

Conscience

Robert Turner

Conscience reveals what each man believes he "ought" to be (Acts 23:1, 24; 24:16; 26:9-11). It is indicative of his inward feeling of moral right, of the noble ideal for which he feels he should strive. It is his prod toward his conception of moral heights, and his brakes against doing what he believes is wrong. Conscience is not the ultimate standard of truth, for that must come from God via revelation; but conscience toward God tells the individual's attitude toward God. That is why man must do what he truly believes God wants him to do (Rom. 14).

While one is trying to do what he believes God wants him to do, (1) he may have an erroneous concept of what God desires (that was the case of Saul, in persecuting Christians), or, (2) he may, through weakness of the flesh, act contrary to his good intentions (Rom. 7:22-f). In this case, he is made miserable by his conscience -- is humbled before God, and appreciative of forgiveness in Christ. We are all imperfect creatures, and should, at times, feel these pangs.

But what of those who take part in, condone, and support that which is contrary to God's word, or without any divine authority? They may know no better, and be acting in good conscience before God. In this case, further information from God's word is most welcomed. Because they truly want to do His will, they gladly open their Bible, investigate, and change their conduct to fit the evidence. In this way they maintain a good conscience before God (I Pet. 3:21).

Sadly, however, we must acknowledge that there are those who have no such noble character (Acts 17:11). They are angered if their practice is questioned. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God (Jn. 12:42-43). If their conscience toward God continues to function, they lead a miserable life, fighting with themselves, overwhelmed with feelings of guilt. Undesirable -- yes, but there is yet hope while the battle rages. How terribly sad to see some whose conscience is seared (I Tim. 4:2), and who can reject God without a qualm.