

All sin or holiness consists, not in volition, but in elective preferences, choices, intentions, moral motives.

External acts possess expediency or in expediency, harmfulness or mischievousness, and their character in these respects I must ascertain by a combined use of judgment and Conscience. I do not know by Conscience whether you are a good man or a bad man; I do not know by Conscience whether I ought to defend the President's southern policy or not. It is a question of judgment what I had better do concerning the South. I must gather all the facts; I must look at human experience; I must take the entire light I have or can get; and then, in the action I choose, Conscience will tell whether my intentions are good or bad; that is, whether I am willing to follow all the illumination I possess or can obtain, or not.

Conscience guarantees only good intentions. Are they enough? If Conscience, when truly followed, does not give us soundness of judgment, really it is not a very important faculty, you say. But let us notice what can be proved beyond a doubt, namely, that a man who follows Conscience we are able to respect, and that we are not able to respect any other man. There is Stonewall Jackson, and here is John Brown. Now let us suppose that Stonewall Jackson believes that John Brown is utterly honest; and let us suppose that John Brown believes the same of Jackson. Brown's action appears to Jackson to be very mischievous, and Jackson's action appears to Brown to be equally so. In fact they are crossing bayonets in a civil war; but they are both men of prayer, men of confirmed religious habits, and we have reason to believe that they are endeavoring to be conscientious. This is a singular fact in the soul; but this is the way we are made. We find that Governor Wise, when he looked into the eyes of John Brown and saw honesty there, and that others who noticed his mood in his last hours, were thrown into a kind of awe by that border warrior. He meant right; and respect for that man's soul is not confined to the circle of the mountains between which he lies in my native county in Northern New York. I have heard the summer wind sighing over the grave of John Brown, and have stood there and gazed upon Mount Marcy, and Whiteface and Lake Placid; but because I believed this man's conscience was a Lake Placid, and his resolution to follow it firm as Marcy, firm as Whiteface, firm as any of those gigantic peaks in my native Switzerland, I felt sure that his soul was marching on, and that when his spirit smote slavery the tree after that was timber. It did not fall, but it was no longer alive.