

ties of our nature. It is a truth, perhaps, too simple for being reasoned; but this is because, like many of the most important and undoubted certainties of human belief, it is a truth of instant recognition. When stating the supremacy of conscience, in the sense that we have explained it, we but state what all men feel; and our only argument, in proof of the assertion, is—our only argument can be, an appeal to the experience of all men.

8. Bishop Butler has often been spoken of as the first discoverer of this great principle in our nature; though, perhaps, no man can properly be said to discover what all men are conscious of. But certain it is, that he is the first who hath made it the subject of a full and reflex cognizance. It forms the argument of his three first sermons, in a volume which may safely be pronounced, the most precious repository of sound ethical principles extant in any language. “The authority of conscience,” says Dugald Stewart, “although beautifully described by many of the ancient moralists, was not sufficiently attended to by modern writers, as a fundamental principle in the science of ethics, till the time of Dr. Butler.” It belongs to the very essence of the principle, that we clearly distinguish, between what we find to be the actual force of conscience, and what we feel to be its rightful authority. These two may exist in a state of separation from each other, just as in a Civil