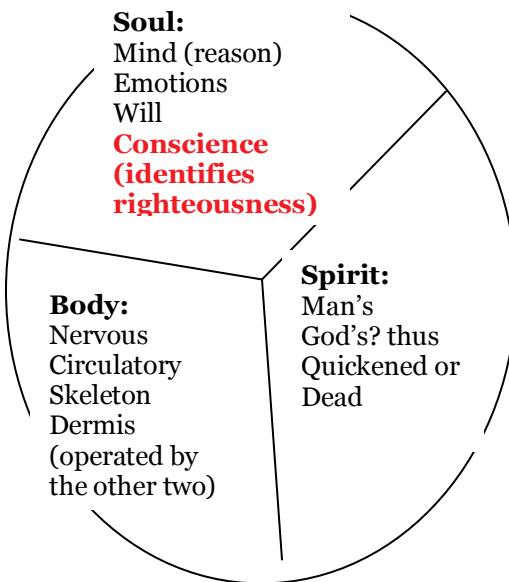


# Outline of Thoughts on CONSCIENCE

**TRIPARTITE MAN**

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole **spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thess.5:23*



## 1. IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

- a. The **Modernists** (modernism began in the Reformation, the 1500's and ended in the late nineteen hundreds)
    - i. Determined that the '**conscience**' is the "supreme interpreter" of Scripture.
    - ii. This means that conscience **overrides** the Bible if my opinion differs from what is in the Bible
  - b. The **Postmodernists** (postmodernism began in the late 1900s)
    - i. **De-thrones** the Bible and God
    - ii. Becomes a '**law unto himself**'
    - iii. Man becomes his **own god**.
    - iv. They **reject** all external truth
  - c. If someone says he **lives by** his conscience, he is dead wrong. Sin clouds our conscience so that it is not entirely reliable.
  - d. Conscience is **a goad; NOT a guide!**
- ## 2. Study of the conscience is a **neglected** topic.
- a. The first to mention it was Chrysostom (c. 3347-407 A.D.)
  - b. Augustine mentioned it and from him to Luther it is not mentioned.
  - c. Have you heard a sermon specifically about the Conscience?

## 3. **Definition** of conscience

- a. Conscience comes from the Greek word "suneidesis" ( ) meaning **"to know with"**
    - i. To know with God
    - ii. To know with yourself
    - iii. Conscience bears **testimony** to the word of God in the heart (acts as a witness) (testimony is from summartureo)
  - b. It is your '**witness.**' Substitute 'witness' for 'conscience' as you read the Bible and vice versa (Romans 2:14-15).
    - i. To the law **written in your heart**
    - ii. To our thoughts, actions, and **intents** of the heart.
    - iii. Just as a **witness in the court room** can be wrong, so can your conscience.
  - c. It must be **purged** (Heb. 9:14, cleansed)
    - i. Because it can be **evil** (Heb. 10:22, cf. Jer. 17:9) and
    - ii. **Seared** (1 Tim. 4:2, insensitive)
    - iii. **Weak** and **ignorant** (1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12)
      - 1. A **Weak** conscience is like a flag on a pole, vacillating between right and wrong, truth, etc.
    - iv. **"shipwrecked."** ("Holding faith, and a good **conscience**; which some having put away concerning faith have made **shipwreck**: 1 Timothy 1:19)
    - v. **Defiled** (Titus 1:15, polluted, stained)
    - vi. **Imperfect** (Heb. 9:9, 10:2)
    - vii. **Pricked** (Acts 2:37, heart here probably refers to the conscience).
    - viii. **Uneasy** (Lk. 2:35, heart here probably refers to the conscience)
    - ix. **Cut** (Acts 5:33)
    - x. **Remorseful** (Mat. 27:3)
    - xi. **Revengeful** (the worse kind of conscience, Gen. 4)
  - d. You are **commanded** to have a good conscience (1 Pe. 3:16, cf., Heb. 13:18, 1 Pe. 3:21, 1 Tim. 1:5, 19)
    - i. Conscience can be strong (1 Cor. 10:25-27)
  - e. Conscience can be clean, clear, pure (1 Tim. 3:9)
4. Our conscience is a **faculty** in man given by God [It is like a room in a house with doors leading to other rooms in the house]

- a. It is **innate** (2 Cor. 4:2) [in 1 Corinthians 10:29 Paul, in speaking of his own conscience and the conscience of another, apparently is presuming that the conscience is universal and innate."<sup>1</sup>]
  - b. It is not **acquired**
    - i. All men have a conscience ("*every man's conscience*" 2 Cor. 4:2)
  - c. It is a **part of the mind** (in the soul)
  - d. It can be **influenced by our environment**, but it is not as a result of our environment.
  - e. It is **NOT** the voice of God within us
 

[Chafer says: "Some maintain that it is not an integral part of man, but is rather the voice of God speaking directly to the one who is exercised by conscience. On the other hand, and far removed indeed, is the notion that conscience is no more than a bent of mind received by the discipline of childhood. **Neither one of these extremes is sustained by Scripture.**"<sup>2</sup>

"The "*voice of God*," the written Words in this dispensation, has an influence on the conscience, but the conscience is **not** "*the voice of God*." It recognizes the testimony of God written in our hearts." [ and the written Words are illuminated by the Holy Spirit, HDW]. (*Hearing the Voice of God*, page 133)]
5. The Holy Spirit illuminates a born-again individual by influencing the conscience "*with the **washing** of water by the word*" (Eph. 5:26)
6. The conscience can be **convicting** (Jn. 8:9)
- a. Which can be good.
  - b. What the conscience convicts a person of before he is saved, is not what the conscience convicts a person of after he is saved. [This is like the savage versus the civilized; or what convicts a Muslim versus a Christian.]
  - c. Or, if overly convicting,
    - i. bad when associated with extreme guilt or remorse in a saved individual.
      - 1. which may be justified or unjustified remorse.
        - a. If you are justified by the blood of the Lamb, quit punishing yourself. (Heb. 9:14)
        - b. Unless you are backslidden or a carnal Christian.

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<sup>1</sup> Roy B. Zuck, "The Doctrine of the Conscience" (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 126, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1969, Logos, 2002) 331.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Anthropology, Part V" (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume 101, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1944; Logos, 2002) 145.

7. The conscience is not infallible or foolproof as seen from the verses above; **thus how can it be the voice of God?????!!!!**
8. The unsaved man holds his conscience as his **guide**, which establishes HIS sense of right or wrong as his guide or standard or justice or fairness. This is wrong!!
  - a. Thus, conscience becomes 'infallible' to an individual. "a law unto himself.
9. The **standard** for our conscience is the 'law of God,' which is in the heart of man but a man with seared, unwashed, not clean, defiled conscience ignores the promptings.
10. The Conscience can be overruled by the will of man.
11. The word, "**heart**," in Scripture can be understood in certain contexts to refer to the conscience (heart can also refer to the 'spirit' of man).
  - a. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their **heart**, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Acts 2:37
  - b. For if our **heart** condemn us, God is greater than our **heart**, and knoweth all things. 1 John 3:20 (see verses 17-20)
  - c. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish **heart** was darkened. Romans 1:21
  - d. Let us draw near with a true **heart** in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:22
12. The Conscience cannot be **eradicated**, but it can be educated (washed), trained, defiled, seared, convicted, etc.
13. The Holy Spirit is **God's witness** (2 Chron 16:9)
14. Conscience must be exercised (Acts 23:1, **24:16**)

## **The Conscience as Witness**

*"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience**" [Greek, **s uneidhs ij**, meaning "to know with" (e.g. with you and God), a witness **with** you of your actions and thoughts] "**also bearing witness**" (Greek, **s unmart urew**, testimony) "**and their thoughts** the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (**Romans 2:14-15**). [HDW, my comments and emphasis].*

*"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience" (i.e. Greek, **s uneidhs ij**, "to know with" himself and God, e.g. a witness with you of your actions and thoughts) "**also bearing me witness**" (i.e. Greek, **s unmart urew**, testimony) "**in the Holy Ghost**" (Romans 9:1). (HDW, my comments).*

In a saved, born again person, the Holy Spirit dwells **in** him and sheds light on Truth, which greatly influences the witness (conscience). Now, substitute "witness" for "conscience" in the following verse:

*“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (2 Corinthians 1:12).*

Man’s spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, God, etc., are called witnesses in Scripture (Jn. 8:18, Rom. 1:9, 8:16, Heb. 10:15, Rev. 1:5, 3:14). Therefore, the KJB translators probably chose “conscience” for the Greek work, *suneidêsis*, in order to distinguish the faculty of conscience, which is our witness, from God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc., who are also called witnesses in Scripture.

[H. D. Williams, *Hearing The Voice of God*, p. 124]