

spirit of the Gospel; and the excellent character and tendency of the religion we profess should be constantly displayed in the spirit that we breathe, and the resemblance that we bear to Him whom we call our LORD.

JUSTUS.

TENDERNESS OF CONSCIENCE:
BIGOTRY: INFLUENCE OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT.

Tenderness of conscience is a quick susceptibility to right or wrong, either perpetrated, or contemplated, either by one's self or another. A tender conscience shrinks back from the commission of wrong with irreconcilable repugnance. The person who cherishes such a conscience will not deliberately violate its dictates for any consideration whatever. To parley with temptation, is to turn away from the counsels, and silence the voice, of conscience—a course which cannot be followed without infinite hazard.

A tender conscience is also an enlightened conscience—one that has been well instructed in the law of God. This is the standard of all moral affections and duties, prescribing the kind of feelings we should indulge, and the kind of conduct we should pursue in our various relations to God and man; and a tender conscience is quick to mark and reprove the least deficiency, or deviation from this standard.

A weak mind, or weak conscience is troubled about *indifferent* things—such as the posture in prayer, whether it should be that of standing, or kneeling, or prostration—for we can hardly believe *sitting* in public worship to be a matter of indifference, especially with healthy men and vigorous youth—and other things which are not subjects of special divine legislation, as the fashion of dress which we and others wear, the ostentatiousness of houses of worship, &c. In regard to apparel, there are only

general precepts in the Bible enjoining moderation, and forbidding extravagance, while they seem to leave it to common sense to determine what is extravagance, and what the happy medium.

These two kinds of conscience will be still better understood from a careful perusal of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, as also two or three chapters from the epistle to the Romans, in which he treats of eating meats. That these meats were, *in themselves*, indifferent, he has himself plainly taught, by saying: "neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse." But the weak conscience of the one might be defiled by eating, or by seeing another eat, while he regarded the import of the action the same as doing homage to an idol. But the person of an enlightened conscience might eat without any scruple on his own account; but was bound to abstain simply from a regard to the weak brother's conscience. For the same reason we may abstain from a thousand things, indifferent in themselves, pertaining to our food, dress, equipage, expenditures, &c. Such respect paid to the weak consciences of our brothers and sisters, is the fruit of genuine Christian benevolence, acceptable to God, and greatly promotive of the peace and edification of the church.

Tenderness of conscience has no relation to *bigotry*. A blind and obstinate attachment to some creed, party, ritual, or practice, is what is generally meant by *bigotry*; and the less reason any one can give for this attachment, the more obstinate he generally is. The least important facts of his own creed are those which he is the most reluctant to give up. The pharisees of our Saviour's time strenuously exacted and scrupulously paid tithes of all manner of herbs, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law.