹ Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, p. 64; Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 9; Carpenter, The Conscionable Christian, pp. 42-43; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 500; Downname, A Guide to Godlynesse, pp. 66-67; Dyke, Good Conscience, pp. 22-23; Hughes, St. Pauls Exercise, p. 6; Jones, A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 636; Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience,

making this syllogism conscience requires the assistance of the intellect and memory. The intellect, which houses synderesis, retains all the rules and principles of morality and presents them to conscience so that judgments can be made. Memory brings to mind particular actions about which conscience will pass judgment. Assisted by these two, conscience frames an argument. For example, in the mind of a murderer the intellect would say: "Every murderer is cursed"; conscience assisted by memory would say: "Thou art a murderer"; then conscience would pass sentence: "Thou art cursed."²²

Preceding or accompanying an act is the recognition by conscience that the act is right or wrong. As St. Paul says: "Which men, though they knewe the Law of God, how that they which commit suche things, are worthie of death, yet not onely do the same, but also favour them that do them" (Romans 1.32). But sometimes this awareness is subsequent to the act, as in the case of the Jews who in their ignorance crucified Christ but afterwards suffered remorse. This awareness comes from an examination

pp. 134-35; Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 3-4. In saying that conscience arrives at its conclusion by a practical syllogism, the Reformers were of course following the Scholastics.

²² This example of a syllogism of conscience is from Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 38. For others, see: Ames, Conscience With The Powers, And Cases Thereof, p. 3, and Taylor, Ductor Dubitantium, p. 10.

of conscience which one undertakes to please God and avoid sin. If it is ignored, hardened impenitance (Isaiah 44.18) and presumption ensue, but if it is diligently practiced one gains a correct understanding of his actions, feels humility, and exercises equity and gentleness towards others.²³

The examination of conscience is essential if one wishes to amend his life. For this purpose, Henry Mason has laid down a guide for reviewing one's actions.²⁴ There are two inducements for the examination of conscience. The first is that God has commanded us to do it. St. Paul says: "Let a man therefore examine him self, and so let him eat of this bread, and drinke of this cup" (1 Corinthians 11.28) and "Prove your selves whether ye are in the faith: examine your selves" (2 Corinthians 13.5). And we are told in Psalms 4.4: "Examine your owne heart upon your bed, and be stil."

These precepts make the examination of conscience a necessary duty, but the practice of certain good men also

²³ Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 25-28.

²⁴ The Tribunall Of The Conscience: Or, A Treatise Of Examination: Shewing Why and how a Christian should examine his Conscience, and take an account of his life (London, 1626). Ames also discusses the examination of conscience but not as thoroughly as Mason. See Conscience with the Powers and Cases Thereof, pp. 25-28. Thomas Hooker also says that one is bound to examine his spiritual estate. See The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, Viz. Self-Deniall, And Self-Tryall (London, 1640), p. 211.

proves it to be a profitable way to order one's life. David practices it himself and preaches it to others. "I comuned with mine own heart" (Psalms 77.6), he says, and in Psalms 119.16 Daleth announces "I have declared my waies and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes." These passages suggest that if one wants to change the course of his life, he should first examine his ways. This same pattern is found in Lamentations 3.40 where the afflicted man encourages us to "serche and trye our waies & turne againe to the Lord." This also implies that the most efficient way to conversion and amendment is through examination.

Secondly, the same practice was established and recommended by Saints Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory, and Bernard, who exhort the Christian to examine his conscience in the morning so that he can judge how the night was passed and in the evening so that he can evaluate how the day was spent. Classical writers also advocate the examination of conscience as a way to perfect one's life. Seneca reports that Sextius, the Roman philosopher, ended his day by examining what he had done during it, and Seneca himself examines his conscience before retiring.²⁵ And Pythagoras and his followers would inquire into what they had done

²⁵ de Ira, III, 36, in The Workes, trans. Thomas Lodge (London, 1614), p. 577.

during the day.²⁶ Thus, because Biblical, classical, and medieval writers recommend it, Mason advises one to pass sentence on all his works and actions (pp. 5-9).

Employing the court of conscience metaphor, Mason likens this examination to a judiciary process in which there is an inquiry into the facts, a sentence pronounced according to the nature of the crime, a punishment inflicted on the guilty, or an acquittal given to the innocent. It involves two sorts of acts, of which some are essential and others accidental. The essential acts are discussion, application, and censure. Discussion consists of sifting through one's life and setting in open view every fact of it in order to see them for what they are. Application is comparing these acts to the law of God. And censure is a judgment that conscience gives to the deeds according to the rule of the law. The first shows what has been done; the second declares what should have been done; and the third metes out the judgment that is deserved. There are two accidental acts. The first precedes the proper acts of examination, and it is a desire to better one's spiritual estate by correcting what is wrong and confirming what is right. The second follows the examination, and it is the effectual practice of such rules or orders that will make the examination useful (pp. 11-15).

²⁶ Pythagoras in Diogenes Laertius, The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, trans. C. D. Yonge (London, 1853), p. 34.

Consequent to bearing witness, conscience either charges man with a sin or justifies his action. If conscience testifies that the action is good, it either excuses, absolves, or approves. According to Ames, excusing is an act of conscience by which man is freed from sin for what he has done, absolving is an act of conscience by which man is pronounced free from punishment for what he has done, and approving is an act of conscience by which man's action is pronounced pleasing to God.²⁷ Scripture offers several examples of the approving and absolving conscience. St. Paul's conscience approves his life of simplicity and sincerity (2 Corinthians 1.12 and 2 Timothy 4.7-8). Hezekiah's approves his good actions and testifies to the uprightness of his heart (1 John 3.14). Simeon's gave him its approbation when it told him he was God's faithful servant (Luke 2.29). Samuel's conscience absolved him of theft, fraud, tyranny, and bribery (1 Samuel 12.3). And after David had committed many sins, he humbled himself before God and his conscience absolved him of all that he had done wrong (Psalms 103.3).²⁸

When conscience excuses, it does so with reference to time and thing. It excuses for something done in the past in the cases of Job (Job 23.11-12; 29.12, 17), Joseph

²⁷ Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 30-31. Perkins lists only two acts of conscience, excusing and absolving, A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 40-41.

²⁸ Fenner, The Soules Looking-Glasse, pp. 116-18.

(Genesis 40.5), Paul (Acts 23.1), and Samuel (1 Samuel 12.3). For present matters, it absolves Paul for his spiritual state (1 Corinthians 4.4) and for his words and affections (Romans 9.1-2). And conscience gives judgment of future actions in the cases of Paul (Acts 24.16) and Job, who said his heart would not reproach him as long as he lived (Job 27.6). As for the matters conscience witnesses, it witnesses Nehemiah's good deeds (Nehemiah 13.14, 22), Paul's teachings (2 Corinthians 1.12), and Abimelech's integrity and innocence in taking Sarah (Genesis 20.6).²⁹

If conscience testifies that an act is sinful, it accuses and condemns. The accusation of conscience proves that a man has done wrong and that he is close to punishment for his sin. The condemnation of conscience passes judgment that the guilty man will be punished by eternal death.³⁰ These two acts of conscience are evident in Scripture, Jerobom's conscience accuses him of altering God's worship (1 Kings 14); and Nabal's accuses him for his griping (1 Samuel 25.37). The best known Biblical example of a condemning conscience is Adam's after the Fall (Genesis 3.7).³¹

²⁹ Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 87-91. Hammond finds the acquitting act of conscience expressed in Acts 23.1, 1 Corinthians 9.12, 1 Timothy 1.5, 19, 1 Timothy 3.9, 2 Timothy 1.3, Hebrews 13.18, 1 Peter 3.16, and Acts 24.16. Of Conscience p. 6.

³⁰ Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 31, and Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 38-39.

³¹ Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse,

When conscience accuses, it does so with respect to time and matter, just as it does when it excuses. In Scripture, conscience accuses for the past actions of Joseph's brothers (Genesis 42.21), Shimei (1 Kings 2.44), David (2 Samuel 24.10), Adonibezak (Judges 1.7), and the Jews (Acts 2.37). It accuses for the present acts of the Scribes and Pharisees (John 8.7-9), Belshazzar (Daniel 5.6), the Lepers of Samaria (2 Kings 7.9), and Felix (Acts 24.25). As for the matter, conscience accuses David for murder (2 Samuel 12 and Psalms 51.14), and Judas for receiving money to betray Christ (Matthies 27.3-5).³²

Because the pain of accusing and condemning conscience is devastating, it is compared in Scripture to pricks in the heart (Acts 2.37), and a worm in the heart that never dies (Mark 9.44).³³

pp. 119-22. Interestingly, in Milton's proposed tragedy, Adam Unparadised, the character of Conscience was to appear to Adam and Eve after the Fall and accuse them for their sins. See The Workes, gen. ed. Frank A. Patterson (New York, 1931-38), XVIII, 230 and 231.

³² Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, p. 92. Hammond finds the condemning act of conscience expressed in John 8.9, Hebrews 9.9, 14, Hebrews 10.2, 22, and Wisdom 17.11, Of Conscience, p. 7.

³³ The "worm of conscience" is a commonplace in the literature on conscience and was also popular during the Middle Ages. Thomas Cisterciensis says: "non quiescit qui sentit vermem pravae conscientiae a quo nemo nocens absovitum (PL, In Cantica Canticorum Eruditissima Commentarii, CCVI, 136); and St. Bonaventure says that the conscience is the "vermis . . . qui non morietur" (Opera Omnia, IX, 428). For its currency during the

From the acts of accusing and excusing arise certain affections. From accusation arise shame, sadness, fear, despair, and anguish. Shame is a man's displeasure with himself for having sinned.³⁴ However, those who have been pardoned for their sins may also be ashamed (Romans 6.25) and those who are most guilty may show no signs of shame (Jeremiah 6.15; Ephesians 4.18). That shame is an immediate consequence of sin is revealed in the Bible and in classical writings. Adam and Eve manifest shame after the Fall (Genesis 3.7), and St. Paul asks: "What frute had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed" (Romans 6.21). Classical writers who recognized that a guilty conscience causes shame, which the Reformers could have known in florilegia, are Isocrates and Diphilus, the comic poet. Isocrates says: "omnino non sperandum esse, si quid turpe seceris, te latiturum. Quamvis enim lateas alios, tu te

Reformation see: William Martyn, Youths Instruction (London, 1612), pp. 11, 12; Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 39; Hobbes, The English Works, III, 624; Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 33; Gilby, A Briefe Treatise of Election and Reprobation, sig. C₃V; John Norden, A Sinfull Mans Solace, (London, 1585), fol. 22^r; Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, p. 36; Nicholas Breton, Wits Trenchmour (London, 1597), p. 8, and Characters Upon Essaies Morall, and Divine (London, 1615), p. 10, Greene, The Life and Complete Works, XI, 168, and XII, 109, 138, 165; and Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing, ed. Horace H. Furnace, reprint of 5th ed. (A New Variorum: New York, 1966), V.ii.79.

³⁴ Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 39; Ames, Conscience With The Powers And Cases Thereof, p. 33; and Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, p. 183.

tamen tibi male conscius eris."³⁵ And Diliphus asks:
 "Quisquis enim ipse non seipsum veretur, Conscium sibi,
 quod mala commiserit, Quomodo apud nescientem pudefieret?"³⁶

Sadness, the second affection stirred by an accusing conscience, is much like melancholy but between them there are great differences. Melancholy is distinguished from an afflicted conscience in that it is a physical illness.³⁷ Melancholy dwells in the fancy, but the sadness one feels for committing a sin arises from a conscience that fears God. A melancholy man does not know why he is sad, but a man with an afflicted conscience knows the exact cause of his feeling. The fears arising from melancholy are imaginary and can be cured by a physician, but the fears of an afflicted conscience are real and can only be cured by God."³⁸ Richard Sibbs says that if we keep a clean

³⁵ Mirabellius, Florilegii, col. 575 and Conrad Lycosthenes, Apophthegmata, p. 118.

³⁶ Mirabellius, Florilegii, col. 573.

³⁷ Paul Kocher documents the relevance of the distinction the Reformers made between terrors of conscience and melancholy to Macbeth; see "Lady Macbeth and the Doctor," SQ, 5 (1954), 341-49. I have not cited the places in which this idea appears that have been noted already by Kocher. Those mentioned above supplement his research. See also Appendix A for a discussion of the conscience-melancholy theme in John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi.

³⁸ Robert Bolton, Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Conscience (London, 1631), p. 207; and Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 507; Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 55-86.

conscience we shall never want "a Divine to comfort us, a Physician to cure us . . . , because . . . wee can be all these to our selves."³⁹ Christopher Lever warns that "there is no Empiricke, no quintessence, no Physicke, can cure a wounded soule: so venomous is sinne, and so incurable are the wounds of sinne: only the bloud of the holy Lambe is able to deliver and heale."⁴⁰ William Broxup admonishes the reader not to wait for a death-bed repentance:

What horror then will thy poore hart indure,
When feare of death doth so afflict thy minde,
When phisickes helpe cannot thy conscience cure.⁴¹

Thus, the essential difference between the man with melancholy and the man with an afflicted conscience is that the former is not truly touched by sin.

When shame and sorrow are present, fear cannot be far behind. An afflicted conscience fears the misery it deserves and attempts to flee from God and the terrors that threaten it. This fear is well described by Solomon: "The wicked flee when none pursueth" (Proverbs 28.1) and by Moses: "Ye shal flee when none pursueth you;" (Leviticus 26.17). On Proverbs 28.1 Peter Moffett comments: "the

³⁹ The Soules Conflict with it selfe, p. 88.

⁴⁰ The Holy Pilgrime, p. 185.

⁴¹ Saint Peters Path to the Joyes of Heaven (London, 1598), sig. G₂^v. See also John Davies, The Muses Sacrifice: Or Divine Meditations (London, 1612), p. 89, and Phineas Fletcher, Job In Tribulation (London, 1632), p. 13.

vengeance of God, the sting of conscience, and the temptations of Sathan cause them as Hindes or Does to flie and remove out of their places."⁴² Michael Jermin, in his commentary on this proverb, says that it expresses: "that great is the terrour which guiltinesse of conscience causeth."⁴³ And Michael Cope interprets the proverb to mean that "their conscience doeth reprove them so lively, that though no man doe pursue and hunt them" they flee.⁴⁴ Henry Ainsworth believes that Leviticus 26.17 shows "great fearfulness of hart, through guiltines of conscience for syn."⁴⁵ Thus, an afflicted conscience subdues one's courage so much that he cannot sustain himself against the impressions of an idle fear.⁴⁶

Although fear compels one to fly from conscience, the

⁴² A Commentarie Upon The Booke Of The Proverbes of Solomon (London, 1592), p. 234.

⁴³ Paraphrastical Meditations, p. 637.

⁴⁴ A Godly and learned Exposition upon the Proverbes of Solomon, trans. M. O. (London, [1580]), fol. 557^r; see also fol. 496^v.

⁴⁵ Annotations Upon . . . Leviticus (n.p., 1618), sig. [Ii₄^v]. See also his annotation on Leviticus 16.36, sig. [Kk₃^v].

⁴⁶ See also: Hall, The Workes, p. 1171; Osmund Lake, A Probe Theologicall: Or, The First Part Of The Christian Pastors Proofoe Of his learned Parishioners (London, 1612), p. 7; Francis Lenton, Characterismi: or, Lentens Leasures (London, 1631), sig. [G₂^v]; John Mabb, The Afflicted Mans Vow (London, 1609), p. 119; John Calvin, A Commentary Upon The Prophecie Of Isaiah, trans. C. C. (London, 1609), p. 314; John Jewel, An Exposition upon . . . Thessalonians, p. 97; and Thomas Wilcox, A Short, Yet sound Commentarie . . . [on] The Proverbes of Solomon (London, 1598), fol. 91^r.

Reformers asserted that one could not escape it. They may have been familiar with this idea through their readings of Medieval writers. Augustine warns, "conscientia mala no fugit siepsum."⁴⁷ Gregory the Great says that "fugiant ergo iniqui humanos oculos, semetipsos certe fugere non possunt."⁴⁸ And Isodorus declares, "nemo potest seipsum effugere, etsi te non damnat publica fama, condemnat propria conscientia."⁴⁹ Richard Greenham asks rhetorically that if our conscience tells us that we have sinned against God, "Whither shall we flie?"⁵⁰ William Chub warns that conscience cannot be escaped.⁵¹ And Nero provided the best historical example that this is true. Joseph Hall says that:

Nero after so much innocent blood, may change his bed-chamber, but his Fiends ever attend him, ever are within him, and are parts of himselfe. Alas, what avails it to seeke outward releefes, when thou hast thine executioner within thee? If thou couldest shift from thy selfe, thou mightest have some hope of ease; now thou shalt never want furies so long as thou hast thy selfe. Yea, what if thou wouldest runne from thy selve? Thy soule may flie from thy body, thy conscience will not flie from thy soule, nor thy sinne from thy conscience.⁵²

⁴⁷ PL, Tractatus XLI, XXXV, 1694.

⁴⁸ PL, Moralium Libri, sive Expositioin Librum B. Job LXXVI, 427.

⁴⁹ PL, Synonyma, LXXXIII, 859.

⁵⁰ "The First Treatise for an Afflicted Conscience" in The Workes (London, 1601), p. 128.

⁵¹ The True travaile of all faithful Christians, howe to escape the daungers of this wicked world (London, 1595), sig. [CV]. See also Jones, A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p.344.

⁵² The Workes, p. 76. The exemplum of Nero and his

The fourth and fifth effects of the accusations of conscience are despair and anguish or perturbation. Despair is the loss of all hope for forgiveness and frequently leads to suicide. Perturbation is an agitation of the whole body whereby all the faculties and powers are disordered. These are the most grievous consequences of accusations not only because they are the most painful but because they seriously endanger one's salvation.⁵³

The accusations and their effects produce an evil or a bad conscience. An evil conscience can be distinguished

guilty conscience was apparently quite common; see also: Jermin, Commentary, upon . . . Ecclesiastes, p. 229; La Primaudaye, The French Academie (London, 1619), I, 29; Pierre Le Loyer, A Treatise of Specters or Strange Sights (London, 1605), fol. 112v; Thomas Fitzherbert, The First Part of a Treatise Concerning Policy, and Religion ([London], 1606), p. 159; Woolton, Of The Conscience, sigs. F₁^r-F₂^r; Innocent Gentillet, A Discourse upon the Meanes of Wel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome, or other principalitie . . . , Against Nicholas Machiavel the Florentine, trans. Simon Patricke (London, 1608), p. 237; Sibbs, The Soules Conflict, pp. 8-9; Caussin, The Holy Court, p. 177, and William Griffith, The Delights of the Saints (London, 1622), p. 210. Nero's ability to escape from his conscience illustrates the "frustra curris" topos that was frequently emblemized during the Renaissance; see Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, eds., Emblemata, Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart, 1967), cols. 472-73, 496-97, and 1035. The image of the hart fleeing with an arrow in its breast is also used as an emblem of the guilty conscience by Carpenter, The Conscionable Christian, p. 56, and Stephen Jerome, Origens Repentance: After He Had Sacrificed To The Idols of the Heathens (London, 1619), p. 8.

⁵³ Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 40; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 507; and Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 33.

according to its degree of sensitivity to sin, and each condition inhibits conscience from leading man to salvation. There are three major kinds of conscience with defective sensitivity, the sleepy, the benumbed and the seared, and two with excessive sensitivity, the troubled and the desperate.⁵⁴ The sleepy conscience is not as quick to accuse as it should be. It is very dangerous for a Christian because it permits one to sin continually without remorse. Furthermore, he cannot come to Christ with a sleepy conscience because he does not feel that his sins are burdensome. Such a conscience had Saul when his dully accused him for the evil he had committed (1 Samuel 24.18). But a sleepy conscience may jeopardize one's salvation by only weakly exciting him to do good as Agrippa's did (Acts 26.28). The cause of a sleepy conscience is often carnal security which results from long prosperity.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Although the Reformers seem to have agreed that there are various degrees of sensitivity to sin, their nomenclature was not always the same. Perkins lists the sleepy under the heading of benumbed. What most Reformers call the sleepy conscience, Ames calls the benumbed, and what most call the benumbed, he calls the stupid. Hughes uses the prosaic rubrics: good but not quiet, quiet but not good, good and quiet, and neither good nor quiet, but he is merely describing the various degrees of sensitivity.

⁵⁵ Ames, Conscience With The Powers And Cases Thereof, pp. 42-43; Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 147-53; Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 126-27; Jones, A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 386; Cade, A Sermon of the Nature of Conscience, pp. 21-22; Richard Sibbs, Bowels Opened, Or, A Discovery of the Neere and deere Love, Union and Communion betwixt Christ and the Church (London, 1639), pp. 109-10; and Wilson, A Christian Dictionary, sig. [X_x^v].

The benumbed conscience differs from the sleepy by degree. When the conscience is benumbed, it only accuses and condemns for the greatest sins, but usually not until the time of a great calamity. Thus, Joseph's brothers were not troubled in conscience for selling Joseph until they were afflicted by a famine in Egypt. A man with a benumbed conscience knows that he is committing evil and he is aware of the punishment due to his sins, but he continues on the same course. St. Paul speaks about these men in Romans 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." But a benumbed conscience will not always stay quiet; when it is aroused it will pursue man with fury.⁵⁶

The third and most serious kind of defective conscience is the seared or cauterized which does not accuse for any sin, even a great one.⁵⁷ The phrase "seared

⁵⁶ Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 67-68; Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 127-28; Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 43; Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 172-76; and Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 316-17.

⁵⁷ Another popular term for the seared conscience is the hard heart. Among the numerous Renaissance references to this term, see: Neil Hemmingsen, The Epistle of . . . Saint Paul . . . to the Ephesians. Faithfullie Expounded, trans. Abraham Fleming (London, 1580), p. 151, Jermin, Paraphrasticall Meditations, p. 647, Arthur Lake, Ten Sermons Upon Severall Occasions (London, 1641), p. 81, Cope, A Godly . . . Exposition uppon the Proverbes, fols. 13^v, and 14^r, Cole, The Godly Mans Assurance, p. 177, Hieron, The Sermons, I, 248, and II, 113, Calvin, A Commentarie . . .

conscience" derives from 1 Timothy 4.2 where St. Paul describes some consciences as being "burned with an hote yron." This condition does not occur naturally in man, but it is acquired when through constant sinning synderesis is diminished to virtual extinction. Man is naturally obstinate and ignorant, but he still possesses a dim light to distinguish good from evil. When, however, he continually sins against synderesis, it is extinguished. Then comes the "reprobate minde" which judges evil to be good. After this comes the seared conscience which feels no remorse for sins. And then finally comes "exceeding greed-nesse" to commit all kinds of sins.⁵⁸

The man with a seared conscience is easily recognized by his manner of sinning and by the state of his conscience. He commits his sins knowingly and willingly (Ephesians 4.19), rejoices in his sins (Proverbs 2.14), and

upon . . . Genesis, trans. Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), p. 116, A Commentary Upon . . . Isaiah, pp. 14, 32, and 486-69, Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, fol. 125^{r-v}, Sermons . . . Upon . . . Deuteronomie, p. 80, and A Commentarie On . . . Hebrewes, pp. 60-61, Martin Luther, Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings, pp. 193, 194, and 198, Wilcox, A Short . . . Commentarie . . . [on] The Proverbs, fol. 92^v, Robert Harris, "Of Newnesse of Heart" in The Workes (London, 1635), pp. 529-39, Moffett, A Commentarie Upon . . . The Proverbs, p. 235, Jewel, An Exposition . . . [on] Thessalonians, p. 134, Hall, The Workes, p. 329, Bolton, Helpes To Humiliation, p. 36, Fletcher, Certain . . . Similes, pp. 28-29, Gilby, A Brief Treatise, sigs. A₄^r, B₃^{r-v}, Martyn, Youths Instruction, p. 8, and Anthony Maxey, An other Sermon Preached Before the King (London, 1605), p. 9. See also the references in Elton, King Lear and the Gods, pp. 220-21.

⁵⁸ Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 68.

never reforms (Proverbs 27.22). His conscience is secretly troubled and denies him sleep. This condition is the most serious offense against God for it takes away the possibility of repentance. Fenner goes as far as to say that a seared conscience is "a great judgement of God: greater than this there cannot be."⁵⁹

To these three principle kinds of defective consciences Bernard adds six others. The dead conscience is the kind possessed by children who cannot use their reason and in mad men who have lost their reason. The blind conscience, so named because St. Paul says that some Gentiles have a "blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4.18, Authorized Version), is in all those who live in ignorance of God's Law. The secure conscience is one which avoids being troubled by falsely persuading itself that it is peaceful. The large conscience can accept sins without

⁵⁹ Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 128-30; Abernathy, A Christian and Heavenly Treatise, pp. 103-13; Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, pp. 43-44; Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 68; Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 176-89; Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 17. For other references to the seared conscience in the theological literature of the Reformation, see: Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters, p. 504; Cowper, The Anatomy of a Christian Man, pp. 97-98; Dyke, Good Conscience, pp. 38-42; Hult, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 317-18; Hughes, St. Pauls Exercise, p. 13; Jones, A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 386; Wilson, A Christian Dictionary, sig. [HgV]; Samuel Hieron, The Sermons of Master Samuel Hieron (London, 1624-[29]), II, 113; Hall, The Workes, p. 1031; William Selater, The Sick Soules Salve (Oxford, 1612), p. 4; Burton, A Discourse, p. 112; Beza, The New Testament, fol. 366v.

remorse.⁶⁰ And the "cheverilll" conscience, which is like kid leather because it can be stretched to accommodate any number of sins, is one which plays an occasion to the best advantage.⁶¹ In each of these six there is a defect in feeling, but not as much as in a sleepy, benumbed, or seared conscience.⁶²

There are two kinds of consciences which suffer from excessive sensitivity, the stirred and the desperate. The terrors of conscience were considered the greatest misery that a man could suffer. According to Richard Greenham, physical pain is preferable to a troubled conscience.⁶³ William Fenner says that a troubled conscience "is the greatest misery that can be: it is like a dismail ghost to terrifie the soul: it is like a burning furnace in the bosome: it maketh the life bitter. In a word, the spirit

⁶⁰ Bourne calls this "conscientia spatiosa", pp. 17-19. See also "Greenes Groatsworth of Wit" in The Life and Complete Works, XII, 103. Gorinius, the old usurer, is a man "of no small credit, exceeding wealth, and large conscience." See also John Downname, A Treatise Of Securitie (London, 1622), p. 12; Alexander Gardyne, Characters and Essayes (Aberdeen, 1625); John Norden, A Pathway to Patience, in all Manner of Crosses, tryals, troubles, and afflictions (London, 1626), pp. 49-50; John Denison, Four Sermons (London, 1620), p. 135; Edward Dering, XXVII Lectures, or readings upon parts of the Epistle written to the Hebrewes (London, 1578), p. 197; and William Bucanus, Institutions of Christian Religion, trans. Robert Hill (London, 1606), pp. 442-43.

⁶¹ See Tilley C608: "He has a conscience like a cheveral's skin," and Bernard, The Isle of Man, pp. 26 and 36.

⁶² Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 137-71.

⁶³ The Workes, p. 5.

of man is not able to bear it."⁶⁴ It is supposed to be so excruciating that it warrants a comparison with the pains of hell. Robert Bolton says that a guilty conscience is "the extremest Hell upon earth."⁶⁵ John Jewel exhorts that a man with a bad conscience "feebleth uproare, warre, lightning, thunder, death, and hell in his heart."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The Soules looking-glasse, p. 188.

⁶⁵ Instructions, pp. 2 and 18. See also Helpes To Humiliation, p. 26.

⁶⁶ An Exposition upon . . . Thessalonians, p. 97. See also Hall, The Workes, p. 76; Hieron, The Sermons, II, 201; Richard Young, The Drunkards Character . . . together with compleat Armour Against Evil Society (London, 1638), p. 488; and Timothy Rogers, Good Newes from Heaven (London, 1628), p. 80. Some writers believed that a tormented conscience that felt like a hell on earth produced strange, horrifying fantasies, especially of chimeras. In his poem "That a vexed Conscience is the only Hell on Earth," Davies writes:

The Minde then looking into Fancies Mirrour,
sees nothing there but Sinne that sits a-Broode
On grimme Chimaeraes, and sights full of horror,
so to confound the Minde, or mad her mood;

The Muses Sacrifice: Or Divine Meditations, p. 89. In his poem "On an evill Conscience," Francis Quarles uses the same image:

What hells of Horror, an evill Conscience brings!
What strange Chimeraes! what prodigious things;

The Complete Works in Prose and Verse, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1880-81), II, 250. Giles Fletcher says that a man in despair:

A thousand wilde Chimeras would him cast:
As when a fearfull dreame, in mid'st of night,
Skips to the braine, and phansies to the signe;

Christs Victory and Triumph in Heaven, and Earth, over, and After Death (Cambridge, 1610), II, xxvi, p. 33. In Prolusion I, Milton says that the Chimeras, Gorgons, and Hydras

The terrors which stir conscience with fear of damnation and God's vengeance do not permit the man to enjoy quiet and comfort. Michael Cope says that the conscience which feels guilt is constantly afraid of God's judgment.⁶⁷ Calvin says that a bad conscience is always at war with itself,⁶⁸ and that the more it galls the reprobate the more he is inclined to blaspheme God.⁶⁹ That a guilty conscience denies one peace by inflicting remorse for crimes committed in the past was frequently a moral of the sensational Elizabethan "murder tracts."⁷⁰ A guilty man is always pricked by remorse, says Anthony Fletcher.⁷¹ Enoch Evans relates the story of a man who was burdened by a wounded conscience after he committed a murder.⁷² The conscience of the murderess Elizabeth Barnes could in "no way permit her to rest, or shew her any place of refuge for

represent the pricks of a tormented conscience; The Workes. XII, 145. The association of the chimeras with a guilty conscience may have been originally suggested by the "flam-misque armata Chimera" that inhabit Vergil's hell (Aeneid, VI, 288).

⁶⁷ A . . . Exposition uppon the Proverbes, fol. 14⁴.

⁶⁸ A Commentary Upon . . . Isaih, pp. 326-27.

⁶⁹ A Commentarie On . . . Hebrewes, p. 306.

⁷⁰ The phrase is Paul Jorgensen's, Our Naked Frailties: Sensational Art and Meaning in Macbeth (Berkeley, Cal., 1971), p. 22.

⁷¹ Certain Very Proper, And Most Profitable Similes (London, 1595), p. 25.

⁷² A true Relation of a Barbarous and most cruell Mur-ther (London, 1595), p. 25.

safety."⁷³ And William Gouge recounts numerous tales about men who were shaken by the remembrance of their misdeeds.⁷⁴ The terrors of conscience increase at death and continue after it. "Sin, and an accusing conscience, will cleave to an impenitent soule, in death; after death, in judgment, and for ever," says an anonymous aphorism.⁷⁵ And John Denison warns that the devil employs sinners "in the workes of iniquity in the time of their life, but at the day of their death, rewards them with the scourages of a troubled conscience, and at the day of Judgement, with hellish torments."⁷⁶

There are at least five causes of a troubled conscience. First is the guilt of sin. When one has sinned, conscience becomes aware of it and speaks out as it did in the cases of Judas, Cain, Joseph's brothers, and David. Second is the apprehension of God's wrath. The third is

⁷³ Henry Goodcole, Natures Cruell Step-Dames: Or, Matchlesse Monsters of the Female Sex; Elizabeth Barges, and Anne Willis (London, 1637), p. 4. Dreadful days and restless nights punish the murderess in The Most Cruell and Bloody Murther Committed by an Innkeepers Wife, called Annis Dell, and Her Sonne, George Dell, Foure Yeeres Since (London, 1606), sig. B4.

⁷⁴ The Workes (London, 1627), pp. 138-42. Another villain troubled by his conscience was Sejanus; see Giovanni Manzini, Politically Observations Upon the fall of Sejanus (London, 1634), pp. 6 and 11.

⁷⁵ Panacea: or, Select Aphorismes, Divine and Morall (London, 1630), sig. [A^r].

⁷⁶ The Sinners Acquittance. A Checke to Curiositie. The Safest Service (London, 1634), p. 129. See also Theophilus Higgons, A Briefe Consideration Of Mans Iniquitie, and Gods Justice (London, 1608), pp. 22-23.

fear of death and hell. When one knows he has sinned and knows that he deserves death and hell, then his conscience is troubled. Fourth, conscience is troubled when God withdraws his spirit from conscience, and fifth it is troubled when God terrifies conscience with thoughts about the loss of divine love. Fenner believes that three of the five causes terrified the consciences of Adam and Eve after the Fall and the conscience of Cain after he slew Abel. Adam and Eve's awareness of their nakedness reveals their sense of guilt (Genesis 3.7); their attempt to hide from God shows their apprehension of divine wrath (Genesis 8.3); and they have a fear of divine vengeance (Genesis 8.10). Cain's confession that his sin is greater than he can bear arises from his sense of guilt (Genesis 4.13); his attempt to hide from God shows his apprehension of divine wrath (Genesis 4.14); and his fear that someone will slay him comes from his expectation of death and judgment (Genesis 4.14).⁷⁷

The stirred conscience, on the authority of Perkins, can be classified according to how it accuses or excuses. There are four kinds. First the conscience which accuses man for doing evil must be considered stirred. When the accusations are violent, the conscience is called wounded or troubled, which, although it is not a good condition in itself it can lead to grace. The second kind of stirred

⁷⁷ Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, p. 177.

conscience is that which accuses for doing well. It is common in those who are superstitious. The third is the kind of conscience which excuses for doing evil, and this is found also in superstitious people. The fourth is that which excuses for doing good at some times and in some particular actions of carnal men. When Abimelech took Sarah from Abraham, God knew that he did it with an "upright mind" (Genesis 20.6). This could be considered a good conscience, but actually it is otherwise because although it excuses this one action the man may be unregenerate and his conscience may accuse him on other matters.⁷⁸

The stirred conscience may be experienced by both God's children who are guilty of sin and the wicked who have not lost hope. The children of God are more troubled by guilt of sin than by the apprehension of God's wrath. For example, David is troubled by his sin against God's law (Psalms 51.4). When, however, their conscience fears the wrath of God, the wrath is like that of an angry father, not like that of an enemy. The wicked, on the other hand, only fear the wrath of God, but they also believe that he is merciful. They are like the Jews described in Isaiah 57.10 who were grievously troubled in conscience but did not lose hope.

Because the elect could suffer terrors of conscience

⁷⁸ A Discourse of Conscience, pp. 68-69.

just like a reprobate, it was necessary that they realize that the terrors did not imply damnation. In order to instruct the elect about the true significance of their stirred consciences the Reformers wrote numerous treatises comforting the afflicted and counseling them on how to assuage their grief.⁷⁹ The message of these treatises was always the same: have faith in the mercy of Christ. Thomas Wilcox tells his reader that if conscience seems to accuse too much, the accusations "implieth not convictiō, much lesse condemnation, speciallie in such a height as we imagine."⁸⁰ Thomas Wilson considers the terrors of conscience to be the most difficult trial for a Christian to endure and overcome. When conscience is tormented with the fear of hell, the pain is surcharged with Satan's threats, aggravated by the Law of God and the fear that God will withdraw his mercy. Thus it was with Job, who believed that God was his enemy, and David, who for a long time could only see God's fury and indignation. But both Job and David, although temporarily shaken, withstood their trials, and it is their perseverance that

⁷⁹ These comfort treatises have received little attention by scholars. The only other person who seems to have looked at them is Wilbur Saunders, whose treatment of them is regrettably superficial. See The Dramatist and the Received Idea (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 246-47.

⁸⁰ Large Letters. Three in Number, containing much necessarie matter for the instruction and comfort of such as are distressed in conscience by feeling of sinne, and feare of Gods wrath (London, 1589), p. 16.

Wilson advises the Christian to imitate.⁸¹ Samuel Hieron says that spiritual distress should not be misconstrued as a sign of damnation because "it is the ordinary way by which God brings those to sweetnesse of inward comfort who are his."⁸² And John Norden says that an afflicted conscience, because it is groaning under the burden of sin, shows that there is still grace in the soul.⁸³ Although these terrors can lead one to salvation, if they are not cured they can drive one ultimately to despair.

For the distress of conscience, the Reformers offered several remedies. But the most efficacious was for a Christian to consider that through his mercy God would never tempt one above his strength. But one could also sustain himself in these trials with the thought that those beloved by God such as David, Job, Paul, Hezekiah, and Jesus Christ himself also had to suffer through the terror of conscience. For these men the terrors of conscience constituted a trial of faith, and it should be considered such by the godly.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Saints by Calling: Or Called to be Saints ([London], 1620), p. 331.

⁸² The Sermons, II, 203.

⁸³ A Pathway to Patience, p. 49.

⁸⁴ Wilcox, Large Letters, pp. 18-19; Matteo Gribaldi, A notable and marvellous Epistle . . . concerning the terrible judgement of God, upon hym that for feare of men, denyeth Christ and the knowne verite: with a Preface of Doctor Calvine (London, [1570?]), sig. D₄^v-F₂^v; Michael Day, A Monument Of Morality, pp. 77-80; Andrew Kingsmill, A Most

The last degree of a wounded conscience is despair. As Burton says: "the last and greatest cause of [despair] is our own conscience, sense of sins, and God's anger justly deserved, a guilty conscience for some foul offence formerly committed."⁸⁵ Those who have lost all hope of pardon live in intolerable horror, run headlong into sin, and grow senseless to their evil. Because he can attain no spiritual comfort, the desperate man often commits suicide, as did Saul (1 Samuel 31.4), Achitophel (2 Samuel 17.23), and

Excellent and comfortable Treatise, for all such as are any manner of way either troubled in mynde or afflicted in bodie, Whereunto is ajoined a verie godly and learned Exhortation to suffer patiently all afflictions . . . And also a conference betwixt a godly learned Christian and an afflicted conscience (London, 1578), sigs. BV-B₄V; John Freeman, The Comforter: Or A comfortable Treatise, wherein are contained many reasons taken out of the word, to assure the forgiveness of sinnes to the conscience that is troubled with the feeling thereof (London, 1600), pp. 55-68; Hieron, The Sermons, II, 203. The same advice is offered in the following treatises: Richard Kilby, The burthen of a loaden Conscience (London, 1618); William Bonde, A devoute treatyse for them that ben tymorouse and fearefull in conscience ([London?], 1534); Robert Linaker, A Comfortable Treatise for the reliefe of such as are afflicted in Conscience (London, 1634); Thomas Sparke, A Short Treatise, very comfortable for all those Christians that be troubled and disquieted in their consciences with the sight of their owne infirmities (London, 1580), and Anon., A conference containing a Conflict had with Satan, wherein are plainly set downe the true markes and tokens, whereby the afflicted conscience may proveit selfe, whether it be the childe of God, or the childe of Satan (London, 1577). Prayer manuals were also written to comfort those with an afflicted conscience. See, for example: Anon., A godly Garden out of which most comfortable herbes may be gathered for the health of the wounded Conscience of all patient sinners ([?London], [1574]).

⁸⁵ The Anatomy of Melancholy, with an Introduction by Holbrook Jackson (Everyman's Library: London, 1932), III, 400.

Judas (Matthew 27.5). The only cure for despair is "faith with patience and prayer with hope."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Because the idea of religious despair plays an absolutely fundamental role in Renaissance art and literature and in Reformation theology, its evolution and recurrence are much too complicated to deal with here. But those who diagnosed the states of mind of the desperate always linked despair to a troubled conscience; see Mabb, The Afflicted Mars Vow, pp. 119-29; Peter Vermigli, Most Fruitfull and learned Comentarries [on the Book of Judges] (London, 1564), fol. 247^v; Norden, A Pathway to Patience, pp. 50-51; A Sinfull Mans Solace, fols. 23, 42; Gouge, The workes, p. 24; Anon. Panacea, sig. A4^v; Wolfgangus Musculus, Common places of Christian Religion (London, 1563), fols. 461^r-63^v; Perkins, "A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration, Whether a Man be in the Estate of Damnation, or in the Estate of Grace" in The Workes, I, 378; Bucanus, Institutions, pp. 310-11; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., pp. 307-10, 507; Charles Gibbons, A Watch-Word for Warre (Cambridge, 1596), sig. C; Nicholas Caussin, The Holy Court, p. 117; Nathanael Cole, The Godly Mans Assurance, 4th ed. (London, 1633), pp. 252-61; Anon., Two Guides to a Good Life. The Genealogy of Vertue And The nathomy [sic] of Sinne (London, [London, 1604], sig. [H4^r]; Jermin, Commentary, upon . . . Ecclesiastes, pp. 56-57; Wilson, A Christian Dictionary, sig. [D8^r]; Edward Hutchins, Sampsons Jawborne against the Spiritual Philistine (n.p., 1601), pp. 26-28; Abraham Fleming, A Monomachie of Motives in the mind of man: Or a Battell betweene Vertues and Vices of certaine qualitie (London, [158?]), pp. 146-61; Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, III, 400-03; Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 224-32; Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 17; Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 180-84; Ames, Conscience With The Power and Cases Thereof, pp. 47-57; Carpenter, The Conscionable Christian, pp. 49-52; and Downname, A Guide to Godlynesse, p. 67. The idea of despair to the literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance has recently become the subject of several articles but they tend to overlook the role of conscience; see Arie Sachs, "Religious Despair in Medieval Literature and Art," Medieval Studies, 26 (1964), 231-56, "The Religious Despair of Doctor Faustus," JEGP 63 (1964), 625-47, and "Religious Despair in Richard the Third," Romanica et Occidentalia, Etudes dédiées a la mémoire de H. Péri (Jerusalem, 1964), 234-45.

The troubled conscience can lead to damnation if it drives one to despair, but a good conscience purged with Christ's blood and maintained by faith can direct one to salvation. The two effects of a good conscience are boldness and joy. "The righteous are bolde as a lyon," says Proverbs 28.1. St. Paul also says that the testimony of a good conscience produces "rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 1.12).⁸⁷

A good conscience, as defined by Carpenter, is a . . . divine power, and principall part of Gods Image in man, whereby he doth most resemble the self-sufficiency of God, which being enlightened by Gods Word, and purged by faith in Christs blood, from the quiet and punishment of sinne, and from dead workes, to serve the living, Lord, speaketh peace with Gods allowance, is a messenger of good things betwixt God and us, and cheereth up the heart with joy inspeakable and glorious.⁸⁸

This definition would have been acceptable to all the Reformers because it mentions the three prerequisites of a good conscience: enlightenment by the Word of God, purification by Christ's blood, and peace by God's allowance. Carpenter says that knowledge of God's Word is necessary to make a good conscience because "it is not sufficient to duty and obedience, to doe according to conscience, except

⁸⁷ Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, p. 41; Ames, Conscience With The Power And Cases Thereof, p. 32; and Nicholas Hanapus, The ensamples of Vertue and vice, gathered oute of holye scripture, trans. Thomas Paynell (London, 1561), sig. Ff₅^r.

⁸⁸ The Conscionable Christian, p. 59.

it bee inlightened and rectified by the Word,"⁸⁹ Dyke asserts that conscience can only possess integrity when it is informed and principled by the knowledge of God's Word, and he believes it is proven by Proverbs 9.10 and Romans 15.14. Furthermore, if conscience is not rightly informed it cannot excuse that which is good and accuse for that which is evil or urge one towards good and dissuade from evil.⁹⁰ Fenner warns that conscience cannot be upright if it is not obedient to all that God asks. Because St. Paul had obeyed God in all things he could claim a "good conscience" (Acts 23.1).⁹¹ Byfield says that for a man to win a good conscience he must know by law what sins are on the conscience and he must know by the Gospel what propitiation Christ has made for sins.⁹²

To be good, conscience must also be purged by Christ's blood. The author of Hebrews asks: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, which through the eternal Spirit offered him self without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9.14) and "For would they [the sacrifices] not then have ceased to have been offered, because that the offerers once purged,

⁸⁹ The Conscionable Christian, p. 60.

⁹⁰ Good Conscience, pp. 23-27.

⁹¹ The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 133-34.

⁹² A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., pp. 508, 509.

shulde have had no more conscie of sinnes" (Hebrews 10.2). Being washed in the blood of Christ, the conscience will not accuse or condemn.⁹³ Jones says:

It is only Christ Jesus, and the application of his sacrifice to us by a lively faith, that can secure our consciences, and stay the rage of them: being justified by faith wee have peace with God: the blood of Christ purgeth us from all sinne.⁹⁴

And in his commentary on Hebrews 9.14 Luther states emphatically:

. . . nor is it [the conscience] freed from these difficulties [the recollection of past sins and fear of punishment] except through the blood of Christ; and if it looks at Him through faith, it believes and realizes that its sins have been washed away and taken away in Him. Thus through faith it is at the same time purified and made calm, so that out of joy over the remission of sins it no longer dreads punishments. Accordingly, to this purity no law, no works, and nothing at all except this blood of Christ alone can contribute; nor indeed can the blood itself do this unless the heart of man believes that this blood has been shed for the remission of sins.⁹⁵

The conscience which is truly good receives its peace from God's allowance and not from the numbness produced by sin. The quiet conscience of the godly differs from that

⁹³ Dyke, Good Conscience, p. 29; Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, p. 135; Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, p. 184; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 508, and An Exposition Upon The Epistle To The Colossians (London, 1617), p. 85; Harris, "Judas His Miserie" in Sixe Sermons, p. 19; Wilson, A Christian Dictionary, sig. [H₈^r]; Anon. Heavens Joy, Or, Heaven Begun Upon Earth (London, 1616), p. 11; and Denison, Beati Pacifici, p. 8.

⁹⁴ A Commentary Upon . . . Philemon, p. 344; see also pp. 345, 356-57.

⁹⁵ "Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews," in Luther's Works, XXIX, 209.

of the wicked in the four aspects summarized by Fenner. First, the peace of the godly is both nominal and substantial, but that of the wicked is only apparent because the conscience of the wicked is really like a "troubled sea." Second, the quietness has different causes. The quietness of the godly arises from a knowledge of the Word of God and the precepts contained in it, an examination of conscience, righteousness, and tenderness. That of the wicked comes from ignorance of the Word of God which allows them to sin without fear, ignorance of the self, vain hope of salvation, and from the conscience being sleepy, benumbed or seared. Third, they differ in effect. The quiet conscience of the godly gives him comfort and joy, sanctifies his soul, and aids him in the performance of good deeds. In the wicked, quietness can do none of these. Fourth, they also differ in respect to duration. In the godly the quietness is well grounded, but in the wicked it is easily lost, especially at death.⁹⁶

The good conscience of the godly will not only give comfort in this life, but it also provides assurance for

⁹⁶ The Soules Looking-glasse, pp. 137-51. The same idea but presented less comprehensively appears in: Dyke, Good Conscience, pp. 29-42; Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 319-23; Downname, A Guide to Godlynesse, pp. 73-76; Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, pp. 23-24; Wilson, Saints by Calling, pp. 142-43; Perkins, The Workes, p. 368; Stephen Denison, An Exposition Upon the First Chapter of the second Epistle of Peter (London, 1622), p. 10; Abbot, Foure Sermons, pp. 53-55; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 113; Samuel Crooke, Three Sermons (London, 1615), p. 46; and Gouge, The Workes, p. 122.

salvation. The Reformers impressed upon their readers that a sublime, almost ineffable happiness, accompanies a peaceful conscience. Thomas Wilson says that following the reconciliation with God there is "another peace and happy tranquillity of our cōscience, which . . . instead of accusing and trobling, as it was wont, doth now excuse and qcquite us before God with unspeakable rest."⁹⁷ And John Denison says that no delicacy can compare to the feasting of a good conscience:

This the Spouse sheweth in the second of the Canticles, He brought me unto his winecellar, and Love was his banner over me [2.4]. Lo here the Ambrosian Nectar, wherewith Christ Jesus maketh the heart of his spouse glad, causing her to cry out; stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples; for I am sicke with love [2.5]: where the sacred soule is cast into a hourly swound, being ravished with the unspeakable comfort that she enjoys upon this peace of conscience.⁹⁸

But besides this comfort, the good conscience brings one

⁹⁷ Saints by Calling, p. 142.

⁹⁸ A Three-Fold Resolution, pp. 455-56. That a good conscience brings peace and happiness is a commonplace in the literature of the Reformation; see Calvin, A Commentary Upon . . . Isaiah, p. 326, and A Commentarie On . . . Hebrewes, p. 136; David Dickson, A Short Explanation, Of the Epistle of Paul To The Hebrewes (Aberdeen, 1635), p. 326; John Dod and Robert Cleaver, A Plaine And Familiar Exposition Of The Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Chapters of The Proverbs of Solomon (London, 1609), p. 18; Johann Gerhard, Adotationes Ad Prioem D. Pauli Ad Timotheum Epistolam (Erfurth, 1643), p. 14; Gouge, The Workes, p. 123; Edmund Layfielde, The Soules Solace (London, 1633), p. 5; Francis Markham, The Booke Of Honour. Or, Five Decades Of Epistles Of Honour (London, 1625), p. 18; Hall, The Works, p. 46.

into familiarity with God and gives evidence of salvation.⁹⁹ Abraham Fleming says that the man to whom God has given a quiet conscience "hath an assured hope and confidence in himselfe, that he is blessed of God."¹⁰⁰

Perkins declares that it is the duty of all Christians to acquire a good conscience. And to make their task easy, they could follow the program he sets up. He states that a preparation, a remedy, and a reformation are necessary for a good conscience. The preparation involves four steps. First, one must have a knowledge of God's law so that he can understand what must be done and not done. Secondly, one must know that the "judiciall sentence of the law" pronounces a curse on every sin, as St. Paul states in Galatians 3.10. Third, this knowledge of the law must be used in a serious examination of conscience in which one becomes aware of sins and his "wretched & miserable estate." These three steps then lead to sorrow for one's sins, which serves as an occasion for God's grace.

After one has prepared himself for a good conscience, he can allay the terrors of conscience and satisfy its judgments with the proper remedy. This is the "blood or merits of Christ," which can be applied to the wounded conscience

⁹⁹ Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 510; Downname, A Guide to Godlynesse, pp. 78-79; Denison, A Three-Fold Resolution, p. 453.

¹⁰⁰ The Footpath of Faith, leading to the Highwaie to Heaven (London, 1581), p. 111.

by faith. Only after the preparation and the application will there be a reformation of conscience. This occurs when conscience ceases to accuse and terrify and begins to excuse and comfort. As Perkins says, "For then the Lord will send downe his spirit into the conscience by a sweete and heavenly testimonie to assure us that we are at peace with God" (pp. 70-73). A good conscience thus achieved, Downname believes, would provide the foundation of godliness and guide man to the performance of all good deeds that God requires.¹⁰¹

Such then are the various functions the Reformers attributed to conscience, and such are the numerous types of conscience they recognized. For the Reformers, conscience was by no means a simple act of the practical understanding as it is in Aquinas' Summa Theologiae. According to all of them, even to those who expounded the traditional Thomistic interpretation during the seventeenth century, conscience plays multiple, complex roles in the Christian's moral life. It guides one's actions according to the laws of God, bears witness, accuses or excuses, and comforts or punishes. When conscience is purified by the blood of Christ, it executes its offices so excellently that it provides the Christian with an infallible guide to salvation. When, however, conscience is excessively sensitive or obdurate, its capacities are

¹⁰¹ A Guide to Godlynesse, p. 69.

fatally diminished.

If, as I have argued, there was a rich, viable tradition of Protestant thought on conscience during the Reformation that was distinctly different from the Scholastic tradition, then one could expect to find conscience playing its various roles of judging, monitoring one's actions, bearing witness, excusing or accusing, comforting or punishing in the drama of the English Renaissance.

In the next three chapters I will examine the roles of conscience in the English morality plays, Shakespeare's Macbeth, and Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy. In these plays conscience has many of the roles assigned to it in Reformation moral theology. Primarily it guides man's actions according to the law of God and either punishes him for his disobedience or comforts him for his observance of the law.

PART TWO

CHAPTER IV

THE CHARACTER OF CONSCIENCE IN THE
ENGLISH MORALITY PLAYS

Againe there is another fight betweene sinne and the conscience enlightened by nature and the word, which checketh and controlleth the motions of sinne warning and accusing men when they do any sinne: and sinne on the other side fighting angainst the light of conscience to extinguish and put it out.

--Thomas Wilson, A Sermon of The Spiritual Combat (London, 1609), p. 28.

As the English morality play evolved during the sixteenth century, the character of Conscience assumed a definite Protestant identity. He undergoes three changes. First, in the earlier moralities he has exclusively one role--to give spiritual advice to the morality hero. But in the later plays, his function broadens to include the role of spiritual tormentor. Second, the source of Conscience's dictates becomes the bible. Third, in the later moralities, the effective operation of Conscience depends upon God's grace. These three changes reflect the growing influence of the Protestant concept of conscience.

Of the sixty extant plays that adhere either in part or in whole to the morality play tradition, five have crucial, complex roles for Conscience: Mundus et Infans, written 1500-20 and printed in 1522, Impatient Poverty,

written 1547-58, R. B.'s Appius and Virginia, licensed in 1567 and printed in 1575, Nathaniel Woodes' The Conflict of Conscience, written 1575-81 and printed in two issues in 1581, and Robert Wilson's (?) Three Ladies of London, Printed in 1584. And one play, Wilson's (?) sequel to Three Lords and Three Ladies of London, printed in 1590, has a minor, peripheral role for this character.

Except for Three Lords, in which Lady Conscience is divested of most of her ethical and spiritual significance, the character of Conscience personifies the faculty that dictates the laws of God and punishes sinners. In Mundus, Impatient Poverty, The Conflict of Conscience, and Three Ladies, he dictates the laws concerning the acquisition and use of wealth. Reflecting the secular values of the sixteenth century, he abstains from demanding a rigorous asceticism.¹ Rather than preach contemptus mundi, Conscience offers prudential advise on the proper way for a Christian to get and enjoy riches without endangering either his earthly felicity or his eternal salvation. In Mundus, the source of Conscience's advise is Aristotle, but in the other plays it is the Bible. In Appius and Virginia, Conscience pronounces to Appius the divine law against lust. His dictate also comes directly from the Bible.

¹ Cf. Bernard Spivack, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains (New York, 1958), p. 211.

Although the character of Conscience in these plays accurately states the law of God, he cannot reform the erring morality heroes. Without grace to regenerate their corrupt natures, they find the lessons of Conscience too difficult to follow. Each of them eventually suffers some form of retribution for valuing the pleasures of the world above the laws of God. In the earlier moralities Mundus and Impatient Poverty, the morality heroes are punished with poverty or illness. But in all of the later plays, the character of Conscience torments the hero with remorse and despair.

Mundus et Infans, written in the early sixteenth century, is the first surviving English morality play to deal with the role of conscience in the Christian's life. It traces the life of man from childhood through manhood to old age, but the character of Conscience does not appear to the hero until he reaches maturity. The author portrays Conscience as an accommodating but ultimately ineffective spiritual adviser who teaches man how to avoid all of the Seven Deadly Sins and how to live virtuously and prosperously in this world. The import of his lesson is not rejection of the world but the Aristotelian virtue of moderation.

When Manhood (Infans' name having been changed upon reaching maturity) encounters Conscience for the first time, he has been leading a carefree, dissipated life. He

The "debate" to which Conscience refers is with Manhood not Mundus, with whom Conscience has no quarrel. It concerns man's proper good which Manhood believes is the immoderate pleasure the Seven Deadly Sins can give him. But Conscience, who identifies himself as "a techer of the spyrytualeté" and as one "that be leders in-to lyght" (ll. 327, 336), informs him that his proper good is God. Conscience stresses that God is the only king to whom Manhood should pledge his services, and he warns that pursuit of the Seven Deadly Sins will only sink him into misery. His lesson for achieving holiness and prosperity is simple: eschew Folye, (which is his generic term for the Seven Deadly Sins), obey the Ten Commandments, which he magisterially recites, attend Mass, and exercise the Aristotelian virtue of moderation. "All myrthe in measure is good for the," he advises Manhood, "But syr measure is in all thyng" (ll. 451-52). Further, he allows Manhood to go "arrayed honestly" as long as it is "in all manner of degree," and he permits his "sporting of play" if Manhood keeps "good governance both night and day" (ll. 468-69). Significantly, Conscience never argues the contemptus mundi theme in this debate.

In response to Conscience's teaching, Manhood rejects total allegiance to Mundus and reconciles the demands of the sacred and the profane:

But yet wyll I hym [Mundus] not forsake,
 For mankynde he doth mery make.
 Though the Worlde and Conscience be at debate,

Yet the Worlde wyll I not despyse;
 For bothe in chyrche and in chepyng
 And in other places beyng,
 The Worlde fyndeth me all thyng
 And dothe me grete servyse (ll. 511-18).

But, regardless of this resolve, he is seduced by Folye, although not without a struggle. When Manhood first meets him, he rejects his invitation to go reveling in London because he knows that such immoderation would be against the teachings of Conscience. He insists that he will not go with Folye for "Conscience byddeth [him] naye" (l. 551). When Folye reveals his name, Manhood remembers that he is the one "that Conscience dyd blame,/ whan he me taught" (ll. 609-10). He declares that he would rather let the "Worlde be wrath/ Than lose the cunnyng that Conscience me gave" (ll. 623-24). And he "demands" that Folye not revile Conscience for he "is counselor for a kynge" (l. 628). But his loyalty to his former teacher soon wanes. He follows Folye to the stews, in disobedience to Conscience, who has returned to the stage again to dissuade Manhood from serving the Seven Deadly Sins.

After Manhood descends deeply into sin, he suffers poverty, illness, and despair as punishments for his transgressions. By the end of the play his name has been changed to Age. He considers suicide, but he is saved from this by Perseverance, Conscience's "borne broder," who teaches him that heaven is open to those who sincerely repent, believe in the twelve articles of the Creed, and

obey the Ten Commandments. Thus, by guiding Age to repentance, Perseveraunce transforms a potential tragedy into what Spivack calls a "comedy of redemption."⁴

In Mundus et Infans, Conscience is a reliable teacher who knows the way to both worldly success and salvation, but he is helpless to persuade, except temporarily, Manhood to do good and avoid evil. Although no specific reason is given for it in the play, Conscience's ineffectiveness seems to reflect the Thomistic idea that man cannot by his own natural powers always abstain from sin. According to Aquinas, the Fall did not totally corrupt human nature; "even in the state of corrupted nature it can, by virtue of its natural endowments, perform some particular good, such as to build dwellings, plant vineyards, and the like" (ST, 1a2ae, 109.2). But after the Fall, man needs grace to heal his nature so that he may always abstain from sin. Although he can avoid "all mortal sin," whose source is in the reason, he cannot long remain without mortal sin or venial sin, which is caused by the corruption of his sensual appetite, if he does not have grace (ST, 1a2ae, 109.8). Thus, the play seems to be calculated to show that without grace, the conscience is incapable of checking the human inclination to sin.

In Mundus et Infans, Conscience has the task of diverting Manhood away from the full array of the Seven

⁴ Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, p. 240.

Deadly Sins by teaching him the Aristotelian virtue of moderation. But as the sixteenth-century morality play develops towards a close examination of man as a phenomenal creature, the character of Conscience undergoes two changes. First, he acquires the more specialized role of guiding man away from only one of the Seven Deadly Sins: covetousness in Impatient Poverty, The Conflict of Conscience, and Three Ladies of London, and Lust in Appius and Virginia. Secondly, his knowledge of right and wrong comes from the Bible, not a secular source.

In Impatient Poverty, the first surviving English morality play with a character of Conscience definitely written after the Reformation, the protagonist is torn between Conscience and Abundance,⁵ although he is off stage when they have their debate. As in Mundus, Conscience leans towards acceptance of the world and does not teach contemptus mundi. His moral arguments, however, are based on Biblical texts, not on Aristotle. Furthermore, in the fifty years or so since the earlier morality was written, the ineffectiveness of Conscience to discourage overindulgence in mundane pleasure has been definitely linked to the absence of God's grace. This seems to reflect the Reformation idea that only the conscience purged by the blood of Christ can be a sure guide to salvation.

⁵ Abundance's name may derive from Christ's admonition in Luke 12.15: "for though a man have abundance, yet his life standeth not in his riches."

The play dramatizes the proper way for a Christian to acquire riches. In his first speech, Peace announces to the audience:

I speak for this cause, daily ye may see
How that by envy and malice, many be destroyed
Which if they had lived in peace and patient humility
Riches and prosperity with them had been employed
For there as is peace, no man is annoyed
For by peace men grow to great riches
And by peace men grow to great quietness (p. 319).⁶

One of the most dependable guides to peaceful prosperity, the play will show, is conscience.

When Impatient Poverty first meets Peace, he has apparently ignored his conscience because he is full of wrath and envy, and he is hungry and threadbare. However, Peace convinces him that

if thou wilt forsake sensuality
And be governed by reason as I shall enduce thee
Thou shalt come to riches, within short space (p. 320).

Further, he instructs him to have charity and patience in his dealings with men. After his charge accepts this advice and recognizes that his indigence and misery are divine punishments, his name is changed to Prosperity. But his newly gained status is not permanent. After he is seduced into prodigality by Envy and Misrule, he is again reduced to poverty. Nevertheless, this opening scene dramatically establishes for the audience the economical potential of godliness.

⁶ All citations to Impatient Poverty are from Recently Recovered "Lost" Tudor Plays, ed. John S. Farmer (London, 1907).

The virtue of charity is prominent in Peace's scheme of values, for he exhorts Impatient Poverty to:

love thy neighbor with charity
Do unto him no manner of disease
Look how thou would he did to thee
Do to him no worse in no degree
And then thou shalt our lord please (p. 320).

The virtue, however, is grossly abused by Abundance, whose tactics in the marketplace are obviously profitable but unacceptable to the Christian Conscience because they are not consonant with the laws of God as they are revealed in the Bible. Abundance boasts that he thrives because he swindles his customers and practices usury, and he speciously argues that his stratagems are good and lawful. According to his ethical standards, selling merchandise at exorbitant prices becomes a "good deed/ To help a man at his need" (p. 322). According to him the unconscionable extortion of money from his customers is:

plain buying and selling;
Lawful it is for a man to win,
Else rich shall he never be (p. 323).

Conscience approves of "true buying and selling" but condemns Abundance's "false usury." Buying and selling in themselves are not evil, he informs Abundance:

All those that occupy false usury,
And transgresseth the laws of God by iniquity,
All such are accursed I you told;
As for buying and selling needs must be;
And God commandeth to lend them that are needy,
So it be not to their injury
For lucre to them sold (p. 323).

The commandment against usury to which Conscience refers appears often in the Old Testament: "If thou lend money to

any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury" (Exodus 22.25).⁷ To those, like Abundance, who have become rich through usury, Conscience offers advice taken from Scripture: make restitution to the injured party. "Ye must restore to them ye have offended unto," Conscience declares. The Biblical source of the idea is the story of Zacchaeus, the wealthy publican who tells Jesus that he will give half his goods to the poor and that he will restore fourfold anything he has taken falsely (Luke 19.1-10)⁸ Furthermore, Conscience reminds Abundance of the unhappy fate of Ahab, who coveted and unjustly possessed Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). According to Conscience, Ahab's misery shows that all usurers should fear the wrath of God. But these arguments fall on deaf ears, for Abundance would rather live with all his treasures than amend his ways and gain salvation. Conscience sums up Abundance's folly, when he berates him, not for loving the world but for loving it more than God:

O dull wit! plunged by ignorance,
Regarding nothing of ghostly instruction,
Setting more his mind on worldly substance
Than on everlasting life to come!
God will strike when He list; ye know not how soon.
Therefore to every man this counsel I give:
To be sorry for your sin and do penance while ye live
(p. 326).

⁷ See also Leviticus 25.37 and Deuteronomy 23.19.

⁸ John Wilson's Zacheus Converted (London, 1631) discusses the Concept of Restitution from a Protestant point of view.

In the debate with Abundance, Conscience shows great intellectual acumen and in intimate acquaintance with the Bible, yet he fails to reform the usurer. One reason for this is that Abundance lacks grace, without which his corrupt nature cannot change. Conscience twice urges him to call for it, and he twice refuses (pp. 323, 325).

But another cause of his failure here is that Conscience himself is imperfect in two respects. First, he shows that he sometimes mistakes evil for good, as he does when the crafty Envy hoodwinks him into believing that his name is Charity. This is a masterful piece of irony on the part of the dramatist, because Conscience has just defended the ideal of Christian charity against the arguments of Abundance. Second, Conscience's decision to quit the fight against covetousness and abscond to another country to avoid being hanged indicates he has the weakness he is an unregenerate conscience. For example, William Whately describes the conscience that lacks grace as being easily vanquished:

. . . the conscience, if it take the folie once or twice, is benumbed and silenced. Sometimes it suffers its mouth to be clear stopped by some idle shift and vain distinction, which the wit hath invented for the justification of evill: and after some such paultry defence or apologie, a man is suffred to sin freely enough. But if the thing be never so justifiable, yet after two or three times doing it, the heart is hardned, the naturall conscience put to silence . . . For why? the unsanctified man . . . did not beg Grace to hold him up before his sinnes . . . But now the sanctification of the will doth still get the victory, though it may receive a foyle. It will not be put down.⁹

⁹ The New Birth: Or, A Treatise of Regeneration (London, 1635), p. 55.

Thus, the play implies that regardless of how well informed and perspicacious conscience may be, it is no match for the evils that beset mankind if it is not bolstered by grace.

Mundus et Infans and Impatient Poverty are comedies in the sense that the heroes of each are brought to repentance after a life of sin. In the earlier play, Perseveraunce is responsible for Manhood's spiritual recovery. In the latter, Peace guides Impatient Poverty back to God. But the character of Conscience makes no contribution to the comic resolution in either play. In Mundus, he is rejected in favor of Folye and never returns to the stage during the denouement. In Impatient Poverty, he is tricked into exile. In Three Ladies of London, however, Lady Conscience is the architect of the comic action; by exercising her power to bear witness, she brings the play to a happy ending.

The character of Conscience in Three Ladies differs from the earlier ones in two respects. First, Conscience is a woman.¹⁰ Second, Lady Conscience is concerned both with saving the city of London and with saving individual souls. Consequently, she plays both a social and a spiritual role, although the two are analogous. Nevertheless, she is still the person-

¹⁰ Conscience is also personified as a woman in Richard Barnfield's "The Combat betweene Conscience and Covetousnesse in the minde of Man" (1598) in The Poems, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1936), pp. 120-25, and in Cesare Ripa's Iconologia; see Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery, The 1758-60 Hertel Edition of Ripa's Iconologia, ed. Edward A. Maser (New York, 1971), number 119.

ification of the Protestant concept of conscience, for she is informed with the laws of the Bible and is severely punished with remorse for her sins.

The play begins with London in moral chaos, because no one will obey Lady Conscience. She asserts to Lady Love, "Men ought be rul'd by us; we ought in them bear sway," (p. 250).¹¹ But in fact, Lady Lucre, Lady Conscience's main adversary, and her companions rule "the rout"; (p. 249). Her control over the city ultimately leads to the murder of Hospitality by Usury.¹² When Lady Conscience intercedes on Hospitality's behalf, she functions in her social role as protectress of London's poor. On the grounds of Christian charity, she pleads with Usury to spare her friend's life:

But yet, Usury, consider the lamentable cry of the poor:
For lack of Hospitality fatherless childred are turned
out of door.
Consider again the complaint of the sick, blind, and
lame,
That will cry unto the Lord for vengeance on thy head
in his name (pp. 31617).

She again appears in her social role when she grieves to see the cozening of the poor by London's tradesmen (pp. 325-26), and when she suggests that lenders be merciful to their

¹¹ All citations from the play are to A Select Collection of Olde English Plays, ed. Robert Dodsley, 4th ed. (London, 1874), VI.

¹² The passing away of hospitality was often lamented during the sixteenth century. See for example: Nash, The Works, III, 284, Anon., A Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Servingmen (London, 1598), p. 109, Greene, The Works, XI, 272, Henry Arth, Provision for the Poore (London, 1597) in Tudor Economic Documents, eds., R. H. Tawney and Eileen Power, (London, 1924), III, 454-55, and Anon., Cyville and Uncyville Life (London, 1579) in Inedited Tracts, ed. William C. Hazlitt (London, 1868), pp. 12-13.

debtors.¹³

Analogous to her social role is her familiar spiritual role. Just as she tries to defend Hospitality and London's poor from Usury, Lady Conscience also tries to protect the soul of Lady Lucre from sin. She does this by informing Lady Lucre of the Scriptural laws governing wealth. For example, quoting Matthew 16.26,¹⁴ Lady Conscience tells Lady Lucre:

What avantageth it thee to win the world, and lose thy
soul withal?
Yet better it is to live with little, and keep a con-
science clear,
Which is to God a sacrifice, and accounted of most dear
(p. 323).

And later she again acts in this role when she exhorts Fraud, Dissimulation, Usury, and Simony to repent:

How dare you for shame presume so boldly,
As once to show yourselves before Love and Conscience,
Not yielding your lewd lives first to repentance?
Think you not, that God will plague you for your wicked
practices,
If you intend not to amend your vild lives so amiss?
Think you not, God knows your thoughts, words, and works,
And what secret mischiefs in the heart of you lurks
(p. 262).

But Lady Conscience is rejected for being too "scripulous."

Unheeding her plea for Christian charity, Usury forces Lady Conscience into beggary and turns her out of her home after he kills Hospitality. Although she patiently bears her poverty for awhile, she eventually follows Lady Lucre and

¹³ See Psalms 37.26, 112.5, Proverbs 19.17, and Luke 6.35 for advice on the proper spirit of lending money.

¹⁴ See also Mark 8.36 and Luke 9.25.

and becomes one of her bawds.

When Lady Conscience leaves the stage with her face painted like a harlot's, it seems that the forces of evil have gained absolute control over London. But their hold on the city only lasts until Lady Lucre, accompanied by Lady Conscience, is brought to court on the charges of having committed adultery with Mercatore the merchant and Creticus the lawyer, robbed Mercatore, and consented to the murder of Hospitality. The court room scene is a dramatization of the court of conscience concept. Here Lady Conscience again plays her analogous social and spiritual roles. Lady Lucre denies the Judge's charges, and since no witness comes forward to accuse her, it seems that she will escape punishment. But Lady Conscience cannot be silent, and she confesses that she and Lady Lucre indeed have been guilty of adultery. Then Lady Lucre cries out:

O Conscience! thou hast kill'd me; by thee I am over-
thrown (p. 367).

Thus, by bearing witness against herself and her fellow bawd, Lady Conscience restores moral order to London, and at the same time brings herself and Lady Lucre to repentance.

For their sins, Lady Conscience, Lady Lucre, and Lady Love are imprisoned by the Judge until the first day of the general session. When the sequel, Three Lords and Three Ladies of London, opens they are still in prison. In this play Wilson dramatizes the reformation of conscience. Lady Conscience acknowledges her sins, feels genuine remorse, and becomes effective enough to guide her husband, Lord Pleasure.

At the Beginning of the play, she feels sorrow for her sins and seems to be close to despair:

O Sorrow, when, when, Sorrow wilt thou cease
 To blow the spark that burns my troubled soul,
 To feed the worm that stings my fainting breast,
 And sharp the steel that gores my bleeding heart?
 My thoughts are thorns, my tears hot drops of lead:
 I plain, I pine, I die, yet never dead.
 If world would end, my woe should but begin:
 Lo, this the case of Conscience for her sin;
 And sin the food, wherewith my worm was fed,
 That stings me now to death, yet never dead (p. 414).

This remorse, however, does not lead to despair but serves as a painful preparation for her reformation. This occurs when she ceases to accuse and terrify herself and begins to feel God's pardon for her sins. Then, having been fully regenerated, Lady Conscience is a suitable bride for Lord Pleasure. Their marriage insures the continuation of moral order in London, because Lady Conscience vows to "measure" her husband's "delights by reason's rule: /In recreation Conscience' help to use" (p. 444).

In Woodes' early Elizabethan morality The Conflict of Conscience, the character of Conscience again appears in his familiar role as man's spiritual guide through the world, giving counsel on the uses and abuses of wealth. And as in Mundus et Infans and Impatient Poverty, we discover that conscience cannot operate effectively in a man who lacks God's grace. But Woodes goes far beyond the earlier dramatists in conceiving of the violation of the moral law if conscience as an act that sets in motion the tragic process.

Covetousness, one vice of the hero Philologus, disturbs the moral order conscience enforces and precipitates the catastrophe of the play; but it is conscience, acting as the agent of nemesis, that eventually rights this balance by afflicting Philologus with unbearable pricks of guilt and more significantly by driving him to despair of salvation. Thus, in Woodes' play, Conscience is not only man's spiritual guide, but also an instrument of divine punishment.

In The Conflict of Conscience, Philologus represents Francis Spira, the wealthy Italian lawyer who under ecclesiastical pressure recanted the Protestant faith, converted to Catholicism, and subsequently suffered despair. His name means "love of words," and his fate serves as a warning ex-emplum to those whose commitment to Protestantism is only verbal.¹⁵ He is like those whom Ezekiel describes: "they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (33.31).

Sallying Philologus's faith from one side are the for-

¹⁵ In his *Delights of the Saints* (London, 1622), Griffith Williams distinguishes true saints from those who profess but do not practice true holiness, of which one kind is the "verball Saint," whom he describes, paraphrasing Matthew 15.8, as "like the Jewes indeed, that draw neere unto God with their lips, but their hearts are farre from him" (pp. 120-21). This Biblical idea also appears in patristic theology; see Tertullian, *Liber de Oratione*, PL, I, 1175, and Peter Chrysologus, "*Sermo CXLII*," PL, LII, 581.

ces of evil: a Catholic Cardinal, Avarice, Hypocrisy, and (Sensual) Suggestion, who all conspire to seduce Philologus into apostasy by threatening him with the loss of his life and wealth. Defending it on the other side are the forces of good: Spirit, Conscience, Horror, and Theologus, who are ultimately vanquished. Conscience's principal antagonist is Suggestion, and their conflict is over man's proper good. Suggestion proposes that Philologus should choose temporal pleasure, and Conscience tries to persuade him that the everlasting joys of the soul are more important than worldly vanities. Conscience, as we should expect in a play conceived by a Calvinist imagination, cannot protect Philologus without the help of grace, and the victory of Suggestion over Conscience ironically proves to be the triumph of despair.

When Philologus appears on stage for the first time, he is on top of the wheel of fortune, for he has wealth with a contented mind and his faith in God seems secure. He explains to Mathetes, who wants to know why God afflicts members of his Church, that not all affliction proceeds from a wrathful God as punishments for offenses. He reminds him that some of the elect are also afflicted by God in order to test and strengthen their faith. Of the eight consolations for affliction that Philologus recites to Mathetes, the chief is that, as St. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2.12: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him [i.e. Christ]."¹⁶

¹⁶ See ll. 118-269. All citations to the play are

Philologus's exposition is homiletic, but it is also organically related to the action that follows, for when Philologus cannot endure his own afflictions he shows that his expressed faith in God is merely empty rhetoric.

After magisterially discoursing about affliction, it becomes a personal problem for Philologus when a legate from the Pope demands that Philologus renounce his faith or lose his property, which is indeed considerable. He realizes that his excellent preparation of salvation will be nullified if he now gives up his faith. But it seems that his "wealth in Gooddes" could easily charm him into obeying the legate. "Besides of friendes," he says:

I have great store, who do me firmly love,
A faithfull wife and children fayre, of wooddes and pasture store,
And divers other thinges, whiche I have got for my be-hoofe,
Whiche nowe to be depraved off, would grieve my hart full sore:
And if I come once in thier clawes, I shall get out no more (ll. 781-85).

As the loss of his goods becomes more imminent, the weaker becomes his resolution to proceed on the path to salvation. He is safe from damnation, however, as long as he can test his actions against his conscience. In his dispute with the Cardinal about theological doctrines, he answers each question according to his conscience, "Goddes worde" (i.e. Scripture) being his warrant. The Cardinal, eager to trap Philologus in a heresy, queries him on essential

from the Malone Society Reprints edition, eds. Herbert Davis and F. P. Wilson (Oxford, 1952).

points of difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. He first asks Philologus if the Pope is the head of the true church. To this, Philologus replies that because it cannot be proved by Scripture he cannot accept the ecclesiastical authority of the Pope or his representatives. The answer exasperates the Cardinal, but because he wants Philologus to further condemn himself, he asks if both the bread and Christ's body are present in the Eucharist. Philologus, of course, confirms the Protestant doctrine of consubstantiation.

Philologus is secure in this doctrinal examination because he acknowledges conscience to be the touchstone of truth, and therefore he will not go against it. "I feare," he says, "I should kill/ My soull for ever: if against my conscience/ I should to the Popes lawes acknowledge Obedience" (ll. 1301-03). He admits that he would accept the Cardinal's doctrines if they would content his conscience:

To approve unto mee by Gods holy booke,
 Some one of the questions of our disputation:
 For I will heere you with hartes delectation:
 Because I would gladly to your doctrine consent,
 If that I could so my conscience content.
 But my Conscience crieth out and bids me take heede
 To love my lord God above all earthly gaine,
 Whereby all this while, I stande in great dread,
 That if I should Gods statutes disdaine,
 In wretched state then, I should remaine:
 Thus cryeth my Conscience, to mee continually,
 Which if you can say, I will yeelede to you gladly
 (ll. 1377-88).

When Philologus falls, it is not because he is deceived by the Cardinal's arguments. His conscience, which takes its

laws from the Bible, has informed him about what is true and false. Rather, he falls because he is fondly overcome by the vanities of the world.

Although Philologus can effectively parry the doctrinal questions of the Cardinal, he loses the integrity of his conscience when the forces of evil threaten to take away all of his worldly goods. When Avarice warns him that he will confiscate all his property if he does not recant his religion, Philologus frames a bogus problem:

My case indeede I see most miserable,
 As was Susanna betwixt two evyls placed,
 Either to consent to sinne most abhominable:
 Or els in the worldes sight to be utterly disgraced:
 But as she her chastitie at that time imbraced,
 So will I now spirituall whordom resist,
 And keepe mee a true Virgin to my loving spouse Christ
 (ll. 1356-62).

For him to believe that the disgrace of poverty and giving up one's faith are evils of equal weight is simply fatuous. Although the threat of Avarice shakes Philologus more than the arguments of the Cardinal, his faith at this point is still unimpaired. He does not reject the demand of his conscience to remain Protestant until Suggestion shows him in the Glass of Vanity the unspeakable joys and worldly pleasure that will be his if he accepts Catholicism. Then Philologus embraces the delights of the world, as we have had only too good reason to suspect from the fear he has had of losing his worldly possessions.

Although Philologus has made much of his conscience during the doctrinal examination by the Cardinal, the charac-

ter Conscience does not appear to him until after the fall in Act IV, Scene 3. Then he acts as Philologus's spiritual guide, although he addresses his remarks more to Suggestion than to Philologus. Conscience himself is an unworldly character who considers riches "fond and foolish vanities" (l. 1795). However, he prefers but, like his earlier counterparts in Mundus et Infans and Impatient Poverty, he does not demand that one despise them. He finds riches themselves to be good because they were created by God, but he urges that one abhor them if they lead one from God (ll. 1771-84). Conscience's lesson, however, falls on deaf ears, and Philologus decides to enjoy his worldly goods now and worry about salvation later. This overthrow of Philologus's personified conscience by Suggestion seems to be the result of Philologus's refusal to "sue for grace," which Spirit exhorted him to do after the Fall.

For his disobedience to Conscience, Philologus is visited by Horror, who personifies the torments of conscience that God sends to sinners not only as punishments but also as goads to repentance. He transforms the Glass of Vanity into the "Glasse of deadly desperation" in which appears the innumerable sins that separate Philologus from the merciful God to whom he felt so close at the beginning of the play. Horror explains that he has come to Philologus:

because thou dost dispise, Gods mercy and his grace,
And wouldst no admonytion take, by them that did thee
warne,
Neither when Conscience counsailed thee, thou wouldst
his wordes

Who would have had thee unto god, obedience tru to
 learnes: (imbrace)
 Nor couldst betweene Suggestions craft, & Conscience
 truth discerne
 Behold therefore, thou shalt of mee an other lesson
 heare,
 Which wil thou, nil thou w^t torment of Conscience, thou
 shalt beare
 And where thou has extinguished, the holy Spirit of God,
 And made him wery with thy sinnes, which dayly thou hast
 done,
 He will no longer in thy soule, and spirit make abode:
 But with the Graces, which he gave to thee, now is he
 gone,
 So that to Godwarde, by Christes death, rejoycing thou
 hast none,
 The pease of Conscience faded is, in stead whereof I
 bring
 The Spirit of Sathan, blasphemy, confusion and cursing
 (11. 1970-83).

It is by this power of conscience to terrify Philologus
 with a conviction that he is alienated from God that the play
 achieves the dimensions of tragedy, for it was often consid-
 ered by the Reformers to be the greatest torment that a Chris-
 tian could suffer in this world. No sooner does Horror ap-
 pear to him than he is convinced that:

God is against mee I perceive, he is none of my God,
 Unlesse in this, that he will beat, and plague mee with
 his rod.
 And though his mercy doth surpasse, the sinnes of all
 the worlde,
 Yet shall it not once profit me, or pardon mine offence,
 I am refused utterly, I quite from God an whorlde:
 My name within the Book of lyfe, had never residence,
 Christ prayed not, Christ suffered not, my sinnes to
 recompence:
 But only for the Lordes elect, of which sort I am none,
 I feele his justice towards mee, hi mercy all is gone
 (11. 2028-36).

He cannot hope for salvation because "My Conscience, which
 for thousands stand, as guiltie mee condmne" (1. 2197), and
 because he believes "God hath condemned my Coſcience, to

perpetuall greife and feare" (l. 2321). Such consciences that feel the anguish of estrangement from God, Calvin warns:

do finde no rest, from being vexed and tossed with á terrible whirlewinde, from feeling themselves to be torne in peeces by God beinge angirly bent against them, from being pearced and launced with deadly stinges, from trembling at the lighteninge of God, so that it is much more ease to enter into al the bottomles depthes and devoringe pittes, than to stande one moment in those terrours.¹⁷

And Alexander Hume's description of the guilty conscience reads like a commentary upon Philologus:

hee that hes the feeling of his awin sinne, and of the wrath of God aganis his sinne, in the highest degrie; that man sall see nathing but the angrie face of God, burning like a consuming fire against him, and sal think na uther thing, but that the Lord in his just judgement has castin him away, out from his presence & kingdon: Quhilk of al torments, that man can suffer in this life, is the gretest.¹⁸

Consumed by the wrath of God and convinced of his own damnation, Philologus can only find relief in suicide, which the Nuntius in the first issue of the play says he committed after suffering an "afflicted mynde" for thirty weeks (l. 2418). In the second issue, however, the Nuntius reports that Philologus was converted to God and died a natural death. Thus, in this version of the ending of the play we have evidence that Horror has not only sufficiently punished Philologus for his sins but has also fulfilled his assigned function to "correct impenitents" (l. 1969). But regardless

¹⁷ The Institution of Christian Religion, III, 25, fol. 419^r

¹⁸ Ane Treatise of Conscience. (Edinburg, 1594), pp. 35-6.

of Woodes' inability to make up his mind about the ultimate fate of his character, the author has convincingly dramatized the anguish of those who reject conscience as their guide.

The tragic series of consequences leading from disobedience of conscience through feelings of guilt to despair and culminating in death, which Woodes use in the first issue of The Conflict of Conscience, is well described by Hieronimo in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy:

There is a path upon your left-hand side,
That leadeth from a guilty conscience
Unto a forest of distrust and fear,
A darksome place and dangerous to pass:
There shall you meet with melancholy thoughts,
Whose baleful humours if you but uphold, ¹⁹
It will conduct you to despair and death.

For his crudely written "Tragicall Comedie" Appius and Virginia, R. B. appropriates this pattern to give dramatic unity to the career of Appius. Conscience advises him against plotting the seduction of Virginia and then relentlessly drives him to desperate suicide for pursuing his plan.

But to understand that the character Conscience has these two functions in the play, we must know something about one tradition of the iconography of conscience. During one of Appius' monologues, the characters Conscience and Justice come on stage and in a brief allegorical mime try to dissuade the lecherous judge from ravishing Virginia. The stage direction reads: "Here let him make as thogh he went out and

¹⁹ The Revels Plays edition, ed. Philip Edwards (London, 1959), III. xi. 13-19.

let Conscience and Justice come out of him, and let Conscience hold in his hand a Lamp burning and let Justice have a sword and hold it before Apicius' breast" (opposite ll. 499-512).²⁰ Although B. R. Pearn, Willard Farnham, Bernard Spivack, Dieter Mehl, and Douglas Cole have made perceptive comments on this mime,²¹ none has explained the significance of the burning lamp of Conscience. If we are familiar with this iconographical tradition, we recognize that the burning lamp indicates that at this moment of inner struggle, Conscience is tormenting Apicius for his lust and also revealing to him his moral duty.

The iconography of Conscience has its roots in classical literature. Cicero mentions that in the drama the furies pursue the guilty with flaming torches:

Nolite enim putare, quem ad modum in fabulis saepe-
numero videtis, eos qui aliquid impie scelerateque
commiserunt, agitari et perterriti Furiam taedis
ardentibus.²²

In patristic and medieval literature, conscience is often

²⁰ All citations to the play are from the Malone Society Reprints edition, ed. R. B. McKerrow and W. W. Greg (Oxford, 1911).

²¹ Seriatim: "Dumb-Show in Elizabethan Drama," *RES*, 11 (1935), 389-90; *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley, Cal., 1936), pp. 225-56; *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains* (New York, 1958), pp. 270-71; *The Elizabethan Dumb Show: The History of a Dramatic Convention* (London, 1965), pp. 88-89; and *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Princeton, N. J., 1962), pp. 35-36.

²² *The Speeches*, trans. John H. Freese (London: The Loeb Classical Library, 1930), p. 180.

described as a light or a spark of fire.²³ But it seems that the flaming torch of the Furies did not again become associated with the tormented conscience until the sixteenth century. Calvin, for example, warns: "the furies of hell harrie and pursue the wicked, not with burning Torches, as the Poets faine: but through anguishes of coscience, and y^e tormēt of their wilfull rebellion."²⁴ Thus, no sooner does Conscience appear with his "Lamp burning" than the lustful Appius begins to feel the pricks of conscience in his breast. He exclaims:

But out I am wounded, how am I devided?
Two states of my life, from me are now glided,
For Consience he pricketh me contempned,
And Justice saith, Judgement wold have me condemned:
Consience saith crueltye sure will detest me
And Justice saith, death in thende will molest me,
And both in one sodden me thinkes they do crie,
That fier eternall, my soul shall destroy (ll. 501-09).

The burning lamp also represents the Scripture,

²³ Hilary, In Evangelium Matthaeei Commentarius, PL, IX, 1060; Jerome, Commentariorum in Ezechielem, PL, XXV, 22; John of Damascus, as quoted in Jeremy Taylor, Ductor Dubitantium, of The Rule of Conscience, p. 6; John Chrysostom, as quoted in Nannus Mirabellius, Florilegii Magni, Sev Polyantheae Floribus Novissimus Sparsae, ed. Joseph Lang (Lyons, 1659), col. 576. Bernard of Clairvaux, Tractatus de Interiori Domo, PL, CLXXXIV, 515; and Adamus Scotus, De Tripartito Tabernaculo, PL, CXCVIII, 786. For a related idea of the light of reason shining in the conscience darkened by sin, see Rupertus, In Evangelium S. Joannis Commentariorum, PL, CLXIX, 213.

²⁴ A Commentary Upon . . . Isaiah, trans. C. C. (London, 1609), p. 592. See also: John Woolton, Of the Conscience, sig [E₄r]; Alexander Hume, Ane Treatise of Conscience, pp. 35-36; John Hughes, St. Pauls Exercise, Or A Sermon Of Conscience, p. 9; and Jeremiah Dyke, Good Conscience: Or A Treatise Shewing The Nature, Meanes, Marks, Benefit, and necessities thereof, p. 259.

which many Reformers claimed enlightened the conscience with the perfect rule by which to judge the morality of one's actions.²⁵ This idea also appears in an emblem in Johannes Mannich's Sacra Emblemata (Nuremburg, 1624), which is reminiscent of R. B.'s mime. The picture is a roundel that shows two hands held over a sleeping man and his dog;²⁶ in the right hand is a rod and in the left is a candle. Inscribed around the circumference is the motto and a biblical reference: "Mordet Mens Conscia Tandem. 1 Cor. IIII. v. XXI." The poem reads:

Hic Jacet, et stertens fundit per membra quietem,
Sed canis ut latrat quam subito evigilat?
Cum vocat e scelerum summo lex, surge: prehende
Lucem Evangelii: Sic bene tutus eris (p.26).

The rod and the candle, which are analogue to the sword and burning lamp in R. B.'s mime, symbolize the two functions of conscience: to punish sinners and to guide men to God

²⁵ William Ames, Conscience With The Powers And Cases Thereof, pp. 5-6; Richard Bernard, Christian See To Thy Conscience, pp. 42-51; Immanuel Bourne, The Anatomie of Conscience, p. 9; Nicholas Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters Of The First Epistle generall of St. Peter, p. 499; Richard Carpenter, The Conscionable Christian, pp. 59-60; Dyke, Good Conscience, pp. 57-60; William Fenner, The Soules Looking-glasse, Conscience, p. 41; Ephraim Huit, The Anatomy of Conscience, pp. 92-93.

²⁶ The sleeping dog in this picture may seem quaintly decorative, but it too has emblematic significance. Taking the idea from Isaiah 56.10-11, some Renaissance writers likened the accusing conscience to a barking dog; see Samuel Daniel, The Complete Works in Verse and Prose, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1885-86), III, 40; Stephen Jerome, Origines Repentance: After He Had Sacrificed To The Idols for the Heathens (London, 1619), p. 8, and Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters of The First Epistle generall of St. Peter, p. 506.

by the light of the Gospels. Rather than follow the teachings of the Gospels, however, Appius pursues his plan to rape Virginia, and for it he is punished by the rod of God, which 1 Corinthians 4.21 intimates is the fate of all sinners. As William Perkins explains: "the rod of Christ is tearmed a rod of yron, or the rod of his mouth; and it signifies that absolute and soveraigne power which Christ hath over his creatures, whereby hee is able to convert and save them, or to forsake and destroy them. And it is a peculiar priviledge of this rodde, to smite and wounde the conscience."²⁷ God not only smites Appius' conscience with the rod of Justice, as this brief mime of Conscience and Justice indicates, but Appius' desperate suicide in prison leaves no doubt that God ultimately destroys and forsakes the judge for rejecting the light of the Gospels.

In Appius and Virginia the English morality play reaches the climax of its concern with the retributive punishment of conscience and becomes truly tragic. Without the mercy of God to avert the catastrophe, as it does in the second issue of The Conflict of Conscience, Appius is left to suffer the vengeance of his inexorable conscience.

This survey of these English morality plays indicates that the character of Conscience was cast primarily in two roles: as man's guide to salvation and as an instrument of divine punishment, although in Three Ladies of

²⁷ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 27.

London, Lady Conscience functions briefly as a witness to man's actions in the court room scene. During the earlier half of the sixteenth century, Conscience appears exclusively as man's guide. Although there is a dramatic opportunity to portray Conscience as an instrument of divine punishment in both Mundus et Infans and Impatient Poverty, the dramatists do not present the retributive suffering of an agonized conscience. Rather, they are content to punish their erring heroes with physical suffering and poverty. But during the latter half of the century, the dramatists Nathaniel Woodes and R. B., while retaining the idea that conscience is man's spiritual guide, also use Conscience to punish their characters for their sins. This punitive function of Conscience perhaps reflects the current Protestant belief that a guilty conscience is the worst torment a man can bear in this life. This torment of conscience that elevates Philologus and Appius to the stature of tragic heroes was to reach its highest dramatic expression during the Renaissance in Shakespeare's Macbeth.

CHAPTER V

CONSCIENCE AND COURAGE IN MACBETH

Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe.

--Richard III, V.iii. 310-11

The authors of the sixteenth-century morality plays established three dramatic conventions for handling the character of Conscience. First, they created two fundamental roles for him: spiritual guide and tormenter. Secondly, they conventionalized the morality hero's reaction to these two roles of Conscience. The hero always rejects Conscience the guide and suffers from fear when Conscience the tormentor appears on stage. The former reaction is exhibited by Manhood, Impatient Poverty, Lady Lucre, Philologus, and Appius. The latter is expressed by Philologus and Appius. Third, they used the character of Conscience to give a pattern to the spiritual life of the hero. We see, for example, Philologus and Appius progress from a conflict of conscience, to a rejection of Conscience's advice, through the sufferings of Conscience's torments, to despair. There is also a possible variation on this pattern. Despair may lead to suicide, as it does in the cases of Appius and Philologus in the first issue of The Conflict.

But despair may also serve as a trial of faith, as it does in the case of Philologus in the second issue of The Conflict. Each of these conventions, the roles, the reactions, and the spiritual pattern, is not governed by the dramatist's concern for realistically portraying the workings and nature of the human conscience. Rather, each is governed by the same Protestant doctrine: the good conscience, that is, one free from sin, is necessary for salvation.

These three conventions were still alive on the English stage when Shakespeare wrote Macbeth (ca. 1603-06). But whereas the authors of the morality plays personified the hero's conscience, Shakespeare internalizes it.¹ Therefore we can only see its effects on Macbeth and follow its gradual deterioration in his speeches and actions. We witness, for example, Macbeth struggling with his conscience when he plans to murder Duncan, experiencing the terrors of guilt that immediately follow the deed, and finally silencing the accusing voice of conscience. Although

¹ For critical remarks of varying merit on Macbeth's conscience see: F. J. Furnivall, Introduction to Leopold Shakespeare (London, 1877), p. lxxvii, Stopford Brooke, On Ten Plays of Shakespeare (New York, 1905), pp. 193, 196, and 197, Arthur Fairchild, Shakespeare and the Tragic Theme (University of Missouri Studies XIX: Columbia, Mo., 1944), p. 62, H. B. Charlton, Shakespearean Tragedy (Cambridge, 1948), p. 143, Willard Farnham, Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier: The World of His Final Tragedies (Berkeley, 1950), p. 119, E. E. Stoll, Shakespeare Studies: Historical and Comparative in Method (New York, 1927; reprinted, 1960), p. 92.

we can only see its effects, we can recognize that Macbeth's conscience is acting as both a guide and a tormentor. By first rejecting his conscience's advice and then suffering its torments, Macbeth registers the conventional reactions to conscience. Furthermore, the spiritual pattern leading from the conflict of conscience to despair defines Macbeth's career.

The similarities between Macbeth and the morality plays that have a character of Conscience indicates that Shakespeare was working within a well defined tradition. Although he uses the three morality play conventions, he avoids a simple repetition or imitation of them. Principally, he does this two ways. First, he specifies that Macbeth rejects the advice of his conscience because he thinks it is manly to do so. Second, he invests the spiritual pattern with irony. This irony involves a contrast between Macbeth's design to become courageous by rejecting his cowardly conscience and the debased courage of despair that he actually obtains. Because Macbeth's equation of conscience with courage the ironic reduction of Macbeth's courage constitute the major modifications Shakespeare made of the morality play conventions, we shall examine them carefully.

Before the assassination of Duncan, Macbeth never doubts that murder is morally wrong. In fact, he not only knows that it is an act vigorously condemned by his

conscience, but he also considers it a violation of his manhood. But under the influence of Lady Macbeth,² he accepts the idea that deference to the judgments of conscience is cowardly and that manhood consists in brute courage alone. When he adopts Lady Macbeth's idea of manhood, his conscience becomes muted, and the conflict between conscience and courage works towards its inevitable resolution in which Macbeth not only loses his throne and his life, but also his soul.

The belief that conscience is an impediment to valourous action is held by other Shakespearean villains besides Macbeth, most notably, Richard III, Tarquin, and Hamlet. The presence of this idea in some of his works reflects Shakespeare's interest in an ethical problem that concerned several other Renaissance writers. To fully understand its meaning in Macbeth it will be helpful to first look briefly at some Renaissance discussions of courage and then turn to Shakespeare's handling of the conscience-courage theme in some of his other works.

The idea that a sensitive conscience is cowardly may have developed from Machiavelli, who in his Discourses criticizes the Christian religion for preferring meekness

² Lady Macbeth's ideas of courage and manhood have been well analyzed by Michael Taylor, "Ideals of Manhood in Macbeth," EA, 21 (1968), 337-48, D. W. Harding, "Women's Fantasy of Manhood: A Shakespearean Theme," SQ, 20 (1969), 245-53, and Eugene Waith, "Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearean Tragedies," ELH, 17 (1950), 264-68.

to valor:

Our Religion hath rather gloried humble and contemplative men, then those of action. Moreover it hath plac'd the cheife good in humility and in the reject-ing and contempt of worldly things. That other [the religion of the Romans] imagin'd the cheife happiness to consist in the greatnesse of courage, in the strength of body, and in all other things fit to make men exceeding valiant: and if our Religion requires valour in a man, it is rather that he be fit for strong sufferance, then for a strong action. This manner of living then as it seemes, hath made the world become feeble, and given it a prey to wicked persons, who may securely rule over it . . . and though it may appeare, that the world is growne effeminate, and the heavens disarm'd, it proceeds rather without doubt from the cowardice of men, who have given an interpretation of our Religion according to their owne lazy and idle dispositions, and not agreeable to vertue.³

Machiavelli's deprecation of meekness provoked several responses during the Renaissance, all of which attempted to defend Christian mansuetude as being essential to true fortitude. Thomas Fitzherbert, for example, denies Machiavelli's claim that the Romans possessed true valor:

. . . so that whereas true valour, and magnanimitie (which never passe the limits of reason) and according to the doctrin of all philosophers, all waies accompanied with humanitie, and pietie, and compassion: this Archpoliticke Machiavel, imagineth a kind of valour, fraught with beastlie inhumanitie, and bloodie cruellitie, and desposeth men thereto, by horrible, and inhumane spectacles of murthering combats, and effusion of bloud, the custome whereof, though it may

³ Machiavels Discourses, upon the first Decade of T. Livius, trans. E. D. (London, 1636), pp. 267-68. Machiavelli's friend Francesco Guicciardini wrote in his Ricordi: "It was said truly that too much religion spoils the world, because it makes the mind effeminate, involves men in thousands of errors, and diverts them from many generous and virile enterprises," Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman, trans. Mario Domandi with an Introduction by Nicolai Rubinstein (Harper Torchbooks: New York, 1965), p. 104.

seeme some way to mitigate, and temper the exorbitance of feare, yet provoketh, and draweth men in the end to feritie, and cruellitie, which as I have said, is commonlie, seconded with timiditie, and cowardice, and can never accompanie true valour, and fortitude.⁴

Innocent Gentillet makes essentially the same point as Fitzherbert. Under the third maxim, "Of Religion," he writes: "The Painim Religion holds and lifts up their hearts, and so makes them hardie to enterprise great things; but the Christian Religion persuading to humilitie, humbleth and too much weakeneth their minds, and so makes them more ready to be injured and preyed upon." He charges that this maxim attempts to "despoile us of all Religion, feare of God, and of all conscience, feare and loialty which are taught us by our Christian Religion."⁵ Similarly, George Gifford, without mentioning Machiavelli by name, argues against those who are of the opinion that a man cannot be both godly and valiant. He attempts to prove that the Christian virtues of meekness, humility, and patience are also the fit properties of a soldier.⁶ And Jeremiah Burroughes condemns those who think godliness makes men "cowards, to be men of no metall and valour,

⁴ The Second Part of a Treatise Concerning Policy, and Religion ([Dovai], 1610), p. 355.

⁵ A Discourse Upon The Meanes Of Wel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome, or other principalities . . . Against Nicholas Machiavel the Florentine, trans. Simon Patrick (London, 1608), pp. 107-08.

⁶ A Treatise Of True Fortitude (London, 1594), sig. [B₇^{r-v}].

poore spirited men." This is not true, he claims: "Except you think that to be the onely bravenesse of spirit, to venture upon any thing that may further your owne ends, not to fear sinne, nor the displeasure of an infinite God . . . and to blesse yourselfe in the proud swellings of your owne heart, to be able to scorne at conscience, [and] humiliation for sinne."⁷

A corollary of Machiavelli's concept of courage as brute valour is the maxim that conscience will make man a coward and thus diminish his capacity for valorous action. This idea is held by some villains in Renaissance literature, and often by many of Shakespeare's. For example, in Barnabe Barnes' The Divils Charter (London, 1607), Pope Alexander VI, a typical stage Machiavel, says to himself:

Thy conscience is no conscience; if a conscience
It is a leoprouse and polluted conscience.
But what? a coward for thy conscience (sig. B₂^v).

Bussy D'Ambois uses a similar idea in his attempt to mitigate Tamyra's guilty fears:

Sin is a coward Madame, and insults
But on our weakness, in his truest valour:
And so our ignorance tames us, that we let
His shadows fright us (III.i. 18-21).⁸

This equation of conscience with cowardice seems to have

⁷ The Excellency Of A Gracious Spirit (London, 1638), pp. 130-32. One E. D., the English translator of Machiavelli's Discourse remarks that the Romans were more "cruell" than the Christians but not more valiant, p. 266.

⁸ The Revels Plays edition, ed. Nicholas Brooke (London, 1964).

remained a maxim of villains during the seventeenth century, for in The Pilgrim's Progress Faith reports to Christian that Shame "said it was a pitiful, low, sneaking business for a man to mind religion; he said that a tender conscience was an unmanly thing."⁹

The Shakespearean characters prior to Macbeth who dismiss conscience in order to act courageously actually lack courage as Gentillet, Gifford, and Fitzherbert define it and have more of what Fitzherbert calls "beastilie inhumanitie, and bloodie cruellitie."¹⁰ This is clearly seen in Richard III (written 1591-94) where we find one of Clarence's murderers swear: "I'll not meddle with it [conscience]; it makes a man a coward. A man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; a man cannot swear, but it checks him; a man cannot lie with his neighbor's wife, but it detects him. 'Tis a blushing shame-faced spirit that mutinies in

⁹ The Rinehard edition, with an Introduction by Louis Martz (New York, 1949), p. 74.

¹⁰ Aaron the Moor and Richard III are cut from the same cloth, but since Shakespeare doesn't use the "coward conscience" topos to characterize him, I have omitted him from this discussion. It should be noted here, however, that his cruelty, as excessive as it is, is morally intelligible in light of the Reformation idea of the seared conscience. This is the kind of conscience possessed by "notorious malefactors," Perkins says. They have a "reprobate minde, which judgeth evill good, and good evill; after this follows the seared conscience, in which there is no feeling or remorse: and after this comes an exceeding greedinesse to all manner of sinne" (A Discourse of Conscience, p. 68). Aaron manifests all three characteristics; for the first, see III.i. 202-05; for the second, V.iii. 184-90; for the third, V.i. 123-44. The references are to the New Arden edition, ed. J. C. Maxwell, 3rd. (London, 1961).

a man's bosom. It fills a man full of obstacles"

(I.iv. 131-36).¹¹ Richard himself holds this same attitude. The night before the Battle of Bosworth Field, he exclaims: "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me" (V.iii. 180). And before his oration to his army, he proclaims:

Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe:
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
(V.iii. 310-12).

Hamlet's attitude towards his conscience, we are beginning to understand,¹² is anything but sacred. Like Richard III and Clarence's murderer, Hamlet embraces the idea that conscience hinders courageous enterprises, and as the play proceeds his conscience becomes less and less mettlesome. Hamlet begins to develop the villain's characteristic attitude towards his conscience when he reproaches himself for not taking revenge against Claudius. He places the blame squarely on his conscience:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action (III.i. 83-88).¹³

¹¹ The Pelican Shakespeare edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Baltimore, 1959).

¹² See Waith, "Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearean Tragedies," 264; Harold Skulsky, "Revenge, Honor, and Conscience in Hamlet," PMLA, 85 (1970), 78-87; and Eleanor Prosser, Hamlet and Revenge (Stanford, Cal., 1967), pp. 167-71.

¹³ The Pelican Shakespeare edition, ed. William Farnham (Baltimore, 1957).

Hamlet's preference for heroic enterprises to his conscience is heard again in the soliloquy in Act IV, Scene iv, where he attributes his passivity to:

Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event--
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward (ll. 40-43).

Here he also envies the brave Fortinbras, who has "spirit" and "divine ambition" (l. 49), and he concludes the speech with the resolution to lay aside craven scruples and consecrate his time to "bloody thoughts" (l. 66).

After this time, conscience can no longer prevent him from executing his revenge. Indeed, it has become so hardened by the time he speaks with Horatio in Act V, Scene ii, that it even exculpates him for his central role in the murders of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow.
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensèd points
Of mighty opposites (ll. 58-62)

Furthermore, it has become so perverted that rather than protest against revenge, as it once did, it now seems to sanction the act. Hamlet says to Horatio:

Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon--
He that hath killed my king, and whored my mother,
Popped in between th' election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage--is't not perfect conscience
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil (ll. 63-70).

Thus, by twisting his conscience until it dictates suit

him, Hamlet successfully removes one of his most formidable obstacles to carrying out the ghost's injunction.

In The Rape of Lucrece (1594), we find another Shakespearean character led by his concept of courage to defy conscience. Before the rape, Tarquin experiences a conflict between his conscience and his will, just as Appius does when he intends to rape Virginia.¹⁴ At this point, the narrator of the poem comments:

Thus graceless holds he disputation
'Tween frozen conscience and hot burning will,
And with good thoughts makes dispensation,
Urging the worser sense for vantage still;
Which in a moment doth confound and kill
All pure effects, and doth so far proceed
That what is vile shows like a virtuous deed.
(ll. 246-52).¹⁵

When Tarquin's moral perceptions become so confounded that evil appears to him as good, he considers obedience to conscience cowardice and the rape itself an act of bravery.

As Tarquin debates with himself, his will is temporarily checked by both his conscience and his concept of courage. He realizes that each will be violated by the act. Acting as his spiritual guide, conscience attempts

¹⁴ This conflict between conscience and will would seem to make somewhat tenuous C. S. Lewis' claim that "nearly all moralists before the eighteenth century regarded Reason as the organ of morality. The moral conflict was depicted as one between Passion and Reason, not between Passion and 'conscience,' or 'duty,' or 'goodness'," The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge, 1964), p. 158.

¹⁵ All citations to Lucrece are from the New Arden edition of The Poems, ed. F. T. Prince (London, 1960).

to deter Tarquin by charging him with fear:

And now this lustful lord leap'd from his bed,
 Throwing his mantle rudely o'er his arm;
 Is madly toss'd between desire and dread:
 Th'one sweetly flatters, th'other feareth harm.
 But honest fear, bewitch'd with lust's foul charm,
 Doth too too oft betake him to retire,
 Beaten away by brain-sick rude desire (ll. 169-75):

Here pale with fear he doth premeditate
 The dangers of his loathsome enterprise (ll. 183-84).

This fear has three objects: familial dishonor (ll. 204-10), damnation (ll. 211-14), and Collatinus' wrath (ll. 218-20). Furthermore, he believes rape would be despicable for a truly valorous man:

O shame to knighthood and to shining arms!
 O foul dishonor to my household's graves!
 O impious act including all foul harms!
 A martial man to be soft fancy's slave!
 True valour still a true respect should have.
 Then my digression is so vile, so base,
 That it will live engraven in my face (ll. 197-203).

But will proves too strong to be subdued. After his conscience is "frozen" (l. 247), he dismisses his fears as "childish" (l. 274) and alters his concept of courage to accommodate his desires. Rather than take conscience as his guide, he claims:

Affection is my captain, and he leadeth;
 And when his gaudy banner is display'd,
 The coward fights, and will not be dismay'd
 (ll. 271-73).

Thus, Tarquin separates conscience and courage, which were once joined in league against the rape.

In the Shakespearean Henry VIII, there is another

variation on the conscience-courage theme.¹⁶ As we saw in the third chapter, a peaceful conscience was considered a source of fortitude during the Reformation. This idea is used to characterize Buckingham, Katherine, and Wolsey. Buckingham, for example, perniciously accused of treason by Cardinal Wolsey, states:

I have this day receiv'd a traitor's judgment,
And by that name must die; yet heaven bear witness,
And if I have a conscience, let it sink me,
Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful
(II.i, 58-61).¹⁷

Rather than destroy him with vexation, his peaceful conscience supports him in adversity. The career of Katherine parallels that of Buckingham's. She too is brought low by the Cardinal, but she has done nothing "yet o' my conscience/ Deserves a corner" (III.i. 30-31), and therefore she can also endure her suffering with patience. Of the three characters in whom this theme is worked out, the most striking is Wolsey. After his downfall at the hands of King Henry, Wolsey, like his victims Buckingham and Katherine finds within himself "A peace above all earthly dignities,/ A still and quiet conscience" (III.ii. 389-80). This gives him the "fortitude of soul" (l. 388) to bear his well deserved misery. Together these three characters demonstrate that conscience, far from always engendering

¹⁶ For more information on the theme of conscience in Henry VIII, consult Appendix B.

¹⁷ All citations to the play are from the New Arden edition, ed. R. A. Foakes, 3rd ed. (London, 1957).

cowardice, as so many Shakespearean villains think, may also be a source of fortitude for enduring the vagaries of fortune. Shakespeare presents a more complicated version of the relation of conscience to courage in Macbeth. In this tragedy the dissociation of conscience from courage is largely responsible for Macbeth's degeneration from "valour's minion" to "Hell-hound." This occurs after Macbeth's sensitive conscience becomes seared.

Much of the richness of the play derives from the conflicting interpretations of manhood. When Macbeth considers murdering Duncan, he is free to define his manhood in either of two ways. Each of these involves taking conscience into account. On the one hand, by obeying his conscience, which vigorously condemns the assassination, he could affirm that a man is a "reasonable creature," who along with the angels is the only possessor of a conscience and thus is essentially distinguished from "bruit beasts: for though they have life and sense, and in many things some shadowes of reason, yet because they want true reason, they want conscience also."¹⁸ On the other, by murdering Duncan, he could affirm that manhood requires courageous actions without consideration to their morality. The first concept of manhood would have been upheld by all Reformation writers on conscience, while the second is the one urged by Lady Macbeth, associated with Machiavelli, and

¹⁸ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 6.

condemned by Fitzherbert, Gentillet, Gifford, and Burroughes. Ironically, Macbeth's adoption of the second definition, under the influence of his wife's taunting, eventually leads to the diminution of his true courage.

Until Lady Macbeth convinces her husband to become a man in her terms, Macbeth adheres, however weakly, to the first definition, for he fears that the murder of Duncan is a threat to his very manhood. The supernatural soliciting of the witches, he knows:

Cannot be ill; cannot be good:--
 If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature? Present fears
 Are less than horrible imaginings.
 My thoughts, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
 Shakes so my single state of man,
 That function is smother'd in surmise,
 And nothing is, but what is not (I.iii. 131-142).¹⁹

The phrase "single state of man" indicates that here Macbeth has a comprehensive concept of man that includes both body and soul. The fear that shakes him so violently is not only ontic but also spiritual, because he is aware that his guilt will alienate him from God and thereby endanger if not destroy his soul. Macbeth, however, responds to this sensational image of the murdered Duncan by removing his means to the crown from the vigilant eye of conscience and placing it in the amoral hand of chance. "If Chance

¹⁹ All citations to Macbeth are from the New Arden edition, ed. Kenneth Muir, 9th ed. (London, 1962).

will have me King," he says, "why Chance may crown me, / Without my stir" (I.iii. 144-45).

Macbeth, however, cannot so easily tuck away his active conscience. Its workings are again evident when he intensely feels his ambition for the throne. Here we can detect Shakespeare's use of the conflict of conscience convention:

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if th'assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all--here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come.--But in these cases,
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th'inventor: this even-handed Justice
Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice
To our lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And Pity, like a new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubims, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.--I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th'other-- (I.vii. 1-28).

In this long soliloquy, Macbeth first reflects upon the inevitable consequences of the deed (ll. 1-12) and then proceeds to review the reasons that strongly argue against the assassination. Throughout the entire soliloquy, Macbeth hears the warning voice of conscience. He seems to be aware

that the "even-handed Justice" that will plague him on earth will come in two forms, physical and spiritual, as they were believed to come to all tyrants. And Macbeth does suffer both in the play. First, he fears he will be punished in the manner in which he sins, for he knows that bloody deeds are inevitably returned upon the murderer. Peter Martyr concisely describes the lex talionis that punishes cruel tyrants like Macbeth:

. . . this lawe of rendring like for like, let the cruel tyranntes of our tyme be affeared, which never make an end of killing, tearing, and burning of holy and innocent mē, as thoughe wisdomē never admonished them: By what soever a man sinneth, by the same also is he punished.²⁰

Secondly, he knows that in this life he cannot escape the "even-handed Justice" of conscience, his internal judge. Thomas Fitzherbert, writing on the justice of God, uses the Court of Conscience metaphor to explain that God has ordained a tribunal to be in the soul of every man "to the end that every one being the accuser, witness and judge of his own sins and condemning himself by his own sentence, may either repent and do satisfaction, or else expect the due punishment therof from the devine justice and acknowledge it for the most just when it shall be inflicted on him."²¹ Thomas Milles concludes that even if there were no other divine or human punishment to be feared for wickedness,

²⁰ Most Fruitfull and learned Coментарies, fol. 12^r.

²¹ The First Part of a Treatise Concerning Policy, and Religion, p. 160.

neither in heaven or in hell, "yet this continuall torment and anguish of mind, this hell and horror of Conscience, might suffice to make all Princes detest and abhor the abominable precepts of Machiavel." ²² And Gentillet warns that God will torment a tyrant with a guilty conscience all during his life. ²³

Just as Macbeth's conscience upholds the moral order in which crime is punished by retributive justice, it also upholds the corresponding social order in which Macbeth, as Duncan's kinsman, subject, and host, is obligated to protect his king and honor his virtues. That conscience functions as a stay against social chaos is an idea that was occasionally expressed during the Renaissance. For example, Justus Lipsius considers conscience to be one of the best guides to living in society. He argues that one must have both prudence and virtue to live in society. Virtue, he claims, has two branches, goodness and piety, which is "a right beleefe concerning God, and the true worship of him." From piety springs a belief in divine providence and conscience, which he defines as a "remaine and sparke of right and perfect reason in man, judging and manifesting good and evill deeds." ²⁴ And according to Francois

²² The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times, I, 927.

²³ A Discourse, pp. 236-37.

²⁴ Sixe Bookes of Polickes or Civil Doctrine, trans. William Jones (London, 1594), pp. 1-8.

de Le Noue, the French civil wars of the sixteenth century resulted in part from the overthrow of conscience by impiety:

Impietie, Unjustice, and Dissolution, which a very learned personage of our tyme hath very well noted, whose opinion also being so well grounded I will both allow and follow. Impietie sayth he, overthroweth conscience: unjustice either publicke or particuler, subverteth all pollicie and common societie of mankind: Dissolution doth diversely trouble and spoyle families, so that through the mixture of all these mischiefes, most horrible confusions doe ensue.²⁵

At this point in the play, conscience temporarily checks impiety and thereby stays lawlessness and confusion for it convinces Macbeth that a "man" must join his valor with loyalty and morality. Consequently, a few lines after this soliloquy, Macbeth, momentarily obeying his conscience, decisively replies to his wife's taunts:

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none (I.vii. 46-47).

But Macbeth's moral resolution crumbles under the pressure of Lady Macbeth's exhortation to be courageous, and the first act ends with Macbeth converted to the idea of assassination. After the murder, Macbeth's conscience is still operative, but it undergoes two distinct changes. First, it violently denounces the crime and terrifies Macbeth with a fear that is both punitive (just as Fitzherbert

²⁵ The Politicke And Militarie Discourses . . . Whereunto are adjoynd certaine observations of . . . things happened during the three late civill warres of France, trans. E. A. (London, 1587), pp. 2-3.

Milles, and Gentillet warned it would) and reformatory. But then, after being hardened during a career of crime, it becomes silent and allows Macbeth to sin without remorse. As we witness this collapse of Macbeth's conscience, we also see a radical reduction of the kind of courage he demonstrated in battle against Macdonwald.

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth experiences the conventional fears of a guilty conscience. That these fears are administered by conscience is suggested by Macbeth when he asks:

Who then shall blame
His peester'd senses to recoil and start,
When all that is within him does condemn
Itself, for being there (V.ii. 22-25).

As puzzling as these lines are,²⁶ they are not as ambiguous as they first appear. "All that is within" perfectly fits the Reformation description of conscience, which involves all of the faculties of the soul: the intellect, where it functions as a recorder of man's deeds, and the will or affections, where it functions as an accuser or comforter.

It is generally accepted that the fear which shakes Macbeth's nightly sleep (III.ii. 17-19) and unmans him when the ghost of Banquo enters the banquet hall arise from a guilty conscience,²⁷ for sleeplessness and the vision of

²⁶ CF. Jorgensen's interpretation of these lines, Our Naked Frailties, pp. 181-84.

²⁷ See L. B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes, pp. 86 and 225-26; Willard Farnham, Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, p. 113; and Douglas Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe, p. 47.

ghosts were symptoms commonly ascribed to the guilty conscience during the Renaissance.²⁸ But there is other evidence in the play, which seems to have gone unnoticed, that suggests Macbeth's fear originates in his feelings of guilt. Contrary to Jorgensen's assertion, in Macbeth Shakespeare does associate tyranny with the fears of a guilty conscience.²⁹ And when we recognize this, we can understand that Macbeth's fear of Banquo and Fleance is not merely prudential, but also the paranoid fear that many Renaissance writers believed overtakes guilty tyrants. For example, a tormented conscience, Caussin says, is one source of fear:

For there is not any thing so turmoyled, so torne, and so divided as a soule which hath alwaies before it the Image of its owne crimes. This was it which made the Neros and Domitians to tremble. This, which caused Apollodorus . . . to have horrible visions so that it many times seemed to him in his nightly sleepes that the Scythians flayed him alive, and threw his chopped members one after another into a boyling Cauldron.³⁰

LeLoyer mentions that being guilty of some notorious crime, men with a remorseful conscience often "suppose all persons whome they see to approach and come neere them, to bee Sergeants and officers comming to arrest them, and to make

²⁸ See for example: The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 324-25, LeLoyer, A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sightes, fol. 112^{r-v}, and Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, III, 402.

²⁹ Our Naked Frailties, p. 202.

³⁰ The Holy Court, p. 193.

them prisoners."³¹ Gentillet says that wicked tyrants are punished with feelings of "distrust."³² Milles also supposes that among a tyrant's punishments for his crimes are "infinitt suspitions and feares," and he cites Andronicus Comnenus, an emperor of Constantinople, as an example of a tyrant who governed with cruelty and injustice, suffered fears and suspicions, and, like Macbeth, worried about who his successor would be.³³ And Woolton provides an insight into why Macbeth specifically fears Banquo for his "royalty of nature," "dauntless temper," "wisdom," and "valor" (III.i. 48-53): "Well says Salust, Kings & Tyrants doe alwayes more suspect good men then badde, and other mens vertues are terrible unto them. Removing therfore from them such men, whose vertues their naughtie mindes detest and abhorre, they conjoyne with Cutthrotes and Ruffynes."³⁴

³¹ A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sights (London, 1605), fol. 112^r.

³² A Discourse, p. 236.

³³ The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times, I, 926, 921.

³⁴ Of Conscience, sig. D3^r. The number of parallels between Macbeth's behavior after the murder of Duncan and that of the "unrighteous" in the 17th chapter of Wisdom is remarkable. Both attempt to hide their sins and are terrified by ghosts, appalled by sounds, and distressed by fitful dreams. As the author of Wisdom says: "it is a fearful thing, when malice is condemned by her owne testimonie: and a conscience that is touched, doeth ever forecast cruell things (17:10). Both also are guilty of keeping "holy people in subjection" (17:2), i.e. the people of Scotland but especially Donalbain and Malcolm. Furthermore, the play and Wisdom abound in images of darkness, and the line: "and the illusions of magical artes were brought downe,

The wounded conscience that makes Macbeth distrust Banquo and Fleance stings his mind like a scorpion (III.ii. 36).³⁵ It may also be partially responsible for driving him back to the Witches to learn his fate (IV.i). As Alexander Hume notes, a guilty man may attempt to alleviate his torment "sometime by consulting with sorcerers, and seeking responses of unclean spirits."³⁶

To view this fear as merely punitive is to miss its greater significance. Besides punishing Macbeth, it also provides him with the possibility of repentance. Although Cunningham, Farnham, Proser, and Jorgensen do not find any evidence to suggest that Macbeth can be saved after the murder of Duncan,³⁷ this tormenting fear indicates that such a possibility is real. A wounded conscience like

And it was a most shamefull reproache for the boasting of their knowledge" (17:7) seems to parallel the idea in Macbeth's remarks when he realizes the sinister ambiguity of the Witches' prophesies:

And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope (V.viii. 19-22).

Shakespeare was probably acquainted with Wisdom, since it was included in the Geneva Bible, and possibly he received from it some hints about the nature of a guilty conscience.

³⁵ For the reasons I think Macbeth is referring to his guilty conscience here, see Appendix C.

³⁶ Ane Treatise of Conscience, p. 44.

³⁷ Seriatim: "Macbeth: The Tragedy of the Hardened Heart," SQ, 14 (1963), 39-47; Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, p. 108; The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies (Princeton, N. J., 1965), pp. 69-70; Our Naked Frailties, p. 166.

Macbeth's, Perkins says, "which though it selfe it be not good not any grace of God; yet by the goodnesse of God it serveth often to be an occasion or preparation to grace; as a needle that drawes the thread into the cloath, is some meanes whereby the cloath is sewed together."³⁸ Calvin also claims "that feare maye instruct [men] to humilitie: but by and by they flye to the sacrifice of Christ, where they have assured peace."³⁹ And John Norden reads an afflicted conscience as evidence that there is still grace in the soul.⁴⁰ Rather than accept this fear that proceeds from his terrified conscience as a painful occasion for grace, Macbeth fatally regards it as a strange delusion that can be razed by committing more crimes (III.iv. 141-43). Thus, when he takes this attitude, he hastens his own damnation.

Lady Macbeth interprets her husband's overwhelming fear, the vestige of the morally sensitive man he once was, as evidence of his cowardice and lack of manhood. When Macbeth starts at the ghost of Banquo, she scornfully asks: "Are you a man?" (III.iv. 57) and "quite unmanned in folly?" (III.iv. 72). She also dismisses the ghost as "the very painting of [his] fear" (III.iv. 60). When the ghost

³⁸ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 69.

³⁹ The Commentaries . . . upon the first Epistle of Saint John, fol. 62^r.

⁴⁰ A Pathway to Patience, pp. 49-50.

reappears, Macbeth, however, asserts: "What man dare, I dare" (III.iv. 98), And when it disappears from the banquet hall for the final time, he claims "I am a man again" (III.iv. 107). But his concept of "man" is now much different than it was when he refused to murder Duncan because it was unworthy of a "man." For Macbeth to be a man now means to be bloody, bold, and resolute and to commit crimes without fear of conscience. After the banquet, impelled by this new concept of manhood, Macbeth desperately resolves never to repent but to plunge into further evil:

for mine own good,
 All causes shall give way: I am in blood
 Stepp'd so far, that, should I wade no more,
 Returning were as tedious as to go o'er.
 Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
 Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd
 (III.iv. 134-39).

This resolution sears his conscience, for never again does Macbeth seem to distinguish right from wrong or feel remorse. With conscience in this condition, his valor degenerates into a courage fraught with a bloody cruelty that he savagely turns upon Macduff's family and the good men of Scotland (IV.iii. 164-73). When, however, Macbeth was Duncan's loyal subject and defended the kingdom from the rebels Macdonwald and the Thane of Cawdon, he did exhibit what the Renaissance would have recognized as the moral virtue of fortitude. This is defined by Henry Crosse:

Fortitude is a greatnesse of mind, which without furious or rash resolution, feareth not to hazard it selfe in the greatest perils, and with great pursuit to hunt after honourable actions . . . neither is true Fortitude

measured by the compasse of a great body, nor by dooing great enterprises, in respect of the huge stature, but by a fierce and couragious spirit, striving in a good cause.⁴¹

This definition of fortitude reflects the influence of Aristotle, as do many Renaissance definitions of fortitude.⁴² But the important thing is not so much that Crosse distinguishes fortitude from foolhardiness but that he asserts fortitude can be exercised only in the pursuit of "honourable actions" and "a good cause." Thomas Floyd makes the same point; fortitude, he says, "is an invincible vertue, or courage of the mind, undertaking any perile in an honest and good cause."⁴³ And two anonymous writers on the moral virtues say the same thing. One divides fortitude into four parts: magnificence, confidence, patience,

⁴¹ The Schoole of Pollicie: or the araignement of State-abuses (London, 1605), sig. B₃^v.

⁴² A study of the Renaissance ideas of fortitude requires a book, and here I am only interested in discussing the virtue in relation to Macbeth. It seems that the tendency among Renaissance humanists, and for Shakespeare at least when he was writing Macbeth, was to follow Aristotle's definition of a brave man as "one who fearlessly meets an honourable death or some instant threat to life," The [Nicomachean] Ethics of Aristotle, trans. J.A.K. Thomson (Baltimore, 1953), p. 95. This definition is also accepted by: Thomas Elyot, The Book named The Governor, ed. with an Introduction by S. E. Lehmberg (Everyman's Library: New York, 1962), pp. 185, 198, Laurentius Grimaldus, A Commonwealth Of Good Consaile. Or, Policies chiefe Conseller (London, 1607), p. 118, Jacques Hurault, Politicke, Moral, And Martial Discourses, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1595), p. 275, and Sir William Leighton, Vertue Triumphant, Or A Lively Description Of The Foure Vertues Cardinall (London, 1603), sig. E^v.

⁴³ The Picture of a perfit Common wealth (London, 1600), p. 124.

and perseverance, and he defines magnificence as the pursuit of great and high deeds with an honorable desire for glory.⁴⁴ The other says that fortitude does not consist in physical strength but in the courage that makes one capable of great deeds.⁴⁵

There is no question that at one time Macbeth's courage met these Renaissance criteria for fortitude. In battle against Duncan's enemies, Macbeth was not dismayed by any hazard, and because he was fighting for his country he was using his valor in a "good cause." Furthermore, Macbeth successfully joined justice to his fortitude, just as Francis Markham says a soldier should:

. . . and as our Souldier himselfe must be Just, so Just must bee is [sic] quarrell, and as Just the use and manage of his weapon; his lawfull Prince must employ him, not the heate of his owne Blood or desire of Action; his Alleageance must move him, not hope of Advancement; and his conscience must tie him, not Spoyle or Boot-haling.⁴⁶

Macbeth's defeat of Macdonwald is specifically linked with justice by the bleeding Sergeant:

No sooner Justice had, with valour arm'd
Compell'd these skipping Kernes to trust their heels,
But the Norweyan Lord, surveying vantage,
With furbish'd arms, and new supplies of men,
Began a fresh assault (I.ii.29-33).

And because Macbeth conducts himself like the perfect

⁴⁴ A Characterisme of the Foure Cardinall Vertues (London, 1630), sig. C₄^r.

⁴⁵ Two Guides to a good life, sigs. [H₇^v]-[I₆^r].

⁴⁶ Five Decades Of Epistles Of Warre (London, 1622), p. 18.

soldier, he receives honor as his due reward. The bleeding Sergeant calls Macbeth "brave" (I.ii.16) and "Valour's minion" (I.ii.19); Rosse honors him with the epithet "Bellona's bridgroom" (I.ii.55); and Duncan, with praise, calls him "valiant cousin! worthy gentleman" (I.ii.24), "noble Macbeth" (I.ii.69), and "worthy Cawdor" (I.iv.47).

But Macbeth's fortitude, even at its best, is never more than what George Gifford calls "humane fortitude," which he defines as that

which the Gentiles, I will not say had (for they had nothing in them pure,) but which by the light of nature they did see and describe, and which they laboured to attaine unto by the naturall powers & faculties of the mind, through humane courage.⁴⁷

He contrasts human with "divine Fortitude": "where the mind through faith in Christ, putteth on the grace & power of God, and thereby dooth become great and valiant" (sig. [A₅^r]). Those who try to attain fortitude by their own powers and faculties only achieve an "exceeding hardinesse," "a resolute or rather desperate boldness, beeing in deede a vice under the shewe of resemblance of vertue" (sig. [A₅^{r-v}]). Even those valiant men of antiquity, Philip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great, Scipio, Hannibal, Caesar, and Pompey, who had the skill to lead an army and possessed a fierce courage, did not have true fortitude (sig. [A₆^r]). Their valor was quite precarious and easily corrupted by their pride, covetousness, ambition, and cruelty. Tamberlane,

⁴⁷ A Treatise Of True Fortitude, sig. [A₅^r].

for example, was a valiant and expert soldier, but he became a vicious tyrant. And after Lucifer's rebellion against God, the fortitude of the fallen angels became a "most obstinate, rebellious, & horrible devellish boldnesse. They bee stiffe and hardie to warre and to maintaine a kingdome, even against the most High" (sig. B₂^r). Macbeth is also "stiffe and hardie to warre," but, as Jorgensen has shown, Macbeth is not consecrated by the grace of God.⁴⁸ It is precisely this lack of grace that reduces his courage to "human fortitude."

Their are two soldiers in the play, Macduff and Malcolm, who do have divine fortitude, and with whom Macbeth is contrasted. Banquo has proven to be courageous in battle and Macbeth believes his valor is of that elevated kind that is guided by wisdom (III.ii.52).⁴⁹ But his own proclamation that he stands "in the great hand of God" (II.iii.130) cannot be taken as evidence that he also has grace, for he alone among his countrymen had the knowledge to protect Duncan from Macbeth and did not use it. As for Macduff and Malcolm, however, there is no doubt that grace enhances the fortitude of both. Macduff, whose grief is the whetstone of his courage, proves his valor at Dunsinane,

⁴⁸ Our Naked Frailties, pp. 195-98.

⁴⁹ Markham says that a soldier must join wisdom to his valor, "for if in any condition of men true Judgement be requisite, it must be in a Souldier," Five Decades Of Epistles Of Warre, p. 18.

but his is not the barbarous kind of valor that Macbeth displays after the murder of Duncan. Rather, it is the kind of fortitude that Gifford says can only be achieved with grace. And Macduff does have grace, as Malcolm knows; he tells him:

That which you are my thoughts cannot transpose:
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell:
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,
Yet Grace must still look so (IV.iii.21-24).

Malcolm too possesses this superior variety of fortitude. Speaking falsely about himself in order to test Macduff's loyalty, he denies that he has those virtues which he does in truth possess:

But I have none: the king-becoming graces,
As Justice, Verity, Temp'rance, Stableness,
Bounty, Perseverance, Mercy, Lowliness,
Devotion, Patience, Courage, Fortitude (IV.iii.91-92).

This "Courage, Fortitude" is not the vulgar kind that Gifford says belonged to the heathens. It is a higher kind that is accompanied by the grace, which, at the end of the play, Malcolm promises he will use to restore the health of his country:

this, and what needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,
We will perform in measure, time, and place (V.ix.37-39).

Although he never had "divine fortitude" like Macduff and Malcolm, Macbeth possessed "human fortitude" when he was fighting for Duncan. But after his conscience becomes seared he retains only a faint resemblance of his original virtue: the courage of the desperate. His choice to ignore

the voice of conscience ultimately leads him to despair, to see life as "a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing" (V.v. 26-28). It is this despair that sustains him at Dunsinane. Elyot denies the desperate any claim to true fortitude, "although they which be hardy or persons desperate have a similitude, and seem to be valiant, yet they be not valiant."⁵⁰ Furthermore, he says this courage of the desperate has two characteristics: first, it is not moderated by reason, and second, it turns to cowardice when it meets an unexpected peril. At Dunsinane Macbeth's courage seems to have been reduced to this kind for it has both of these qualities mentioned by Elyot. Before the battle, Cathness reports that Macbeth's valor is not controlled by reason:

Some say he's mad; others, that lesse hate him,
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause
Within the belt of rule (V.ii. 13-16).

His courage abates when he hears that Macduff was ripped untimely from his mother's womb:

⁵⁰ The Book named *The Governor*, p. 186. Elyot develops an idea that several other Renaissance writers mention; see Guillaumed Chevalier, *The Ghosts Of The Deceased Sieurs de Villemor, and de Fontaines . . . With The Discourse of Valour*, trans. Thomas Heigham (Cambridge, 1624), p. 90, Francis Lenton, *Characterismi*, sig. [G₁₂^r], Henry Crosse, *The Schoole of Pollicie*, sig. CV, and Owen Feltham, *Resolves Divine, Morall, Politicall* (London, 1623), p. 38. There are also two emblems in Henkle and Schöne's *Emblemata. Handbuch gun Sinnbildkunst des XVI, und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, cols. 589, 1066, that depict the courage of the desperate.

Accursed be the tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd my better part of man (V.viii. 17-18).

And his refusal to fight provokes Macduff to call him "coward" (V.viii.23). But Macbeth recovers enough courage to battle Macduff, but it is a courage more to be pitied than admired for it is only an attenuated form of the true valor he once possessed.

In this final battle against Macduff, Macbeth finds himself in what Paul Tillich has called a "boundry-situation" which "is encountered when human possibility reaches its limit, when human existence is confronted by an ultimate threat."⁵¹ The threat that confronts Macbeth here at Dunsinane is not just death at the sword of Macduff but also spiritual despair from which even death cannot release him. Having seared his conscience in a quest for courage, Macbeth has cut himself off from all that is divine within himself, from humanity, and from God. He has lost not only the golden opinions of men, honor, love, obedience, and friends but more profoundly, hope of salvation. This despair he must take with him into death when conscience, although benumbed and seared in this life, will be quickened to life by God and consume not but devour him

⁵¹ The Protestant Era (Abridged Edition), trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago, 1957), p. 197. Also see Tillich's The Courage To Be (New Haven, Conn., 1952), p. 54. The phrase "boundry-situation" has been profitably used in the criticism of tragedy by Richard B. Sewall in The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven, Conn., 1959), pp. 5, 7, 8, 13, 30, 46, 60, 87, and 151.

forever. As Perkins warns: "after the last judgement, [sinners] shall have not onely their bodies in torment, but the worme in the soule and conscience shall never die: and what will it profit a man to gaine the whole world by doing things against his owne conscience, and loose his own soule?"⁵² To this question Macbeth provides an eloquent and tragic yet orthodox answer: Nothing. Although this answer may ring flat to modern ears, it is one that Shakespeare, given the religious temper of his times, could not wholly avoid.

⁵² A Discourse of Conscience, p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

CONSCIENCE AND HAPPINESS IN THE ATHEIST'S TRAGEDY

These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
 The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
 By a strong siding champion Conscience.

--Milton, Comus, ll. 210-12.

In The Atheist's Tragedy, or, The Honest Man's Revenge (1611), Cyril Tourneur employs the same conventions to present the concept of conscience that we find in the morality plays and in Macbeth. Like Shakespeare, Tourneur significantly varies these conventions to clarify one of the major themes of the play: the peace of a good conscience is man's greatest kind of earthly happiness. We find, for example, conscience acting as a guide and tormentor to D'Amville and Levidulcia. Both of these characters also make the villain's conventional responses to conscience. Although neither has a conflict of conscience, each ignores the guidance of conscience and suffers the torments of a guilty conscience. Then, both D'Amville and Levidulcia despair and commit suicide. Although D'Amville's suicide is accidental and does not grow out of his despair, it nevertheless completes the spiritual pattern established in Appius and Virginia and in the first issue of The Conflict of Conscience and parallels the death of Levidulcia.

The spiritual pattern common to both of their lives suggests that happiness is not to be found in those things D'Amville and Levidulcia seek, wealth, pleasure, and honor.

With the character of Charlemont, Tourneur varies the conventions to make his point about conscience and happiness. Unlike D'Amville and Levidulcia, Charlemont has a conflict of conscience when he considers avenging his father's murder. And unlike Macbeth or any of the morality heroes who have a conflict of conscience, he resolves the conflict in favor of conscience. Consequently, his conscience comforts him rather than torments him. This peace of conscience then sustains him in his affliction and gives him inner happiness. Thus, a different spiritual pattern emerges to define Charlemont's career. Charlemont progresses from a conflict of conscience, to an acceptance of the dictates of conscience, and finally to peace and happiness.

Because the concept of a good conscience is involved with the theme of the pursuit of happiness in The Atheist's Tragedy, it will be necessary to examine the traditional Christian definition of man's summum bonum in order to understand why Tourneur believes a good conscience can bring man true felicity on earth. According to traditional Christian theology, man's greatest happiness consists in the knowledge of God. As Aquinas proves in Summa Contra

Gentiles: "It is therefore evident also by way of induction that man's ultimate happiness consists solely in the contemplation of God." Furthermore, because God cannot be known by vague opinions, by demonstration, or by faith, it is impossible for man to achieve ultimate happiness in this life. Therefore, he must wait until his afterlife to enjoy it.¹

This opinion of man's highest good is also asserted by Richard Barckley in his popular Discourse Of The Felicitie Of Man. Or His Summum Bonum (London, 1603). Judging from the numerous parallels between the ideas about happiness in it and those in The Atheist's Tragedy, it is possible that Tourneur used this work, or one very much like it, as one of his sources. Barckley says:

and seeing God is the greatest, and chieftest good of all things, from whom all things have their being and goodness, in him is to be sought that summum bonum, and blessednesse or beatitude we looke for, and no other where. (p. 361).²

Although he believes that there is no estate in life void of troubles, Barckley affirms that man can achieve true felicity in this life by glorifying and worshipping God:

Then we must set before our eyes Felicitie, as a marke to which wee must direct the course of our life; wherein we must have a continuall respect to the true felicity and beatitude, or summum bonum of men; that is, to glorifie and magnifie God in this life, as hath

¹ Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas, ed. with an Introduction by Anton C. Pegis (The Modern Library: New York, 1948), pp. 454, 463-67.

² See also, p. 461.

beene said, which is his last end and proper action, whereunto is joynd the hoyes of heaven in the life to come, without which our life here, is meere infelicitie, how pleasing so ever it be (p. 465).³

Because man has a soul, the knowledge of God is his sovereign good. But Barckley argues that felicity must be considered in respect to both of man's natures, his body and his soul. Besides worshipping and glorifying God, man, through the grace of God, may enjoy pleasure, wealth and honor. Unfortunately, however, many men mistakenly believe that these can give true happiness. Of all the temporal things that God has graciously allowed man to enjoy, these three, although pursued the most, give infinitely less happiness than a good conscience (p. 508).

One of the most important ideas in The Atheist's Tragedy is that peace of conscience gives more happiness than pleasure, wealth, or honor. The corollary is also true: without the blessing of a peaceful conscience, one cannot be happy with pleasure, wealth, or honor. The theme of the pursuit of happiness is principally worked out through three characters, D'Amville, Levidulcia, and Charlemont, although minor characters are also involved in various aspects of the theme. D'Amville, Levidulcia, and Charlemont each seek happiness in a false good, but of the three only Charlemont eventually succeeds in finding the happiness of a peaceful conscience.

³ See also p. 361.

D'Amville, who subordinates everything to the ideal of happiness on earth, seeks felicity in the three false goods mentioned by Barckley: pleasure, wealth, and honor. Not only an atheist⁴ and a Machiavel,⁵ D'Amville is also an epicure,⁶ for he believes that man's highest good is sensual enjoyment. In the opening scene of the play, he and his instrument Borachio expound upon their Epicurean philosophy:

D'Am. Then if death casts up
 Our total sum of joy and happiness,
 Let me have all my sense feasted in
 Th' abundant fulness of delight at once,
 And with a sweet insensible increase
 Of pleasing surfeit melt into my dust.
 Bor. That revolution is too short methinks.
 If this life comprehends our happiness,
 How foolish to desire to die so soon!
 And if our time runs home unto the length
 Of Nature, how improvident it were
 To spend our substance on a minute's pleasure,
 And after live an age in misery!
 D'Am. So thou conclud'st that pleasure only flows
 Upon the stream of riches.
 Bor. Wealth is lord
 Of all felicity (I.i. 16-31).⁷

⁴ Robert Ornstein, "The Atheist's Tragedy and Renaissance Naturalism," SP, 51 (1954), 194-207.

⁵ Harold Jenkins, "Cyril Tourneur," RES, 17 (1941), 21-36, and Michael Higgins, "The Influence of Calvinistic Thought in Tourneur's Atheist's Tragedy," RES, 19 (1943), 258.

⁶ Although the terms "epicure" and "atheist" were virtually synonymous during the Renaissance because each denominated one who denied the existence of divine providence, D'Amville is also an epicure in the sense that he considers pleasure man's summum bonum. For discussions of Renaissance epicureanism see: Ornstein, "The Atheist's Tragedy and Renaissance Naturalism," 198-99, and William Elton, King Lear and the Gods (San Marino, Cal., 1966), pp. 9-29.

⁷ All references to The Atheist's Tragedy are to the

Seeking happiness in this life is the only course available to one who believes that man's nature is exclusively bestial. He asks Borachio:

Observ'st thou not the very self same course
Of revolution both in man and beast?
Bor. The same, for birth, growth, state, decay, and
death;
Only a man's beholding to his Nature
For th' better composition o' the two.
D'Am. But where that favour of his Nature is
Not full and free, you see a man becomes
A fool, as little-knowing as a beast.
Bor. That shows there's nothing in a man above
His Nature; if there were, consid'ring 'tis
His being's excellency, 'twould not yield
To Nature's weakness (I.i. 5-16).

Since D'Amville denies any belief in man's spiritual nature, he does not recognize any law above physical nature. When he attempts to seduce Castabella, his son's wife, he argues that the moral law that condemns incest unfairly restricts the liberty nature grants its other creatures:

Incest, tush!
These distances affinity observes
Are articles of bondage cast upon
Our freedoms by our own subjections.
Nature allows a gen'ral liberty
Of generation to all creatures else.
Shall man, to whose command and use all creatures
Were made subject, be less free than they (IV.iii.
123-30).

D'Amville's kind of epicureanism is confuted by Barckley, who argues that Epicurus and his followers are wrong to regard pleasure as man's summum bonum because man has a dual nature. In his body, man participates with the

Revels Plays edition, ed. Irving Ribner (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

beasts, but in his spirit, which is the rational soul, he also participates with the angels. Because of his bestial nature man is given to seeking pleasure, but his rational soul reprehends him for following his affections. "If felicity be the proper action of man," he argues:

then it cannot be in pleasure, for that is common with him and brute beasts, but after them it must be an action peculiar and proper to him alone. And seeing that man is made of two distinct natures . . . it is more reason that his felicitie should be agreeable with the best part of his nature, which is a reasonable soule.
(pp. 9-10)

Then he proceeds to register numerous examples of those who were brought to an unfortunate end for having spent their lives in voluptuousness and pleasure (pp. 11-64). D'Amville is likewise reduced to a miserable condition, for he suffers the temporal punishments due to his sins. Furthermore, he also receives the condign punishment of damnation.

When Borachio asserts that "Wealth is lord/ Of all felicity," he brings to the attention of the audience another false good that D'Amville seeks and which, the play reveals, can give man no more happiness than pleasure.⁸

⁸ It should be noticed that D'Amville's pursuit of wealth without respect for his conscience is a true mark of his Machiavellian character. In this respect his literary antecedents are Marlowe's Barabas, who believes that a man with a conscience "for his conscience lives in beggery" (I. i.117), *The Jew of Malta*, ed. Richard Van Fossen (London, 1965) and Greene's Gorinuis, who tells his son Lucanio to read Machiavelli, in whose works he will find "it is to be foole-holy, as to make scruple of conscience, where profit presents itselfe," "Greenes Groatsworth of Wit" in *The Life and Complete Works*, XII, 108. See also Machivil, who advises his son: "Let never conscience at thy profit knock," in Anon., The Uncasing of Machivils Instructions to his

Avarice cankers all D'Amville's human considerations; for D'Amville it justifies intriguing against his nephew Charlemont and murdering his brother Monteferrers. He says brazenly:

Let all men lose, so I increase my gain:
I have no feeling of another's pain (I.i. 128-29).

Despite the wealth that D'Amville acquires through his deviousness, he cannot attain the felicity Borachio promised. Felicity, Barckley explains, cannot consist in wealth because it is "subject to so many adventures and accidents of fortune, and so easily lost" (p. 65). Tourneur also shows that wealth is so easily lost that it is vain to seek it. For example, Charlemont is temporarily dispossessed of his inheritance by the machinations of his uncle. Cataplasma, Soquette, and Fresco must surrender their

Sonne: with the Answer to the same (London, 1613), p. 7; see also pp. 11, 19 for similar advice. The conflict between the claims of conscience and greed is the theme of Martin Parker's Robin Conscience, Or, Conscionable Robin: His Progress through Court, City, and Countrey (London, 1635). The disrespect for conscience is also a characteristic of the usurers in the Jacobean and Caroline city comedies; Lucre's conscience is like a "wolf" (I.iii.34), and it is so deep that it must be measured in "fathoms" (III.i.183); the same descriptions would fit Hoard's and Dampit's; Thomas Middleton, A Trick to Catch the Old One, ed. G. C. Watson (London, 1968). Sir Giles Overreacher is "without touch of conscience" (I.i.160); it is "sear'd up" (V.i.210), Philip Massinger, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, ed. T. W. Craik (London, 1964). And in Massinger's The City Madam, ed. Cyrus Hoy (London, 1964), Luke, who is not a usurer, just prodigal and avaricious, casts aside "Religion, conscience, charity" (IV.ii.131). Jewel says that usurers are "past all sense and feeling of God, which knowest the will of God, and dost the contrarie," An Exposition upon the two Epistles . . . to the Thessalonians, p. 134.

goods because they were acquired with money made in prostitution. Sebastian is denied his annuity. And except for his unfortunate, accidental self-slaughter, D'Amville would have had in safe possession all Charlemont's wealth when his nephew was executed. But the inability of wealth to bring happiness is most poignantly demonstrated when D'Amville, after he has celebrated his gold in imitation of the manner of Volpone, realizes that this gold cannot redeem the lives of his two sons. Seeing Sebastian lying dead and Rousard expiring, he desperately beseeches the physician to:

Take this gold; extract
The spirit of it, and inspire new life
Into their bodies (V.i. 88-90).

But nothing remains within the power of man or nature to restore their lives.

D'Amville also pursues honor, but it proves to be elusive. When his unsuccessful seduction of Castabella ruins his chances to have heirs, when his sons die, and when he acts dishonorably at Charlemont's trial, the D'Amville dynasty, which he considered the crown of life and which he hoped would immortalize his name, crumbles in its nascency. The House of D'Amville, which is founded upon fratricide, and whose fortunes are increased by Machiavellian schemes, is contrasted with the ancient, eminent House of Montferrers, which has been distinguished by its long history of noble men who have won honor in war. During the early acts of the

play the ascent of the House of D'Amville parallels the descent of the House of Montferrers. In the later acts, however, the cycle is reversed when the House of D'Amville is brought to destruction and the House of Montferrers increases in fortunes and honor when Castabella and Charlemont promise to marry.

Through his posterity D'Amville hopes to gain immortality; when his sons first enter the play, he announces:

Here are my sons
 There's my eternity. My life in them
 And their succession shall for ever live,
 And in my reason dwells the providence
 To add to life as much of happiness (I.i. 123-27).

To further this end he successfully schemes to marry Rousard to Castabella, whose wealth will increase the honor and fortune of his house. This strategy, however, ultimately fails because Rousard is impotent. Also ending in failure are his incestuous plans to marry Castabella. But it is the deaths of his sons that completely overthrow his hopes to build a dynasty. The dying sighs of Rousard signify the ruin of the House of D'Amville; D'Amville laments:

His gasping sighs are like the falling noise
 Of some great building when the groundwork breaks.
 On these two pillars stood the stately frame.
 And architecture of my lofty house.
 An earthquake shakes 'em; the foundation shrinks.
 Dear Nature, in whose honour I have rais'd
 A work of glory to posterity,
 O bury not the pride of that great action
 Under the fall and ruin of itself (V.i. 75-83).

For his proud attempt to achieve immortality by founding a dynasty, D'Amville must suffer a final indignity. His name,

although is will not be esteemed by posterity, will not be forgotten. It will live in infamy, not only for his atheism, epicureanism, and fratricide, but also for his dishonorable attempt to act as his nephew's executioner. The second judge warns him:

My lord, the office [of executioner] will increase a mark
Of scandal and dishonour on your name (V.ii. 233-34).

In his quest for wealth, pleasure, and honor, D'Amville has sought "happiness within the freedom/ of the conscience" (IV.iii. 286-87); that is, his pursuit of happiness has not been conducted with regard to the advice of his conscience. For this reason, conscience arises to plague him with feelings of guilt. Temporarily D'Amville enjoys peace of conscience as he carries out his schemes, but it is the peace of a seared conscience. He is not even frightened by the thunder he hears after he has just murdered his brother. To Borachio, who is rightly shaken by it, D'Amville misinterprets the thunder as simply a natural phenomenon. "Dost start at thunder?" he asks Borachio; "Credit my belief,/ 'Tis a mere effect of Nature" (II.iv. 141-42). He assures him:

'Tis a brave noise,
And methinks graces our accomplished
Project as a peal of ordnance
Does a triumph; it speaks encouragement (II.iv. 152-55).

But this thunder is more than just the "brave noise" D'Amville supposes it to be. It is also the wrathful voice of God speaking in his conscience. Writing about the first

fratricide, Calvin says that after the murder of Abel, "it was this thunder of Gods voyce, to strike Caine, and to overthrowe him to confusion." God, he continues, who knows the thoughts in all men's hearts, "needeth not any long circumstance of inquisition, but in one word so thundereth against the wicked, guiltie, that it is sufficient enough to condemnation."⁹ Robert Bolton also thinks that "from the mouth of God doth in the first place behave Himself like a Son of Thunder, pressing upon the conscience of those to whom Hee was sent, many heinous sinnes."¹⁰ John Jewel says that a man with a bad conscience "feelethe uproare, warre, lightning, thunder, death, and hell in his heart."¹¹ And according to John Woolton, conscience speaks "with the noyese of the thunder."¹² By this time, D'Amville is

⁹ A Commentarie . . . upon . . . Genesis, trans. Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), p. 140.

¹⁰ Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences, p. 133.

¹¹ An Exposition upon . . . Thessalonians, p. 97.

¹² Of The Conscience, sig. E₃^r. Caligula's fear of thunder was interpreted as evidence of a guilty conscience. See Fitzherbert, The First Part of a Treatise, pp. 159-60; Woolton, Of The Conscience, sigs. [E₄^v]-F₁^r; Pierre LeLoyer, A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sightes, fols. 112^{r-v}; La Primaudaye, The French Academie, I, 28. These commentators are following Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, trans. Robert Graves (Penguin Books: Baltimore, 1957), p. 174. Juvenal, Sat. 13, ll. 223-26, also describes the guilty man's fear of thunder and lightning; (Juvenal and Persius, p. 262). See also the references in Elton, King Lear and the Gods, p. 205. Massinger associates thunder with the guilty conscience in The Unnatural Combat, V.ii, in which the tormented Malefort hears thunder and is struck by a bolt of lightning, and in The Roman Actor, V, in which

steeped in sin so far that his conscience cannot even be awakened by the thunder of God's voice.

D'Amville's seared conscience allows him to peacefully pursue pleasure, wealth, and honor, but even a seared conscience cannot remain insensitive forever. His peace is razed by the death's head D'Amville sees in the graveyard. Conscience, which once had comforted D'Amville, now makes him ashamed of light and so timorous that he would startle at the shaking of a leaf:

And that bawd,
The sky there, she could shut the windows and
The doors of this great chamber of the world,
And draw the curtains of the clouds between
Those lights and me about this bed of earth,
When that same strumpet, Murder, and myself
Committed sin together. Then she could
Leave us i' the dark till the close deed
Was done, but now that I begin to feel
The loathsome horror of my sin and, like
A lecher empty'd of his lust, desire
To bury my face under my eyebrows and
Would steal from my shame unseen, she meets me
I' the face with all her light corrupted eyes
To challenge payment o' me. O behold!
Yonder's the ghost of old Montferrers in
A long white sheet, climbing yond' lofty mountain
To complain to Heav'n of me. Montferrers!
'Pox o' fearfulness. 'Tis nothing but
A fair white cloud. Why, was I born a coward?
He lies that says so. Yet the count'nance of
A bloodless worm might ha' the courage now
To turn my blood to water. The trembling motion
Of an aspen leaf would make me, like
The shadow of that leaf, lie shaking under't (IV.iii.
215-39).

Domitian, shaking with the fears of a guilty man, hears thunder and sees lightning. Germane to my remarks on the meaning of thunder in The Atheist's Tragedy are the discussions of thunder in Jorgensen, Our Naked Frailties, pp. 168-69, and especially Elton, King Lear and the Gods, pp. 197-212.

After seeing the death's head, D'Amville never regains his exhuberant confidence. Indeed, he grows so distraught and terrified that at the trial he must fortify himself with a glass of wine because his guilt intensifies his fear of death. He experiences the fear that Calvin says is the just reward of the reprobate:

And this is true, that the reprobate doe never feele their miserie, but with present destruction: from whence they may not escape: that is to say, when the sinner is obstinate to the end, and hath scorned the patience and long sufferance of God. This is the just reward of late repentaunce: to feele horrible torment without remedie: if we may call a blinde, and astonnished feare of punishment, without any hatred of sinne, or desire of reverting, repentaunce. So Judas also confesseth his sinne, but being overwhelmed with feare, he flyeth the presence of God all that he may. And it is undoubtedly true, that the reprobate have no meane. So long as they have any rest, they are verie carelesse and negligent: but when the wrath of GOD urgeth them, they are rather crushed to peeces, then amended. Therefore their feare maketh them to faint, in so much that they thinke upon nothing but everlasting destruction and the paine of hell.¹³

Like Calvin's reprobate D'Amville has a fear which is without hatred of sin, even though before he dies he confesses his crimes and admits that there exists a power above nature. In contrast to Charlemont, who faces death with cheerful courage, D'Amville, shaken by his fearful conscience, exemplifies the folly of exalting pleasure, wealth, and honor above a contented conscience. His fate is the one that inevitably awaits all epicures. As William Burton says, men who covetously and ambitiously seek the pleasures and profits of

¹³ A Commentarie . . . upon . . . Genesis, p. 144.

this world "make shipwrecke of faith and a good conscience."¹⁴

Levidulcia, wife of Belforest, stepmother of Castabella, and mistress of Sebastian D'Amville, also has the illusory notion that happiness consists in pleasure. Her course roughly parallels D'Amville's. She seeks happiness in pleasure, disregards her conscience, suffers remorse, and commits suicide. Like D'Amville she does not recognize any law above nature. According to her natural philosophy, reason is divorced from nature. To act naturally does not mean to act rationally, as it would to many Renaissance moral philosophers;¹⁵ rather it means to act contrary to reason. Levidulcia asks Castabella why she prefers her absent Charlemont to Rousard:

prefer'st th'affection of an absent love
 Before the sweet possession of a man,
 The barren mind before the fruitful body,
 Where our creation has no reference
 To man but in his body, being made
 Only for generation which, unless
 Our children can be gotten by conceit,
 Must from the body come. If reason were
 Our counsellor, we would neglect the work
 Of generation for the prodigal
 Expense it draws us to of that which is
 The wealth of life. Wise Nature, therefore, hath
 Reserv'd for an inducement to our sense
 Our greatest pleasure in that greatest work,
 Which being offer'd thee, thy ignorance
 Refuses for th'imaginary joy
 Of an unsatisfy'd affection to
 An absent man (I.iv.79-96).

¹⁴ Dauids evidenace or the assurance of God's love (London, 1592), p. 78. Burton is paraphrasing 1 Timothy 1.19.

¹⁵ The idea of nature as a moral norm is discussed in Herndl's The High Design, pp. 13-40.

In advising her daughter to place her nature above her reason, Levidulcia is inverting the hierarchy that many moral philosophers traditionally say a man should honor.

Levidulcia also refuses to allow conscience to interfere with the enjoyment of pleasure. Before meeting in the fateful tryst with Sebastian, which ends in the death of her lover, her husband, and herself, she takes this advice from the bawd Cataplasma:

you wrong yourself
To let consideration of the sin
Molest your conscience (IV.v. 27-29).

By choosing to pursue pleasure rather than follow her conscience, Levidulcia moves downward on the Great Chain of Being, from human to animal to the lowest link, inanimate object. With unintentional irony, she says about her passion for Sebastian:

My strange affection to this man! 'Tis like
That natural sympathy which e'en among
The senseless creatures of the earth commands
A mutual inclination and consent (IV.v. 16-19).

Furthermore, her conscience, which she has grossly offended, torments her so unbearably after the death of Sebastian and Belforest that she stabs herself. Thus, the play once again affords evidence that the pursuit of pleasure and disregard for conscience lead ultimately to damnation.

D'Amville and Levidulcia seek felicity in false goods, and for it they receive their condign punishment: dishonor, death and damnation. Contrasted with them in their search for happiness is Charlemont, who learns to value his

conscience above all worldly goods. In Charlemont, Tourneur expresses his most important idea about man's summum bonum: the peace of conscience gives greater happiness than wealth, honor, and pleasure. This idea is emphasized and repeated by Barckley who says:

If there bee any happy man in this world (said Socrates) it is hee that hath a cleare and undefiled soule, & a cleare conscience stained with nothing: for in him only the misteries of God may bee beheld and seene (pp. 504-05).

And again, in Barckley we read:

Tranquillitie of conscience, and security of innocence maketh a happy life (p. 505).¹⁶

The reason that a man with a good conscience is infinitely happier than a man who possesses mere wealth, pleasure and honor is that his good conscience gives evidence that he is delivered from guilt and punishment, reconciled to God, and that he is "through Christ in a happy and blessed estate, both in respect to the time present and to come."¹⁷ Thus, armed with the assurance of his innocence and the tranquillity of his conscience, Charlemont can live virtuously among vicious and insidious people like D'Amville, Borachio, Levi-dulcia, and Languebeau Snuffe.

Although Charlemont ultimately discovers the inner peace of conscience, he is not a Stoic hero or a "Senecal man."¹⁸ In characterizing Charlemont, Tourneur used many of

¹⁶ See also pp. 477-78 and 538.

¹⁷ John Downname, A Guide to Godlynesse, pp. 77-79.

¹⁸ M. C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of

the conventional virtues of the Stoic hero, such as his control over his passions, moral self-sufficiency, courage and patience. But Tourneur sharply contrasts Charlemont with Chapman's truly Stoic heroes, Clermont, Cato, and Chabot. Chapman's characters are always masters of themselves and their fate. They know that:

For when the happiest outside man on earth
Weighs all his haps together, such a dearth
He shall find in their plenty, every way,
That if with solid judgement he survey
Their goodliest presence, he will one thought call
Of God and a good conscience worth it all.¹⁹

Until his imprisonment when he becomes an emperor over "this little world of man," Charlemont is like Chapman's "outside man" who seeks his happiness in the world rather than within himself. Furthermore, Charlemont suffers with the patience of a Christian, not a Stoic because he never becomes insensible to his pain. Charlemont is a passionate young man and ambitious to gain honor in war. It is not until the trial when D'Amville kills himself and Charlemont gains wealth and honor, (the things that D'Amville too desired) that he

Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge, 1935; reprinted 1969), pp. 182-83; Herschel Baker, *The Wars of Truth* (London, 1952), p. 113; Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy*, p. 91; Henry H. Adams, "Cyril Tourneur on Revenge," *JEGP*, 48 (1949), 83-84. My view is much closer to that taken by Michael Higgins, "The Influence of Calvinistic Thought in Tourneur's *Atheist's Tragedy*," 259-60, Clifford Leech, "The *Atheist's Tragedy* as a Dramatic Comment on Chapman's *Bussy Plays*," *JEGP*, 52 (1953), 528-29, and Peter B. Murray, *A Study of Cyril Tourneur* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 99-105.

¹⁹ Eugenia, ll. 644-49 in *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (New York, 1941), pp. 286-87.

realizes in Chapman's terms, "a good conscience is worth it all."

Specifically, the false good that Charlemont seeks in the "outside" world is honor, and honor for him means a reputation, a good name. A good reputation is necessary for a Christian, but Charlemont's concern for it proceeds from mere vainglory. He tells his uncle D'Amville that his "inclination" and "disposition" move him to war (I.i.64, 75). Then he explains to his father that his "affection" (I.ii.14) urges him to war. But the real motive Charlemont conceals behind these words is a desire to augment his reputation and avoid the ignominy of being reputed a coward. He entreats his father to let him go to war because:

my affection to the war
Is as hereditary as my blood
To ev'ry life of all my ancestry.
Your predecessors were your precedents,
And you are my example. Shall I serve
For nothing but a vain parenthesis
I'th'honour'd story of your family,
Or hang but like an empty scutcheon
Between the trophies of my predecessors
And the rich arms of my posterity?
There's not a Frenchman of good blood and youth,
But either out of spirit or example
Is turn'd a soldier. Only Charlemont
Must be reputed that same heartless thing
That cowards will be bold to play upon (I.ii. 14-28).

And also for the sake of honor he refuses to stay behind with Castabella or to take her with him. He explains to her:

My Castabelle! For myself to stay
Or you to go would either tax my youth
With a dishonourable weakness or
Your loving purpose with immodesty (I.ii. 95-98).

His concern for reputation is so great that it will not even

yield to his ominous premonitions about his father's safety. Furthermore, when the ghost of his dead father reveals the murder to him and commands him to return to France but leave revenge to God, Charlemont refuses on the grounds:

I would not leave
The war, for reputation's sake, upon
An idle apprehension, a vain dream (II.vi. 60-62).

Everything that impedes his quest for honor, his father's wishes, concern for his father's safety, Castabella's love, and the ghost's commands, is blatantly disregarded. The kind of honor Charlemont seeks cannot bring him true felicity. As Barckley says:

Men desire honour and glorie, because they would seeme to bee endued with vertue, by which they confesse that vertue is to be preferred before glorie & honour. And honour is given as we see by dayly experience by man, and many times taken away again by thẽ that give it. But that wherein felicitie consisteth, is a thing more steadfast, and not so easily removed, nor subject to the variable accidents of fortune. Honour is gotten with much labour, maintained with great expences, and lost with intollerable griefe and sorrow (p. 132).

And indeed Charlemont's career demonstrates that such honour is ephemeral, subject to accidents, acquired by much labor, dearly maintained, and lost with much grief.

In his pursuit of honor, Charlemont never violates his conscience, but this happens only because of fortuitous circumstances and not because of virtue. He professes that his inclination to war is impeded by his father's authority and his refusal to grant him the means to fight. But when D'Amville lends him a thousand crowns, Monteferrers' authority becomes much less of a problem. When D'Amville gives

Charlemont the gold, he reminds him that Monteferrers has not yet consented to let Charlemont go to war. To this Charlemont replies:

If entreaty fail,
The force of reputation shall prevail (I.i. 102-03).

The lines are cryptic, but they seem to mean that if his request for permission is denied, his zeal to achieve a good reputation will compel him to go to war without it. But since his importunities are successful, he does not have to override his father's objections. Charlemont is, like Fortinbras, "of unimprovèd mettle hot and full," and even filial obedience, which is commanded by the Decalogue and therefore engraved in the conscience, must yield to affairs of honor.

Honor is certainly not a despicable prize for a Christian, but he must equally value conscience and honor. The idea, which was current during the Renaissance, seems to have begun with Augustine. Calvin, who found it necessary to reject the Stoic idea that conscience is a sufficient guide for a virtuous man, wrote:

ce temoignage de la conscience pour le philosophe a sa valeur, mais notre religion nous prescrit bien autre chose. Deux choses sont necessaires, dit saint Augustin dans La vie commune des cleres: la reputation et la conscience, la conscience pour toi, la reputation pour ton prochain. Celui qui se fiant a sa conscience neglige sa reputation est cruel.²⁰

²⁰ Quoted in Leontine Zanta, La Renaissance du Stoicisme au XVI^e Siècle (Paris, 1914), p. 64.

Thomas Milles, who also quotes the passage from Augustine to support his idea, explains that conscience and reputation are both necessary for a Christian. He argues although of all external goods a man's reputation is the most precious, it is inferior to his internal goods, of which conscience is the principle because in it lies his chief felicity. Furthermore, he continues, a clear conscience indicates a favor of God in this life and intimates eternal salvation in the next. The gain or loss of a good reputation, however, extends no further than the favor or disfavor of men. Therefore, when conscience is clear, the loss of reputation is not so serious because when a man is slandered, he still has a peaceful conscience.²¹ And Robert Mandevill puts Charlemont's concern for reputation into sharp perspective when, paraphrasing Augustine, he says that "care of conscience, with neglect of name, is a self-done wrong, mixt with a kinde of crueltie; care of name with neglect of conscience, is meere vaine-glorie."²²

As long as Charlemont aspires to equal his ancestors in heroic deeds, the desire for honor holds sway. According to the fabricated story related to Montferrers by Borachio, who seems to be credible because he is disguised in the

²¹ The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times, I, 904.

²² Timothies Taske: Or A Christian Sea-Card, guiding through the coastes of a peaceable conscience to a peace constant, and a Crowne immortall (Oxford, 1619), pp. 29-30. For almost the same idea see Robert Johnson, Johnsons Essayes: Expressed In Sundry Exquisite Fancies (London, 1638), sig. E11^r.

uniform of a French soldier, Charlemont died in a gallant battle by the sea. The entire speech is quite long (II.i. 40-70, 73-95, 101-07) and contains some of the most beautiful poetry in the play, but it is chiefly important for its symbolic value. Charlemont indeed is still alive and well, but during the war the vain, inconsiderate Charlemont does die, and he is reborn a man who accepts conscience rather than the desire for honor as his guide. After he returns to France, Charlemont momentarily forgets the ghost's injunction to "attend with patience the success of things,/ But leave revenge unto the King of kings" (I.i. 22-23) and attacks D'Amville and Sebastian. But he sufficiently subdues his passionate nature to obey the ghost, who has come again to aid Charlemont. The ghost commands him:

Hold, Charlemont!
 Let him revenge my murder and thy wrongs
 To whom the justice of revenge belongs (III.ii. 32-24).

And as Charlemont releases the wounded Sebastian, he replies:

You torture me between the passion of
 My blood and the religion of my soul (III.ii. 35-36).

There is a tension here, as there is in all the great revenge plays of the period, between the divine commandment not to recompense evil with evil and the passion to take revenge as a debt of honor. But Charlemont stands apart from characters like Hieronimo, Hamlet, Clermont, and Vendice by accepting the Christian idea that it is more honorable to follow conscience and to surpass one's enemy in patience than

it is to take revenge against him.²³ The "religion" to which Charlemont refers teaches that passion to take revenge against one's enemies must yield to the authority of conscience. Michael Cope explains the idea fully:

Albeeit the world, devoide of good sense, and right judgement, say, that a man is worth nothing if he have not blood in his nailes, and if he revenge not himselfe on them which have offended him, yet neverthesse one cannot so much abuse himselfe in speeche, but his conscience wil shew him in spyte of his head, that one ought to bee peaceable, and not to revenge himselfe on his enemye according as he desireth. For let us take the most wicked man in the worlde, who if he have done injury to any one, whome he esteemeth stronger then himself, he wil be content that he which is offended, should holde his peace and dissemble the injurie which is done to him, and not revenge it, he wil not thinke him for this, a man of no value. Likewise if he whom the wicked hath offended, goe about, and force himself to be revenged, the wicked man wil seeke to spease him, and shew him that the offence is not so great, that he ought so to covet to be revenged. Cain sheweth us this somewhat: for having offended God by the murther which hee had committed, his wil was good, that GOD who was

²³ That Elizabethans condemned revenge as a sin against God, who has claimed for himself the exclusive right to punish sinners, has been proved by L. B. Campbell, "Theories of Revenge in Renaissance England," MP 29 (1931), 281-96. Miss Campbell's research, however, only scratches the surface. In addition to her references, see the following: Cope, A Godly and learned Exposition uppon the Proverbes, fols. 421^v-422^v; Wilson, A Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, pp. 1067-69; Calvin, The Sermons . . . Upon . . . Deuteronomie, p. 695, Commentarie upon Romanes, fols. 170^r-171^r, A Commentary Upon . . . Isaiah, pp. 424-25, The Institution Of Christian Religion, fols. 163^r-163^v, 629^v-630^r, and The Psalmes of David and others. With M. John Calvins Commentaries (n.p., 1571), Part I, fols. 52^v, 91^r, Part II, fols. 21^v, and 127^r; Jermin, Paraphrasticall Meditations, . . . Upon . . . The Proverbs, p. 288; Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters Of The First Epistle generall of St. Peter, pp. 498, 686-87; Floyd, The Picture of a perfit Common wealth, p. 139; Robert Cleaver, A Sermon . . . on Psalm 51. verse 1 (London, 1610), p. 22; La Noue, The Politicke and Militarie Discourses, p. 83; and Leighton, Vertue Triumphant, sig. F₃^r.

the stronger should have left him unpunished. And seeing that he could not shunne the judgement, nor flye the vengeance of God, he complaineth saying, my punishment is greater then I can wel beare. Wherein one may see that the conscience of a man teacheth him that one ought not to be revenged over his enemy. And when Saule who was a wicked reprobate at divers times justifieth David or that he had the power and opportunitie to revenge himselfe, and yet nevertheles had spared him: he sheweth us that a man be he never so disordinate hath witnes in his conscience that he ought not to revenge himselfe over his enemies according to his owne desire and pleasure.²⁴

George Gifford defends the man who withholds revenge because of his conscience. To those who engage in "private quarrels" he denies the name "valiant or brave men." Some men, he says:

will smile at this, and say they make conscience a cloake to cover their cowardlines. When they have no manhood in them, they would fight if they durst and not beare the reproach, but because they dare not, they pretend humilitie, patience, and long suffereing. How shall it be known what is in a man if he will not fight? For an answer unto this, I say if a man be withheld from revenging himselfe through coardlines of hart, it is no vertue: but if hee bee one that will not in a right quarrell feare anie man, then doth he not make cōscience a cloal of cowardlines.²⁵

Rather than take revenge, the Christian was supposed to bear private injuries with patience, which is what the ghost of Montferrers advises Charlemont when it first visits him. La Primaudaye says:

When wee thinke to hurt the body of our enemy, which is but the executioner of the evill disposition of his Spirite, wee hurt our owne soule, making it guiltie of the judgement of God, who forbiddeth us all revenge and

²⁴ A Godly and learned Exposition upon the Proverbes, fol. 500^r-01^r.

²⁵ A Treatise Of True Fortitude, sigs. [D₄^r]-[D₄^v].

commaundeth us to possesse our soules in patience, and never to requite evill for evill, but to waite the Lordes leasure, being assuredly perswaded that he will save and deliver us.²⁶

William Martyn also declares that only the man who bears his injuries with patience is truly valiant:

For if a man be wronged by his frend, she [patience] maketh him to banish anger, and telleth him, that in forbearing to revenge, he is truly valiant, who can suppress and discreetely conquere his owne rage.²⁷

And John Norden agrees that to endure private injuries with patience is courageous:

And if any professour of armes seeme to take exception at this, in regarde that refusall of a challenge may argue in him pusillanimitie: let him thinke that the effects of true magnanimitie and valour is to beare and to endure with all modestie and patience the wrongs of private injuries.²⁸

The position taken by La Primaudaye, Martyn, and Norden seems to have been the orthodox position of the Christian Humanists; Elyot, for example, says that:

Unto him that is valiant of courage it is a great pain and difficulty to sustain injury, and not to be forth-with revenged. And yet often times it is accounted more valiantness in the sufferance than in hasty revenging.²⁹

In obeying his conscience's command to reject revenge as a debt of honor, Charlemont's conduct exemplifies the

²⁶ The French Academie, p. 325.

²⁷ Youths Instructions, p. 81.

²⁸ The Mirror of Honor (London, 1597), p. 24.

²⁹ The Book named The Governor, p. 191. See also John Chrysostom, An Exposition Upon the Epistle of S. Paule the Apostle to the Ephesians (London, 1581), pp. 210-15, and Hall, The Works, p. 177.

Christian ideal of patient fortitude. By exercising his patience, Charlemont achieves a good reputation that surpasses that which he won in his military exploits. For his patience, he is rewarded with the epithets "honest fellow" (III.ii.37, 62) and "honest man" (V.ii.278). In these instances honest has one of its most exalted meanings: "of good moral character, virtuous, upright, well-disposed" (OED, s.v. Honest, 3A).

Charlemont's patience is immediately tested when he is sent to prison for having attacked D'Amville and Sebastian. There Charlemont can suffer his imprisonment and his other misfortunes like a Christian because his good conscience, peaceful with the knowledge that revenge has been renounced, sustains him. In prison, Charlemont must endure the afflictions of the elect. Distinguished from D'Amville's afflictions, particularly the deaths of Sebastian and Rousard, Charlemont's are not punishments but corrections which help him to salvation. The Reformers believed that God has different intentions in afflicting the reprobate and the elect. The reprobate, like D'Amville, suffer afflictions in this life which, according to Calvin, "painted out unto us as it were a certain entrie of hell, frõ whence they do already see a far of their eternall damnation." They are punished "but onely that, to their great hurt, they should prove God to be a judge and revenger." But, "whom the Lord loveth he chaseneth, and scourageth every son whom he receiveth"

(Hebrews 12.6). The elect, however, suffer afflictions so that they will come to admendment. The difference between the afflictions of the reprobate and the elect are well illustrated by the cases of Saul and David. When God "did cast Saul out of the kingdome, he punished him to revenge-ment: When he toke from David his yonge sonne, he corrected him to admendment."³⁰ God's purpose for afflicting the elect is to test them. In his trial Charlemont proves that he is among them, because instead of resenting divine justice, despairing, or growing insensitive to his pain, Charlemont acknowledges that his troubles are sent from heaven and continues to glorify God. But most important, he is amended by them.

One essential difference between the way the elect and the reprobate suffer their afflictions is that the former attribute their afflictions to God and the latter to chance. (In D'Amville's case, the afflictions are blamed on nature.)³¹ In this respect, Charlemont's behavior is

³⁰ The Institution Of Christian Religion, fols. 267^r-268^r. See also Calvin, A Commentarie On . . . Hebrewes, p. 292 and A Commentarie upon . . . Corinthians, fol. 205^r; John Knox, A Fort for the afflicted. Wherein are ministred many notable and excellent remedies against the stormes of tribulation (London, 1580), sigs. [A₆^r]-B₄^r, and Anon. Two Guides to a good life, sigs. [F₇^v]-[F₈^r].

³¹ Knox, A Fort for the afflicted, sigs. A₃^r-A₃^v; Calvin, A Commentary Upon . . . Isaiah, pp. 62, 116, and The Sermons . . . Upon . . . Deuteronomie, p. 1092; Wilson, A Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, p. 276; Augustine Marlorate, A Catholike exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John (M.p., 1574), fol. 119^r-119^v, and Henry Dullinger, Fiftie Godlie And Learned Sermons . . . Containing The chiefe

entirely consistent with that of the elect, because Charlemont never doubts that "Heaven, thy goodness doth command/ Our punishments" (III.iii. 1-2). Charlemont is much like David who imputes his sickness to the hand of God. In his commentary on Psalm 38.3, Calvin explains why it was important for him to do so:

For onlesse he had ben perswaded that it was layd upon him by Gods appoyntment: he could never have found in his hart too seeke remedy of his wound at his hand. Wee see how all men in a maner bee blynd in gods judgements, and dreame that they be but casuall happes: so as scarce one among a hundred hath an eye to the hand of God . . . And surely whosoever goeth no further than the feeling of his owne grief: he differeth nothing from brute beastes. But forasmuch as all GODS squoorges put us in mynd of his judgement: the trew wisdome of the faythfull, is to have an eye to the hand of him that striketh.³²

Charlemont does become mindful of God's justice during his imprisonment. By that time he has lost his father, his lady, his land, and his wealth, and he is moved to bitterly question God's justice:

I grant thee, Heaven, thy goodness doth command
Our punishments, but yet no further than
The measure of our sins. How should they else
Be just? Or how should that good purpose of
Thy justice take effect by bounding men
Within the confines of humanity,
When our afflictions do exceed our crimes?
Then they do rather teach the barb'rous world
Examples that extend her cruelties
Beyond their own dimensions, and instruct
Our actions to be more, more barbarous (III.iii. 1-11).

and principall points of Christian Religion (London, 1587), p. 306.

³² The Psalmes of David, Part I, fol. [150V]. The folio is incorrectly numbered 142.

But he does not long remain in this skeptical posture, for he immediately realizes that misery is the result of human misinterpretation, not God's injustice. Charlemont realizes that man is miserable because he always compares his condition with that of those whom he thinks to be more fortunate:

O my afflicted soul, how torment swells
 Thy apprehension with profane conceit
 Against the sacred justice of my God!
 Our own constructions are the authors of
 Our misery. We never measure our
 Conditions but with men above us in
 Estate, so while our spirits labour to
 Be higher than our fortunes, th'are more base
 (II.iii. 12-19).

Thus, Charlemont momentarily questions God's justice, but rather than blaspheme God and suppose that his suffering is without merit, in the end he glorifies God and suffers patiently.

The afflictions amend Charlemont as they tend to do the elect. Specifically, Charlemont's amendment comes in the form of increased self-knowledge. The Reformation believed that one function of affliction was to teach the elect self-knowledge, and the Reformers specified that this was knowledge of one's sinfulness.³³ Affliction also leads Charlemont to greater self-knowledge. Although his new self-knowledge implies a recognition that he overvalued

³³ Calvin, The Sermons . . . Upon . . . Deuteronomie, p. 1092; John Hooper, A Declaration of Christ and his Office in The British Reformers (Philadelphia, 1842), V, 76; Adam Harsnet, A Cordiall For the Afflicted: Touching The Necessitie and Utilitie of Afflictions (London, 1632), pp. 36-37, 446-50; Daniel Dyke, Two Treatises . . . The Schoole of Affliction, p. 346.

worldly honor, it consists more in recognition that control of the inner, spiritual life is more important than anything else the external world has to offer. With the new insight that overvaluation of worldly goods is the chief cause of human misery, Charlemont rejects those things D'Amville has acquired as a result of his misfortune and attains a greater degree of order within himself than he had previously known. Whereas he once felt that the death of his father and the forced marriage of Castabella were "wrongs,/ Whereof the lightest is more heavy than/ The strongest patience can endure to bear" (III.i. 143-45), he now has such control over his passions that he can endure all the malice Sebastian can inflict on him. He tells Sebastian:

I have a heart above the reach
Of thy most violent maliciousness,
A fortitude in scorn of thy contempt--
Since Fate is pleas'd to have me suffer it--
That can bear more than thou hast power t'inflict.
I was a baron; that thy father has
Depriv'd me of. Instead of that I am
Created king. I've lost a signory
That was confin'd within a piece of earth,
A wart upon the body of the world.
But now I am an emp'ror of a world,
This little world of man. My passions are
My subjects, and I can command them laugh,
Whilst thou dost tickle 'em to death with misery
(III.iii. 34-47).

As a result of this new insight into the importance of internal order, Charlemont comes to realize that the things of the external world are inferior to his peace of conscience.

Charlemont suffers patiently like a Christian, not like a Stoic, because he never becomes insensitive to his

pain. The Reformers distinguished between true Christian patience and Stoic apathy, which they did not consider to be patience at all because it took away all feeling of grief. In his commentary on Psalm 30.12, Calvin condemns Stoic apathy because a man who lacks sorrow will not turn to God for help; he says that David:

confesseth that he was not so blockish or steelyhearted, but that hee moored in heavinesse and sorow: so hee sheweth that his verye moorning drave him to desyre GOD too turne away his wrath. Eyther of these things is most woorthy to be marked: First least wee imagin a stoicall hardhartednesse in the Saints, that should take away all feeling of greefe 34

Bullinger admonishes his readers to reject the opinion of the Stoics touching "their Indolentia or lacke of greefe," because without grief there is no true patience. He writes:

We are too unthankfull towards our God, unlesse we do willinglye and cheerefullye suffer calamities at his hande. And yet such cheerefulnesse is not required of us, as shoulde take away all sense and feeling of greefe and bitternesse. Otherwise there should be no pacience in the Saints suffering of the crosse of Christ, unlesse they were pinched by the heart with greef, and vexed in body with outward troubles.³⁵

The proper way to suffer patiently is described by Calvin:

. . . not that mē should become blockishe, so as they should have no heavinesse at all, nor be combined with any grieve when they feelee adversities: but the vertue is when they can moderate themselves, and holde suche a measure, as they cease not to glorifie God in the midst of all theyr miseries: nor bee so over commed and swallowed up with sorrowe and anguishes, as to quaille altogether: but fight against their owne passions,

³⁴ The Psalms of David, Part I, fol. 111^r,

³⁵ Fiftie Godlie And Learned Sermons, p. 301.

untill they maye bee able too frame themselves too
the good will of God.³⁶

Charlemont never becomes "blockishe," although he is aware of the alternative because it is mentioned to him by Sebastian who says that the prison will "humble the pride/ o'your mortality and arm your soul in complete patience to endure the weight of affliction without feeling it" (III.iii. 27-29).³⁷ Rather, he suffers patiently in the way described by Calvin: he bears his torment with feeling without being consumed by sorrow; he moderates his passions, making them his subjects; and he glorifies the sacred justice of God. Charlemont's patience is in every respect exemplary Christian.

Charlemont, however, could not endure his afflictions with such patience without a good conscience. Robert Bolton says that "the spirit of a man being found in securitie, and

³⁶ Sermons of Master John Calvin, upon the Booke of Job, trans. Arthur Golding (London, [1574]), p. 31. See also Wilson, A Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, p. 278. Milton also distinguishes between patience and Stoic apathy; see CD.II.10 in The Works, XVII, 253. William Sclater, An Exposition . . . upon the First Epistle to the Thessalonians (London, 1619), p. 317, also condemns the Stoic's "blockish senselesnesse." For other discussions of the differences between Stoic and Christian attitudes toward the affections which are not germane to The Atheist's Tragedy but are essential to an understanding of Renaissance Stoicism, see: Calvin, The Institution Of Christian Religion, fols. 288^v-289^r; Wilson, A Commentarie upon the . . . Romanes, pp. 279-80; Michael Wigmore, The Good Adventure (London, 1620), pp. 17-18, 27. Henry W. Sams has documented the criticism of Stoic apathy during this time, but he has not explored the theological dimension of the criticism; see "Anti-Stoicism in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England," SP, 41 (1944), 65-78.

³⁷ In Massinger's The Roman Actor, the two senators, Junius Rusticus and Palphurius Sura, endure the torments of the hangmen with true Stoic insensibility.

seconded with a good conscience, is able to beare out his infirmities, and all the miseries incident to his nature.³⁸ Robert Harris says that "conscience is a bulwark, a wall of brass and keeps off al invasions and assaults . . . by this a man raigns over all tribulations."³⁹ Commenting on Proverbs 11.5, Cope says that a man's "perfect and upright conscience shal overcome al these difficulties [of the world], and shal passe over and escape al these stoppes."⁴⁰ Jeremiah Dyke states that a good conscience gives a man "Holy boldnesse."⁴¹ And John Downame believes that in adversity a good conscience "will secure us that wee shall not receive any harme."⁴²

Charlemont's good conscience not only sustains him during his ordeal in prison, but during his trial it gives him the courage to face his punishment. His courage to face death, Charlemont tells the envious D'Amville, arises

³⁸ A Discourse About The State Of True Happiness, p. 7.

³⁹ Two Sermons: Wherein We Are Taught, 1. How To Get, 2. How to Keepe, 3. How To Use A Good Conscience (London, 1630), p. 5.

⁴⁰ A Godly and learned Exposition uppon the Proverbes, fol. 168^v.

⁴¹ Good Conscience, p. 116.

⁴² A Guide to Godlynnesse, p. 79. See also Moffett, A Commentarie Upon . . . Proverbes, p. 234; Calvin, Sermons . . . upon the Booke of Job, p. 131; Jermin, Paraphrasticall Meditations . . . Upon . . . Proverbs, p. 637; Jewel, An Exposition upon . . . Thessalonians, p. 95; Wilcox, A Short, Yet sound Commentarie . . . [on] The Proverbes, fol. 60^r; Scalter, The Sick souls Salve, p. 1; and Hanapus, The ensamples of Vertue and vice, sig. Ff5^f.

from "peace of conscience" (V,ii.160). It is upon his peace of conscience that Charlemont's happiness rests. His happy life is that kind' Calvin describes in his commentary on Psalm 1.5:

The Prophete sheweth that the state of happy life is founded upon a good conscience: and therefore that it is no marvel though the ungodly do sone slide frõ the happinesse which they imagined upon. We see now how the Prophete avoucheth the ungodly to be miserable, bycause happynesse is one of the inwarde goodes of the conscience. He denieth not but that before they be driven to the tryal, al things go well with them: but he denieth them to be happye, onlesse they be founded upon substantial and stedfast purenesse.⁴³

Having gone through the flames and furnaces of affliction with a good conscience, Charlemont cannot only look forward to happiness in heaven but also to happiness during his remaining years on earth. God takes vengeance against D'Amville for all his sins,⁴⁴ and at his death Charlemont is restored his wealth, his land, his title, and his lady. But more important, he gains the "honour" he sought since he wanted to go to war. He boasts to D'Amville before he leaps onto the scaffold:

D'Amville, to show thee with what light respect
I value death and thy insulting pride,
Thus like a warlike navy on the sea,
Bound for the conquest of some wealthy land,
Pass'd through the stormy troubles of this life
And now arriv'd upon the armed coast,
In expectation of the victory

⁴³ The Psalmes of David, Part I, fol. 2^r-2^v.

⁴⁴ Campbell proves that the Elizabethans believed that God not only forbid man to take revenge but promised to repay the sinner with vengeance; see "Theories of Revenge in Renaissance England," 282.

Whose honour lies beyond this exigent,
Through mortal danger, with an active spirit,
Thus I aspire to undergo my death (V.ii. 121-130).

The "honour" to which Charlemont feels entitled, and indeed deserves, is something distinct from merely a good reputation. It is that fame which comes only from virtuous actions performed by a man with a good conscience. DuVair says:

Indeede true honour is the glittering & beaming brightness of a good and vertuous action, which rebounds from our consciences unto the sight of them with whom wee live, and so by a reflexion in our selves, brings us a testimonie from others of the good opinion which they have of us, which makes us to enjoy great comfort of minde;

and he states emphatically:

Let us perswade our selves that there is no true honor in the world but that which commeth from vertue. Secondly, that vertue seeks no greater or ampler theater to shew her selfe in, then her owne conscience.⁴⁵

In the character of Castabella, Tourneur emphasizes the idea that it is in a peaceful conscience that one finds the strength to patiently endure afflictions. Like Charlemont, she suffers her miseries patiently and attributes them to heaven. Lamenting that she will be forced to marry Rousard, she addresses heaven:

Yet, since thy pleasure hath inflicted it,
If not my heart, my duty shall submit (II.iii. 13-14).

And also like Charlemont, her conscience, "justly clear as harmless innocence" (V.ii.189), gives her the courage to face death.

⁴⁵ The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks, trans. T. J. (London, 1598), pp. 74-75, 79.

In the careers of Charlemont and Castabella Tourneur demonstrates that only a peaceful conscience can assure man's happiness in this life and in the next. Unlike the pursuit of the specious values of the external world, wealth, pleasure, and honor, which not only have attendant miseries but also invite damnation, the quest for a good conscience leads to bold acts of patience which are the pathways to God, man's summum bonum. It is the Christian concept of a good conscience that gives The Atheist's Tragedy a distinct moral vision, because without it Tourneur could not have seen in an atheist's tragedy an honest man's revenge.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The first part of this study attempted to determine what the concept of conscience meant to the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By considering the concept in relation to its Renaissance moral and theological background, we are in a better position to understand the plays of the English Renaissance in which this concept appears.

The first chapter indicates that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, voluntarism, nominalism, and skepticism challenged the Thomistic interpretation of conscience as an act of the practical reason. By either arguing against the existence of natural law or by denying that man may accurately know it, Calvin, Luther, Hobbes, and Montaigne undermined the basis of the Scholastic concept of conscience.

The second chapter suggests that many Reformers responded to the contemporary confusion about the meaning of the concept by defining it according to Scripture. They successfully countered the objections of the voluntarists, nominalists, and skeptics by asserting that conscience is a divine faculty which is a sure guide to salvation when it is

purified by God's grace. Many Reformers, especially William Perkins and his followers, maintained that conscience is appointed by God to be man's moral guide, his tormentor, and comfortor. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, therefore, conscience was considered by many to be much more than an act of the practical reason.

The third chapter indicated that the Reformers assigned numerous roles to conscience. From the Protestant point of view, conscience judges the morality of man's actions, bears witness, accuses, excuses, torments, and comforts. They linked its ability to perform these functions to its spiritual condition. If conscience is enlightened by the word of God and purified by God's grace, then conscience performs these functions so well that it can be used as a sure guide to salvation. But if it is excessively sensitive or hard, then conscience ceases to function in the ways God intended it.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters then discuss the roles of conscience in the English morality plays, Shakespeare's Macbeth, and Cyril Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy. We found that in each of these plays, conscience performs the roles assigned to it in Reformation moral theology. In the chapter on the English morality plays, we discovered that conscience acts as a guide to salvation by informing the morality here about the moral law of the Bible. For example, in Mundus et Infans, Impatient Poverty, Three Ladies of

London, and The Conflict of Conscience the character of Conscience informs the heroes about the Biblical laws governing the acquisition and use of wealth. In all of these plays, evil is interpreted as a violation of the norms of conscience and good as obedience to them. In the late morality plays, The Conflict of Conscience and Appius and Virginia, the character of Conscience is also given the role of exercising God's judgment against sinners.

In the chapter on Macbeth, we discovered that Shakespeare regards Macbeth's concept of courage as brute valor to be a violation of conscience. By disobeying the dictates of his conscience Macbeth is appropriately punished with despair and damnation. In this tragedy, Shakespeare makes his statement about the relationship between conscience and courage by using three conventions established by the morality dramatists for presenting the character of Conscience. First, he characterizes Macbeth as a man with a conscience that acts as a spiritual guide and as a tormentor. Shakespeare then presents Macbeth rejecting his conscience and suffering from the fears that conscience inflicts upon him. Third, he uses the spiritual pattern that begins with a conflict of conscience and ends with despair to define the career of Macbeth. Shakespeare handles this pattern with irony. When Macbeth rejects his conscience in order to become courageous in Lady Macbeth's terms, he only achieves the debased courage of the desperate. In this play as well as in the

morality, the catastrophe clearly derives from the violation of the recognizable demands of conscience.

The chapter on The Atheist's Tragedy also indicates that Tourneur uses the conventions established by the morality play dramatists. But he uses them to make a moral statement that appears neither in the morality plays nor in Macbeth, and that is: a good conscience is the greatest kind of happiness man can find on earth. To make this point, he contrasts D'Amville's and Levidulcia's pursuit of happiness with Charlemont's. D'Amville and Levidulcia ignore the guidance of their consciences, and suffer the torments of false goods. Charlemont, however, obeys his conscience and is properly rewarded with happiness. By the end of the play, he realizes that a happy life depends more on a good conscience than on honor.

Briefly, then, the conclusion of this dissertation is that the concept of conscience dramatized in the morality plays with a character of Conscience, Shakes'peare's Macbeth, and Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy is the one formulated and popularized by the Protestant Reformers. For many of them, conscience is not merely an act of the practical reason but a divine faculty that man must use as his guide to salvation.

APPENDIX A

FERDINAND'S GUILTY CONSCIENCE IN

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI, V.ii.

In John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi (1613-14), Ferdinand, the twin brother of the Duchess, descends into madness after seeing the corpses of his sister and her children (IV.ii).¹ The Doctor diagnoses Ferdinand's insanity as "lycanthropia," which is caused by an overflow of the "melancholy humor" (V.ii. 6-21). This medical explanation, however, is wrong, because what the Doctor considers a phenomenon of abnormal psychology is really the spiritual malady of a guilty conscience. He is like those "natural and worldly men," whom Alexander Hume condemns for confusing a troubled conscience with melancholy.² He states:

This kinde of trouble that proceids from the Conscience, seemis sa strange & diffiail to natural and worldly men, that they can hardly consave it, but takes it ever up wrang: and estiems those persons that are so troubled, either to be furious, lunatick, or fantastick: either els to have taken sum apprehension, melancholie, or vaine conceit.³

Because the Doctor seeks a natural cause for Ferdinand's

¹ Citations to The Duchess of Malfi are from the Revels Plays edition, ed. John Russell Brown (London, 1964).

² Bosolas also confuses melancholy with his troubled conscience; see V.iii. 345-47. Francisco makes the same mistake in The White Devil, ed. John Russell Brown, 2nd. ed. (Revels Plays: London, 1966), IV.i. 102-15.

³ Ane Treatise of Conscience, p. 36.

illness, he fails to cure him. Like Lady Macbeth, Ferdinand at this point in the play needs more "the divine than the physician."

Ferdinand's lycanthropy and his attack on his shadow in Act V, scene ii are two indications that the duke is suffering from a guilty conscience and not melancholy. Although some Renaissance psychologists considered lycanthropy to be a result of sexual jealousy, Ferdinand's is not a sign of his supposedly sexual obsession for his sister.⁴ Rather it emblemizes his feelings of guilt for having ordered the torture and murder of the Duchess and her children. Webster's dramatization of Ferdinand's guilt is consistent with some Reformers' understanding of the effects of an accusing conscience. For example, Perkins warns that when conscience is aroused by the judgement of God, "it waxeth cruell and fierce like a wild beast."⁵ His view is corroborated by John Abernathy, who asserts: "conscience may lye still a space, and be calme-like: but like a wild beast, while it sleepeth, seemeth tame and gentle, but when it is awaked, flieth in a mans face to devoure him."⁶

⁴ See Lawrence Rabb, The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642 (East Lansing, Mich., 1951), pp. 136-37, and Elizabeth Brennan, "The Relationship Between Brother and Sister in the Plays of John Webster," MLR, 58 (1963), 493-94.

⁵ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 3.

⁶ A Christian and Heavenly Treatise: Containing Physicke for the Soule, 3rd ed. (London, 1630). First published in 1615.

Other Renaissance writers identified this "wild beast" of conscience with the wolf, because it dramatically suggests the ferocity with which the accusing conscience attacks the guilty. For example, in the section "Conscientia," Nannus Mirabellius records two adagia which relate the guilty conscience to the wolf: "Lupus aquilam fugit" and "Lupus ante clamorem festinet." He explicates the former: "Ubi periculum imminens evitari non potest" and the latter: "Ubi quis admissi conscius, ultro timet, priusquam accusetur."⁷ Also, in Origens Repentance: After He Had Sacrificed To The Idols of the Heathens (London, 1619), Stephen Jerome compares the afflicted conscience with the "wolf" (p. 8). And in Thomas Middleton's A Trick to Catch the Old One (1604-06), Hoard refers to the "wolf" of Lucre's conscience (I.iii.34).⁸ Thus, unlike the Doctor who cannot fathom Ferdinand's madness because he is looking for a natural cause, those members of the audience who knew the wolf of conscience topos could have recognized that the lycanthropy indicates the duke suffers from a guilty conscience.

Ferdinand's mad behavior in Act V, scene ii, however, is not specifically lycanthropic. But when the duke attacks his shadow, he again exhibits a symptom of the guilty conscience: fear of one's shadow (l. 38). Ferdinand's

⁷ Florilegii, col. 577.

⁸ The New Mermaids edition, ed. G. J. Watson (London, 1968).

startling act has provoked much speculation about its meaning,⁹ but no one has seen any relation between it and the guilty conscience.

As many Renaissance texts testify, a guilty conscience makes a man afraid of his own shadow. According to Perkins, for example, "the guiltie conscience will make a man afraid . . . if hee see but his owne shadow on a suddaine . . . Proverbs 28.1 The wicked flyeth when no man pursueth him."¹⁰ The guilty man's fear of his shadow is depicted in an emblem by Johannes Sambucus. The picture shows a man turning around to attack his shadow with his sword. The motto is "In Poenam Sectatur Et Umbra," and it is accompanied by the following poem:

Accinetus gladio, facing; in pectore versans
Coepum sollicitat suspitiosus iter.
Saepius & timide se vertens conspicit umbram:
Hanc verit, a sese & longius ire iubet.
Quumq; leves ictus, ac mutua vulnera vidit,
Hic, ait, est sceleris proditor ille mei.
O, quoties terret sceleratos conscius error,
Armant in propriam fata manusq; necem.
Invidia inflatos ne cures, proteget ille
Pignore qui summo sustulit omne malum.¹¹

⁹ See, for example, the interpretations of Peter B. Murray, A Study of John Webster (The Hague, 1969), p. 165, and R. W. Dent, John Webster's Borrowing (Berkeley, Cal., 1960), p. 248. And see also Brown's gloss on this line, p. 142.

¹⁰ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 40. Among Renaissance references to this commonplace are: Nicholas Ling, Politeuphuia Wits Commonwealth (London, 1597), fol. 11^v, and Jerome, Origens Repentance, p. 6 (mispaginated 15).

¹¹ Emblemata, Et Aliquot Nummi Antiqui Operis, 4th ed. (Antwerp, 1576), p. 243.

The picture provides a close visual parallel to Ferdinand's attack on his shadow. Furthermore, the explicative poem suggests that Ferdinand's act may be motivated by a fear that conscience will reveal his role in the torture and murder of the Duchess.

Because dramatists, poets, and emblemists often draw upon common sources for their material, it would be rash to assert that Sambucus' emblem is definitely Webster's source for the idea that a guilty man like Ferdinand would attack his shadow. The parallel, however, offers further evidence that Ferdinand's attack on his shadow, like his lycanthropy, is a symptom that the duke is suffering from a guilty conscience.

APPENDIX B

SHAKESPEARE'S "WILD SEA" OF CONSCIENCE METAPHOR

(HENRY VIII, II.iv. 195-200) AND ISAIAH 57.20

In Shakespeare's Henry VIII, King Henry explains to the members of the ecclesiastical court why he must divorce his childless wife:

I weigh'd the danger that my realms stood in
By this my issue's fail, and that gave to me
Many a groaning throe: thus hulling in
The wild sea of my conscience, I did steer
Toward this remedy whereupon we are
Now present here together (II.iv. 195-200).¹

The New Arden editor suggests that Shakespeare may be indebted to Holinshed, whom he follows closely in this scene, for his image of conscience. But in the Chronicles conscience is like a ship "being tossed on the waves of a scrupulous mind,"² and in Henry VIII conscience is like a "wild sea." Actually the metaphor is an echo of Isaiah 57.20, which was considered a description of a troubled conscience during the Renaissance. The Geneva version reads: "the wick are like a raging sea, when it cannot rest." On this passage the Geneva commentator writes: "their [the wicked's] evil conscience doeth ever torment them, & therefore they cã never rest."³ Calvin praises the passage

¹ The New Arden edition, ed. R. A. Foakes, 34d ed. (London, 1957).

² The Chronicles (London, 1587), III, 907.

³ Shakespeare would have found "mare fervens" (Vulgate)

as an elegant and judicious description of the vexed conscience and explicates the image of the "raging sea." As the sea is tossed into a rage by a tempest, he explains, the "wicked are vexed by a secret worme, which cleaveth fast to their conscience"; "their wicked cogitations amaze them, and cause them to rage, and the guilt and scruples of their consciences astonish them."⁴ And according to John Woolton, Isaiah here expresses "the horror of an evill Conscience."⁵ Thus, Shakespeare's "wild sea" of conscience metaphor derives from Isaiah 57.20 as it was interpreted by many Reformers, rather than from Holinshed's Chronicles.⁶

translated "raging sea" in the Coverdale Bible (1535), Great Bible (1539), Bishops' Bible (1568), and Douay Bible (1609-10). In The Prophete Isaye (London, 1531), George Joye renders it "wode sea," and the Authorized Version has "troubled sea." Isaiah 57.20 inspired at least two poems during the Renaissance: John Davies of Hereford's "That there is no peace to the Wicked" in The Muses Sacrifice, pp. 88-89, and Henry Vaughan's "The Storm" in Poetry and Prose, ed. L. C. Martin (London, 1963), pp. 254-55.

⁴ A Commentary Upon . . . Isaiah, p. 592.

⁵ Of The Conscience, sig. F3^v. For the same interpretation of Isaiah 57.20, see also: Dyke, Good Conscience, pp. 257-58, Byfield, A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters . . ., p. 506, and John Brinsley, The True Watch (London, 1606), p. 7.

⁶ St. Bernard of Clairvaux adumbrated Shakespeare's use of this metaphor: quoting Psalm 104.25, he says: "conscientia hominis est quasi mare magnum et spatiosum, ubi reptilia quorum non est numerus" (Tractatus de Conscientia, PL, CLXXXIV, 553).

APPENDIX C

SCORPIONS AND THE STING OF CONSCIENCE: THE
 MEANING OF MACBETH, III.ii.36

Macbeth's tortured enigmatic cry, "O! full of scorpions is my mind dear wife" (III.ii.36) has received a baffling diversity of interpretations. Roland M. Smith suggests that Macbeth is referring to the superstition that smelling basil breeds scorpions on the brain.¹ G. R. Elliott and Roland M. Frye assert that Macbeth's metaphor reveals a conscience tormented by guilt.² In his edition of the play (London, 1962), J. H. Walters glosses the line: "(a) pricking of conscience, (b) jealousy of Banquo, (c) tortures of fear" (p. 116). Clifford Davidson suggests that the scorpion image may derive from the traditional iconography of Judas.³ But the most thoroughly documented study of this

¹ "Macbeth's Cyme Once More," MLN, 60 (1945), 33-36.

² Seriatim: Dramatic Providence in Macbeth (Princeton, N. J., 1958), p. 120; Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine (Princeton, N. J., 1963), 176.

³ "Full of Scorpions is My Mind," TLS, Nov. 4, 1965, p. 988. Although neither Davidson nor George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (New York, 1966), p. 24, who is Davidson's source for the idea, offers any evidence for the currency of the iconographical tradition in Western art, one seems to have existed. In an illumination of the Last Supper on a leaf from a Choir book, executed in Florence during the last half of the fourteenth century, now in the Morgan Library in New York City (M. 653-54), a black halo with scorpions encircles the head of Judas.

line has been made by Dennis Biggins, who cogently argues that in Renaissance literature the scorpion often emblemizes "flattery treachery." His conclusion, however, that Macbeth thinks of Banquo and Fleance as scorpions because he fears treachery from them is less convincing because he does not consider Macbeth's remark in its appropriate dramatic context.⁴ When Macbeth enters in Act III, Scene ii, he is apparently brooding over the murder of Duncan, because Lady Macbeth asks him:

How now my lord? why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts, which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard: what's done is done (ll. 8-12).

He tells his wife that these guilty thoughts have plagued him with fear and afflicted his sleep with "terrible dreams" (ll. 17-19). It is these same thoughts that sting his mind like scorpions.

Macbeth may think of these thoughts as pricking his mind like the stings of scorpions because during the Renaissance the comparison of a guilty conscience to the sting of a scorpion was conventional. It seems to have its genesis in Reformation commentaries on Revelation 9.3-5, 10. The Geneva version reads:

And there came out of the smoke Locustes upon the earth,
and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the
earth have power. And it was commanded them, that they

⁴ "Scorpions, Serpents, and Treachery in Macbeth," *Shaks*, L (1965), 29-36. See also his brief note, "Full of Scorpions," *TLS*, Feb. 10, 1966, p. 110.

shulde not hurt the grasse of the earth, nether anie grene thing, nether anie tree: but onely those men which have not the seale of God in their foreheades. And to them was commanded that they shulde not kill them, but that they shulde be vexed five moneths, and that their paine shulde be as the paine that cometh of a scorpion, when he hath stung a mā . . . And they [the locusts] has tailles like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tailles & their power was to hurt mē five moneths.

Like medieval commentators on this passage,⁵ many Reformers interpreted the locusts to mean heretics, but some found that their resemblance to the treacherous scorpion made them a particularly appropriate symbol of the arch-heretics, the Roman clergy.⁶ In his Catholike exposition upon the Revelation of Sainct John (n.p., 1574), Augustine Marlorate explains three ways in which "heretickes (and specially the disciples of Antichrist and hypocrites)" may be compared to scorpions:

⁵ This interpretation appears, for example, in: Alciun, Commentariorum in Apocalypsin, PL, C, 1139; Rabanus Maurus, Allegoriae in Universam Sacram Scripturam, PL, CXII, 927; Haymo, Expositionis in Apocalypsin B. Joannis, PL, CXVII, 1052; Anselm, Enarrationes in Apocalypsin, PL, CLXII, 1533; Brunonis Astensis, Expositio in Apocalypsim, PL, CLXV, 651; Rupertus, Apocalypsim Joannis Apostoli Commentariorum, PL, CLXIX, 991-92; and Saint Martin, Expositio Libri Apocalypsis, PL, CCIX, 350.

⁶ Sometimes Reformers interpreted the locusts as Mohammedans; when they did, no mention was made of the wounded conscience. See John Napier, A Plaine Discovery of the whole Revelation of Saint John (Edinburgh, 1593), pp. 129-30; Joseph Mede, The Key Of The Revelation (London, 1650), pp. 100-01; and Thomas Brightman, A Revelation of the Revelation that is The Revelation of St. John (Amsterdam, 1615), p. 305.

First bycause that like a Scorpion, whereas he is meelde to looke unto, dothe at lenght strike prively with venemous sting: so these men pretend simplicitie before the world and yet work mischeefe by dif-faming men behinde their backes. Secondly bycause that as the Scorpion stingeth with his tayle: so these men preferre temporal gaine before spiritual graces, and wound men cōsciences deadly whē they promis most to help them. And thirdly bycause that like as when a Scorpion stingeth with his tayle, he is not felt at the first, but yet sheddeth in his poyson little and little afterwards: So they that be beguiled by these here-tickes, feelee not the wound at first, but when the poyson hath rancled through at the inward parts, thē they feelee themselves stung in the end (fol. 129^r).⁷

Marlorate uses the traditional notion that a scorpion's pleasant countenance belies its treacherous, malicious nature, but his interpretation of this passage also indicates that during the Reformation flourished the idea that the Roman clergy can wound the conscience with the power of the scorpion. Other Protestant commentators on Revelation were to specifically state that it was the doctrines of the Roman clergy that could wound the conscience like the sting of a scorpion. John Bale, William Fulke, Patrick Forbes, Thomas Brightman, John Mayer, Johann Gerhard, and David Pareus are all of this opinion.⁸ George Gifford, who says the locusts

⁷ Marlorate is quoted by John Marbeck, A Booke Of Notes and Common places (London, 1581), p. 976 and by John Fox, Eicasmī Sev Meditations, In Sacram Apocalypsin (London, 1587), p. 89.

⁸ Seriatim: The Image of both Churches, after the most wonderfull and heavenly Revelation of Sainct John the Evangelist, contayning a very fruitfull exposition or Paraphrase upon the same (London, [1570?]), fols. 120^r-122^v; Praelections upon the Sacred and holy Revelation of S. John, trans. George Gifford (London, 1573), fol. 56^v; An Learned Commentarie Upon The Revelation Of Saint John 2nd ed. (Middelburg, 1614), p. 69; Brightman, A Revelation, pp. 306-

represent "all the popish Clergie, their priestes, their swarmes of Monkes, Friers, and Nunnes," develops the idea fully:

O miserable state of pooreblind superstitious papists, which drinke in the poyson of Antichristes doctrine: what a sting doth it leave behinde? how is their conscience unquiet? how is it vexed and tormented? no tongue is able to expresse it to the full. They feele and know that they bee foule sinners, they are sure also that they must come to judgement. They are tould if the torments of hell by the scriptures, and of the fire of purgatory by the popish sort. The doctrine of free justification in the blood of Christ is hid from them, yea condemned as heresie: all assurance of Gods favour, all peace of conscience, all joye in the holy Ghost are quite destroyed. They are sent to seek ease in the merite of their owne workes, in popes, pardons and indulgences, by running on pilgrimage to this Idoll, and to that Idoll, by punishing their bodies with whippings, fastings, and a thousand inventions. And when all is done they are not satisfied, they are not eased, but the horror of judgement, and tortures of conscience still remaine: These scorpion locustes have stung them.⁹

These commentaries on Revelations 9.3-5, 10¹⁰ may

07; Ecclesiastica interpretatio: or The expositions upon the difficult and doubtful passages of the seven Epistles called Catholike, and Revelation (London, 1627), p. 343; Adnotationes In Apocalypsin (Erfurt, 1643), p. 65; and A Commentary Upon The Divine Revelation Of The Apostle And Evangelist John (Amsterdam, 1644), pp. 177-79. The Catholic Franciscus Junius in his The Apocalys . . . With a briefe and methodical exposition . . . (Cambridge, 1596), identifies the locusts as "evill spirits," but mentions that they have the power "to torment the consciences of the poore world" (p. 101).

⁹ Sermons Upon The Whole Booke Of The Revelation (London, 1591), p. 168. See also p. 169.

¹⁰ Not all Protestant commentators on this passage who identify the locusts as the Roman clergy mention the effects of Catholic doctrines on the conscience. See, for example: Henry Bullinger, A Hundred Sermons upō the Apocalips (n.p., 1561), p. 256; John Foorthē, Apocalypsis Jesu Christi, Revelata Per Angelium Domini (London, 1597), p. 57; Hugh Broughton,

have suggested to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English writers the sting of the scorpion as a metaphor for the pricks of a guilty conscience.¹¹ In Greenes Vision (London, 1592), Robert Greene says: "as the Scorpion stings deadly and the Viper bites mortally, so dooth the worme of my conscience grype without ceasing."¹² In Stephen Jerome's Origens Repentance, Origen exclaims that his guilty heart is a "cage of stinging Scorpions" (p. 4). Daniel Dyke warns "when Conscience her gentler prickings are neglected shee falles to deeper wounding and cutting: when rods will do no good, God puts Scorpions into her hands to scourge us to death."¹³ His brother Jeremiah exhorts his readers to avoid sin because it leads to a tormented conscience, which exceeds all other forms of misery;

A Revelation of the Holy Apocalyps (n.p., 1610), pp. 88-89; Richard Bernard, A Key Of Knowledge For The Opening Of The Secret Mysteries Of St. Johns Mysticall Revelation (London, 1617), pp. 180-81; and Hezekiah Holland, An Exposition Or, Commentaries Upon the Revelation Of Saint John (London, 1650), p. 62. See also Richard Sibbs, The Bruised Reed, And Smoaking Flax (London, 1630), pp. 202-03.

¹¹ Some Protestants made other uses of the scorpion metaphor. Robert Bolton, A Discourse About The State Of True Happiness, uses the scorpion as a metaphor for the pleasures of this life (p. 11), and Daniel Dyke, Two Treatises, The One, A most fruitfull Exposition upon Philemon: The Other The Schoole of Affliction (London, 1618), p. 368, John Trapp, Gods Love-Tokens, And The Afflicted Mans Lessons (London, 1637), p. 41, and Burroughes, The Excellence of A Gracious Spirit, p. 45, use it as a metaphor for affliction.

¹² The Life and Complete Works, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1881-86), XII, 205.

¹³ Two Treatises, The one, Of Repentance, The other, Of Christs Temptations (London, 1616), p. 92.

even "the sting of death [is] not so smart, as the sting of a Scorpion in the conscience."¹⁴ Much later in the seventeenth century when in his translation of Juvenal's Thirteenth Satire, Thomas Creech rendered

cur tamen hos tu
evasisse putes, quos diri conscia facti
mens habet attonitos et surde verbera caudit
occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum (ll. 192-95)

as

But why must those be thought to 'scape, that feel
Those Rods of Scorpions, and those whips of Steel
Which Conscience shakes, when she with Rage controuls,¹⁵
And spreads amazing Terrors through their Souls (p. 361),

he was using a metaphor for the guilty conscience that had become highly conventional. Thus, there is a wealth of precedents for interpreting Macbeth's scorpion metaphor as a powerful expression of his guilty conscience.

One, however, could conceivably argue against this interpretation that the locus of Macbeth's pain is his "mind" not his conscience, which he never mentions in the play. But Macbeth's reference to his mind is entirely consistent with the Renaissance understanding of conscience. First, the mind was considered one of the principal seats of conscience, so that, it is the place where the sting of conscience would be felt. Perkins notes that "Conscience

¹⁴ Good Conscience, p. 257.

¹⁵ The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis: and of Aulus Persius Flaccus, trans. John Dryden et al., 4th ed. (London, 1711).

is a part of the mind or understanding."¹⁶ Thomas Morton calls conscience "an action of the minde,"¹⁷ John Weemes defines it as "an inbred light in the mind of man."¹⁸ William Cowper explains conscience as an "understanding power, as in the minde."¹⁹ And Nicholas Byfield maintains that conscience applies "the principles or propositions of the minde, in their particular actions, either with or against them."²⁰

Secondly, many Renaissance writers maintained that a guilty conscience tormented the mind. John Woolton says that the guilty are pursued by "horrores of Conscience, and anguish of minde."²¹ In his sermon, "Of Sinne, and of the kindes thereof . . . And lastly of the most sure and just punishment of sinnes," Henry Bullinger asks: "If God be away from us, how great is the horror in the

¹⁶ A Discourse of Conscience, p. 5.

¹⁷ A Treatise of the Threefolde State of Man (London, 1596), p. 252.

¹⁸ Exercitations Divine, Containing diverse Questions and Solutions for the right understanding of the Scriptures (London, 1632), p. 35.

¹⁹ The Anatomy of a Christian Man (London, 1613), p. 89.

²⁰ A Commentary Upon The Three First Chapters Of The First Epistle generall of St. Peter, p. 500. See also Willson, A Commentarie upon . . . Romanes, p. 91, and A Christian Dictionary, p. 318; Thomas Taylor, A Commentarie Upon . . . Titus (Cambridge, 1612), p. 308; and Andrew Willett, Hexapla: That is, A Six-Fold Commentarie upon . . . Romanes (London, 1620), p. 79.

²¹ Of The Conscience, sig. E₄^r.

minde of men? Heere therefore as punishments due to sinners, are reckoned, the tyrannie of Satan, a thousand tormentes of conscience" ²² In answer to the question "What is an evill conscience," Thomas Becon answers, "It is an inward boyling heate, and tossing of the minde, for a mans wickednesse, and when for pure anguish of the sight and horrore of sinne, the hart fainteth and faileth him." ²³ One I. G. says that guiltiness "doth worke accusations and unquietnesse in the mind. Their conscience also bearing witnesse, and their thoughts accusing one another." ²⁴ And in Woodes' The Conflict of Conscience, Philologus suffers from a guilty conscience and "horror of mynde" (l. 1968).

Much of Macbeth's suffering after the murder of Duncan is mental, as Jorgensen has convincingly argued, ²⁵ but what has gone unnoticed is that Macbeth's mental torment, the "torture of the mind" (III.ii.21) and the scorpions on his "mind," (III.ii.36) are symptoms of a guilty conscience.

²² Fiftie Godlie And Learned Sermons, Divided Into Five Decades, trans. H. I. (London, 1587), p. 520.

²³ The Demaundes of holy Scripture (London, 1577), sig. B₅^r.

²⁴ The Christian Profession (London, 1630), p. 23.

²⁵ Our Naked Frailties, pp. 185-216.

APPENDIX D

MILTON'S ABYSS OF CONSCIENCE METAPHOR (PARADISELOST, X. 842-44): TWO EARLY PARALLELS

In her book Paradise Lost as "Myth" (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), Isabel MacCaffrey notes that Adam's lines:

O Conscience into what abyss of fears
And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which
I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd (X. 842-44).¹

are "adumbrated" by St. Augustine, who writes in Ennarationes in Psalmos, Psalm XLI: "If by 'abyss' we understand a great depth, is not man's heart an abyss? For what is there more profound than that abyss (p. 117). Two much closer verbal parallels, however, to Milton's abyss of conscience metaphor occur in patristic and medieval literature. In his Confessiones St. Augustine asks:

Et tibi quidem, Domine, cujus oculis huda est abyssus
humanae conscientiae, quid occultum esset in me, etiamsi
nollem confiteri tibi?²

In his Tractus de Conscientia. Ad Religiosum Quemdam Ordinis Cisterciensis, St. Bernard of Clairvaux calls conscience an "abyssus multa. Sicut enim profundum abyssi exhauriri non potest, ita cor hominis evacuari non potest, a cogitationibus suis."³

¹ Paradise Lost, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1962).

² PL, XXXII, 779.

³ PL, CLXXXIV, 553. Bernard's Tractatus was anonymously transcribed in the twelfth century as Libellus de Conscientia; this passage also appears in PL, CCLII, 904-05.

Both the Confessiones and the Tractatus were available in numerous Renaissance editions, and although no evidence suggests that either work was definitely Milton's source for the abyss of conscience metaphor, it is a fair assumption that Milton, with his vast range of learning, may have been acquainted with them.

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For the convenience of the reader, this bibliography is divided into Primary and Secondary Works. It includes all primary and secondary works quoted in the text and referred to in the footnotes. It also lists a few secondary works on conscience, mostly articles from theological journals, that I did not have cause to mention in my study but are helpful for understanding the concept. Plays, poems, prose fiction, theological treatises and sermons from collections (e.g. Philip Massinger, The Plays, and William Perkins, The Workes) have not been listed separately unless an individual edition has been used (e.g. Philip Massinger, The City Madam, and William Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience). References to PG and PL are to J-P. Migne, Patrologiae Series Graeca, Paris, 1857-1903, and Patrologiae Series Latina, Paris, 1844-1903. Anonymous works are listed by title. Because of the various wordings of the titles of Calvin's commentaries and sermons on the Bible, they have been listed according to the order in which the books appear in the Bible.

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