

THE
Black Book

OF
Conscience;

OR,

God's Great and High Court of
Justice in the Soul.

WHEREIN

The Truth and Sincerity, the Deceit and
Hypocrisy of every Man's Heart and
Ways are judged and discovered by their
Consciences.

Very seasonable for these Times, wherein Wicked
Men, under Pretence of Liberty of Conscience,
take Liberty to Sin and Blaspheme.

By ANDREW JONES.

r. xvii. 19, 20. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and
desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord, search the
the heart, and try the reins; even to give every one according
to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing.'

Mat. i. 15. 'Unto the pure all things are pure; but to them
that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure: but even
their mind and conscience is defiled.'

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THE
BLACK BOOK OF CONSCIENCE.

Rev. xx. 12. *And I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened: And another book opened, which is the book of life: And the dead were judged out of these things, which were written in the books, according to their works.*

AS there are several books of God, which he hath written for the good of all the children of men, so there are two special books, by which the Lord will proceed in judgement against all the sons and daughters of men. The books which God hath given to the children of men, for their use and comfort of salvation, are these, first and chiefly, the books of the Old and New Testament; wherein Jesus Christ, in all his offices, as Prophet, Priest and King, for to rule us and guide us, by his Spirit in our hearts, is made known.

and declared unto us. And there is likewise set down therein, how every one of us ought to live and demean himself in this present world, with several fearful examples of God's heavy judgements against wicked and notorious finners, in drowning the old world for their sins and wickedness; as you may see Gen. vi. So likewise in destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven, Gen. xix 24, 25. 'And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone, and overthrew those cities, and all their inhabitants;' with several other fearful examples of God's heavy wrath and indignation against sin and finners, in general and in particular. All which, as St. Jude saith in his epistle, are set forth for our examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' Not for our examples, that we should do as they did, but that we should be afraid to do as they did, to commit such sins, lest the Lord lay upon us such, or heavier weights of wrath and vengeance.

So likewise, in the book of the scripture, is set forth the blessed and happy state and condition of all the godly, both in this life, and the life to come, as you may see, Pf. i. v. xci. 'The godly man shall be delivered

from the snare of the fowler, and from the noise of the pestilence, and because he hath made the Lord his refuge, there shall no evil befall: So 'he shall give his angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways,' ver. 10, 11. The joys that are prepared for the godly, and the torments that are appointed for the wicked, are likewise set forth there in the book of the scriptures; as you may see Matth xx. 34, 41. To the godly, 'Come, ye blessed of my father, saith Christ, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the beginning of the world.' But to the ungodly, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Another great book of God, is the book of the creature, containing these mighty works both of creation and providence, wherein the almightiness, power, and goodness of God are so plainly written, that he who runs may read and see it; for, as the apostle saith, Rom. ix. 20 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood,' saith the apostle, 'by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse' Who but an almighty God could out of nothing

create all things; and being created, rule and govern all things? As David says, 'It is nothing but the almighty power and providence of God that bears up the earth, and upholds the foundations thereof.' And this book even the Heathens, who know not God nor his word, who never heard of Jesus Christ, or salvation, are acquainted with: They, I say, by seeing and reading the mighty works of God in the world, confess and say, Verily, there is a God, and none but God could create these glorious creatures, the sun, moon, and stars.

So likewise, there are two special books, by which God will judge all the sons and daughters of men at the last day; and these are, First, The book of his remembrance, written by himself; wherein the lives of of men, yea, their very thoughts are recorded, as David saith, Psal. xciv. 11. 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vanity.' And Psal. cxxxix. 1,—4. Saith David, 'O Lord! thou hast searched me and known me, Thou knowest my down-sitting and my up-rising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassedst my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. There is not a word in my mouth, but lo, O Lord! thou

knowest it altogether.' And although the 'heart of man,' as Jeremiah saith, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. 'is deceitful above all things;' yet God doth exactly know every turning and corner thereof; 'I the Lord, search the heart,' saith he, 'I try the reins.' There is nothing can be hid from his eternal all-seeing eye.

And then, 2dly, There is the book of conscience, in which is exactly written all our actions, thoughts, words, and deeds; and according to this book of conscience, and what is there written, will the Lord proceed in judgement, and every man's conscience shall be his own judge. Saith God, What hast thou done? How hast thou lived in the world? Why thus and thus have I lived, saith conscience. Conscience will then speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. O Lord, saith a wicked man's conscience, I have dishonoured thy name, I have abused thy grace and mercy, in turning it to wantonness; I have abused thy creatures by wasteful and riotous spending, to please and satisfy my lust, saith the prodigal man's conscience. And by chambering and wantonness, by gaming and dicing away my precious time, saith the lascivious and voluptuous man's conscience. Thou gavest

me times and seasons of grace and mercy, and many gracious opportunities, and soul-advantages, whereby I might have wrought out my own salvation with fear and trembling; and, as St. Peter saith, I might have 'made my calling and election sure' to my own soul: But, instead of 'working out my salvation with fear and trembling, and making my calling and election sure,' I have wrought out my own damnation without either fear or wit, and made myself sure of eternal and everlasting condemnation, saith the mere moral, formal, and profane Christian's conscience. Ah! Lord, saith the dissembling hypocrite's conscience, I have been but an outside Christian; I have gone to church, but only as dogs do, for fashions's sake, and to be looked upon and esteemed among my neighbours: I have made a shew indeed, and pretence of religion and holiness; but it hath been but a mere show: I have altogether denied the power and practice of it by my life and conversation, as it is Tit. i. 16. 'They profess that they know God, but in works, they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.' And why so? Because, as he saith in verse 15th, 'their minds and consciences are defiled.'

Ah! my conscience told me several times that I was but an hypocrite, a mere painted sepulchre, fair without and foul within. O! but I would not hear conscience then, but neglected him. Ah! now my conscience makes me fear him whether I will or not; therefore, Lord, do with me what thou pleasest: True and righteous art thou in all thy doings towards me; be they ever so harsh, they are but the just rewards of my iniquities. And saith the covetous man's conscience, the gripping, cruel extorting usurer's conscience, Lord, I confess, I have been a covetous wretch; but I have not coveted after heaven. It hath been my whole trade to cheat and cozen others, and to grind the faces of the poor; all that I could do to undo others; but alas for me! what have I done? I have quite and clean undone my own soul, and that to all eternity. I have been very cruel and unmerciful to others; I would not forgive my poor brethren in the least. O Lord! I deserve no mercy at thy hands, the hottest place in hell would be too cold for me.

What have you donewith all your wealth, saith God to rich men, all these great estates and possessions which I lent you, or rather entrusted you with as stewards? How have

you improved them? What of them have you laid out in relieving my poor members? Have you laid up any thing for eternal life? O! no, faith conscience, I have not, Lord, I have not, but this have I done, I have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath. My gold and my silver is rusted, my riches are corrupted, and rich garments moth-eaten, as St. James saith, chap. v. 3, 4. 'My gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them is now a witness against me, to condem me, and eats my flesh as it were fire.' And now also, 'behold the hire of my labourers, which have reaped down my field, which I have kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them who have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.' I have lived in pleasure upon the earth, and been wanton, and I have nourished my heart as in a day of slaughter. I told you, faith conscience, that for all your greatness and delights, you must come to judgement and give an account to God of all your actions, and for all your wealth, and how, and which way you spent every penny that he lent you. Did I not tell you, faith conscience? True it is, my conscience told me; but I slighted conscience, as a thing of no value or account. Ah miserable man that I was!

to flight this good voice of conscience. Wo unto me! my punishment is less than my iniquities deserve. Thus and thus will men's consciences deal with them before the Lord.

When as Peter denied his Lord and Master, his conscience let him alone once; yea, twice; but the third time the cock crew, and Peter's heart smote him for what he had done, and he went forth and wept bitterly. Peter did not go about to stop the mouth of conscience, as Judas did, and so hanged himself: No, Peter closed with the voice of his conscience, and so by true and unfeigned repentance, obtained mercy.

So likewise David, when the prophet Nathan, in 2 Sam. xii. 13. had by the parable of the ewe-lamb, shewed David the evil of his sins, presently David was convinced in his conscience, of the horridness of his sins. 'And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord: have mercy upon me,' saith David, Psal. li. (the psalm of his repentance) 'According to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions; wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin: For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me Against thee, even

thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.' David had a very tender conscience, for, when he cut off Saul's skirt, his heart smote him, his conscience accused him, as you may see 1 Sam. xxi. 5. O but how many wicked men are there now, whose consciences tell them over and over, again and again of their sins, and yet for all that they stop their ears against conscience? how many times doth the beastly drunkard's conscience, the profane swearer's, the Sabbathbreaker's conscience, tell them of their sins; yet notwithstanding for all the checks of conscience, they will go on in their sins, and fill up the measures of their iniquities, and so make conscience, to fill up the black scroll of indictments against them, whereby they are all everlastingly condemned. O! if men would be but convicted in their consciences of the evil of their ways, when their consciences tell them of it! How many thousands might be brought home by repentance to life eternal, who now run headlong to their destruction! I am persuaded that many who cozen and cheat, by undermining and overselling, by using false and light weights and measures cannot chuse, but meet with many checks from their con-

sciences. And O that men would be convinced of their great evil.

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy by false weights and measures? O be convinced in thy conscience, make conscience thy friend now, by forsaking thy evil practices, lest conscience prove thy foe to torment thee for ever. But men, now a-days, instead of being convinced in their consciences of the evil of their ways, are not ashamed to commit all manner of abominations, and that with greediness, and then lay all the blame upon their poor consciences: And why so? It was my conscience, say they. As many of our diabolical Ranters, Quakers and notorious Libertines, in these our days, have laid all their impieties and and horrid blasphemies upon their consciences. Ask them but the reason why they deny Christ and the scriptures, and cast off the ordinances and ministry of Christ, and live as they list, and refuse subjection to magistrates, and in their actions become worse than beasts; why, they do hold such damnable and devilish opinions, both against God and Christ; yea against humanity itself? Ask them the reason of these things, and what do they say? It is from the light within us, it is the li-

erty of our consciences: And have we not fought for liberty of conscience? Ah! cursed wretches, the light within you is darkness; Is this the liberty of thy conscience? No, no, this is the liberty of thy lusts, and the delusions of the devil. Thou hast seared thy conscience with a hot iron; but yet at last thy conscience, tho' thou hast defiled it ever so much, will put the saddle upon the right horse, and charge thee home with all the blame. Is liberty of conscience, a liberty to sin? No, God forbid, 'Shall we sin,' saith St. Paul, Rom vi. 1. that grace may abound?' O God forbid, I dare not, saith a gracious heart, conscience tells me I must not. 'How shall I,' saith Joseph; Gen. xxx. 7. 'do this great wickedness and sin against God? The grace of God,' saith the apostle, Tit. ii. 11, 12. 'that brings salvation,' teacheth men 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,' and not to live as we list, which is a sign of no grace at all.

A truly tender conscience will be truly tender of committing sin, and will have a circumspect care over himself how he walks and how he lives, that so the name of God and Christ be not blasphemed; 'But, in

these last and worst of times, wherein men, as St. Paul saith, 'make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;' Men have not minded this at all, but have taken full liberty to commit all manner of sins. And I pray God that this sin be not charged upon those, who, instead of restraining men from sin, and punishing them for sin, have tolerated them in sin, if not countenanced them to sin. But, let men take heed how they sin, because grace abounds: For, saith the apostle, Heb. x. 26, 27. 'If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement. For the wrath of God,' Rom. i. 8. 'is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' Read these two texts, all ye that take liberty to sin, because the grace of God hath abounded. How will ye be able to look God and conscience in the face: certainly you will never be able to do it, unless you repent; for if men will sin willingly, notwithstanding all these checks of conscience, there consciences will condemn them before the Lord. For certain it is, there is a conscience in every man that sees and observes, and takes notice of all his ways, and

will keep a just account of them, and so be a witness either for or against the soul, at the day of judgement. What was it that made the apostles so joyful in all their troubles and persecutions? Was it not the witness of their consciences! See 2 Cor. i. 12. 'Our rejoicing is this,' saith St. Paul, 'the testimony of our consciences.' What was it that made Paul and Silas sing in prison for joy? Was it not, that their consciences told them that they were happy and blessed men, notwithstanding all their sufferings and reproaches.

Now what conscience is, I shall briefly show you, and so conclude. Conscience is a thing with which God endued the soul of man by creation, and is for our comfort, if we live as we ought to do; but will be a dreadful terror to them that live and die in their sins. For this conscience was in Adam before the fall, tho' not as a condemner till his fall; for where there is no sin, what needeth an accuser? So long as Adam kept the commandments of God, there was no cause of conscience to condemn him: But, as soon as Adam transgressed, it flew in his face, which made him flee from the face of God, as you may see, Gen. iii. 7. 8. 'The eyes of them both were opened,' their con-

sciences accused them, and they hid themselves. And this conscience is only in men and women, for brute beasts, wanting reason, are not capable of conscience, and the beasts when they die, there is an end of them. But, it is not so with man, for conscience, in man followeth the man farther than the grave. For, if men might bury their consciences with them in their graves, they might be happy notwithstanding all their abuses of conscience! For man oftentimes, against all reason, enquiry, or conscience, doth worse than the worst of beasts. And this conscience keepeth his court in the heart, and there sits upon the life or the death of the soul; and according as he finds every man's work, so doth he pass sentence of condemnation or absolution, for there is no bribing of conscience. Conscience will speak the truth of every man's ways before the Lord, be they good or be they evil: 'If our hearts condemn us,' saith St. Paul, 'God is greater than our hearts.' That is our conscience.

And God hath given this power to conscience, because men would have no plea or excuse before the Lord. It was not Pilate's washing of his hands, and saying, 'I am guiltless of the blood of this

just man,' that could wash away the guilt of Christ's blood from his conscience; Pilate's conscience told him, that Christ was a just man, and that he saw no cause of death in him at all, Luke xxiii. 24. And yet cursed Pilate, contrary to the light of his own conscience, delivered the Lord of Life into the hands of bloody men, to be crucified, and so brought the guilt of his blood upon his own soul.

He that will not endure conscience to reprove him for his sins, certainly loves to go to hell without controul; and he that will not endure conscience to tell him of his sins here, shall, whether he will or not, suffer sufficient torment for his sins hereafter; for an evil conscience is an hell to the soul here, and shall be the hell of hells hereafter.

Now then, if there be such a thing in man as conscience, and that this conscience, shall either justify or condemn him, then let every man take heed how he orders his conversation in the world. Do not give leave to yourselves to think, say or do any thing, but what you are willing to own before the Lord at the last day. Therefore, let every one of us so think, and so do, that we may not have conscience to con-

denn us ; but let us live as those that expect to have conscience witness for them before the Lord, that with godly sincerity they have had their conversation in the world. But what multitudes are there in this world, that live as there were no conscience at all, neither God nor devil, neither heaven nor hell ; ' whose God is their belly, and whose end is destruction,' as St. Paul saith, Phil. iii. 9. ' Who declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not. Wo unto them,' saith the Lord, ' they have rewarded evil to themselves,' Isa. iii. 6. This may be said of thousands of us, whose countenance testify against them, their wanton carriages, painted faces, naked breasts, powdered locks, and other antic fashions, testify against thousands of both men and women, that they do little mind this great truth, that conscience can and will declare all their doings to God. Proud Hamans drunken Nabals, whoring Jezebels, declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not. And as for conscience, they turn him off. But let these miserable wretches know this, as the prophet saith, ' Wo unto them, who have rewarded evil unto themselves.' They have a long black, bloody bill, for conscience open against them at the last day of

the term of their lives ; as soon as ever their souls are departed from their bodies, sentence shall be passed against them, according to their light, and the testimony of their own conscience.

Seeing then, conscience will give an account of every one's ways, let us not slight conscience; let us not stop the mouth of conscience, seeing conscience can and will speak, and tell us what we are. Many there are that go about to stop the mouth of conscience, when conscience deals plainly with them, and tells them of their sins : O ! they cannot endure to hear of that. But remember the miserable end of Judas : What said Judas' conscience to him ? Thou hast betrayed thy Lord and Master for a little silver : Ah covetous wretch ! But could Judas' silver stop the mouth of his conscience ? No, Judas' conscience so terrified him, that he flung in the money again, and so went and hanged himself.

So likewise, remember the fearful state of Spira, and many others, whose conscience made them possess the wrath of God here on earth. 'A wounded spirit,' saith Solomon, Prov. viii. 14. 'who can bear ?' A tormenting and condemning conscience who can endure ? O ! there is no resisting

of conscience ! it is God's vicegerent in the soul : When conscience speaks threatening language, to many, for such and such sins, they seek to turn conscience out of doors. But because they cannot possibly do this, they strive to stop his mouth, by running wilfully into sins, like men that desperately give up their souls to the devil, and so make shipwreck of faith, conscience, soul and all for ever. And then followeth (what we have seen by woeful experience) self-stabbing, self-hanging, drowning, or poisoning, or some such like accursed end. O consider this, all ye that forget God, and make no conscience of your ways ; you undermine your own salvation.—Men deal with conscience as Felix did with Paul, Acts xxiv. 15. They will hear conscience so long as he speaks gross ; but, when conscience tells them roughly of their sins, their darling sins ; then they have enough of conscience, and so put him off till they be at better leisure.

When there was no king in Israel, every man did what was good in his own eyes ; so, where there is no conscience alive in the soul, men live as they list. But yet for all this, conscience will speak home at last.

If thou art a drunkard, or an adulterer, or an unjust dealer, or whatsoever sin it is

that thou art guilty of, conscience will make it known. And if at last conscience doth condemn, thou shalt never be saved. But, on the contrary, though men and devils say thou art an hypocrite or the like, yet, if thou hast the testimony of thy conscience, God will own thee as just and righteous. One dram of peace of conscience is worth a thousand worlds: What would the damned in hell give for a little of this lasting joy, this peace which passeth all understanding: The want of this is hell, yea, worse than hell.

Think upon this, O ye great ones of the world, who live in pleasure! remember that there is a conscience, and that there is a God, and that thou hast a precious and immortal soul, which if thy conscience witness against, shall be thrown into hell. You that eat the fat and sweet of the earth, and drink wine in bowls, and clothe yourselves in silk, remember this, that conscience takes notice of all thy ways, of the pride of thy heart, of the vanity of thy life, and setteth all down in his *BLACK BOOK.* You that, like the harlot, Prov. vii. cry, 'Let us take our fill of love and pleasure,' consider that all these things must have an end. When all is done, the bell must toll, and you must all dance after

death's pipe, who are now finging and swing-
ing yourselves in worldly pleasures and de-
lights. O! if God would say to any soul of
you, as he did to the rich fool in Luke xiv.
20. 'This night thy soul shall be taken from
thee.' It shall little advantage you then to
weep and cry, O! that I were out of these
infernal and eternal flames! O! that I had
hearkened when time was, to the voice of
Christ and mine own conscience.

The sighs and groans of dying men are of-
ten very sad; but the sighs and groans of the
damned in hell can never be imagined or ex-
pressed. O! consider this, ye that sin away
conscience, that quaff and drink away con-
science, accompanying one another in sin;
take heed you be not one day to weep over
one another's backs in hell. Certainly whole
coachfuls of gallants will be tumbled down
to hell; the Lord awaken your sleepy dead
consciences before you go hence and be no
more seen! What pity is it, that persons
that bear the image of God, and are, as it
were in outside glory and beauty, gods a-
bove others: What pity is it, that such beau-
ty should come to be embraced by ugly loth-
some devils in hell. Thousands there are
that court and sport, pine and pant away
their time whose end is to be burned, and

shall at last perish in hell. Fruitless fig-trees they are, that bear nothing but leaves, 'Cut them down,' says Christ, 'and cast them into the fire.' To perish in a prison or on a dunghill, is nothing; to die for want of food is nothing: Lazarus did so, whilst Dives, with his delicious fare, died on his bed of downs, and was cast into hell. You that ly on beds of ivory, and have your hangings of needle-work, if you get not Christ and a good conscience, hell shall be your fate, and devils your companions, to torment you for ever. 'And who shall be able to stand in the day of the Lord's wrath? And who can dwell with everlasting burnings?'

Companions in sin, shall be companions in hell, and those that can sport and play one with another, shall in hell drag and torment one another, and curse the day that ever they saw one another, and cry out to one another, O what miserable wretches were we! to lose the heaven of heavens for a little vain delight, the love and favour of God, for the love and favour of wicked companions, in whose presence we were more delighted, than in the everlasting love of God, whose pleasures are pleasures for evermore. What profiteth it now, that we have had

our wine, and our music, our fill and our full of earthly delights? O wretched creatures that we are! Who shall deliver us from this death, these miserable torments? Wo unto us! we have rewarded evil to our own souls, we are banished for ever from the presence of the Lord, and have utterly lost that inward peace of conscience, the want whereof, addeth torments to our torments, and maketh us in our miseries more exceedingly miserable. Now the Lord give every one of us this peace, this joy; the which, that we may all have, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ; and wash and purge our consciences from dead works, that we may serve the living God. Which that we may all do, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

Take heed to yourselves what conscience you have,
For conscience will damn, and conscience will save.

FINIS.

J. Neilson printer.