

OCT.

THE REFLECTOR

1978

CONFORMABLE UNTO HIS DEATH

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"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, **being made conformable unto his death.**" Thus spoke the apostle Paul in Phil. 3:10. (Emphasis is mine and the quote is from the King James Version. A.C.G.)

There are several things of interest in this statement by the apostle. First of all, there is the clear connection between the (1.) Knowing Christ, (2.) The power of his resurrection, (3.) The fellowship of his sufferings, and (4.) Conformity unto his death. One doesn't "know" Christ until and unless he knows something of the power of his resurrection. One doesn't "know" Christ until and unless he knows something of the fellowship of his sufferings. One doesn't "know" Christ until and unless he has been made conformable unto the death of Christ.

When Christ gave the great commission he said go teach the nations and baptize the taught ones (Matt. 28:19). He said he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). Now the only thing we have going for us on these passages is that our Lord said baptize the people. Of course that would be enough to forever settle the question of the necessity of baptism — unless one came up under the teaching that baptism was not necessary to salvation.

But when all of the teaching on the subject of baptism is considered, we learn that when one is baptized he knows Christ, he knows the power of the resurrection of Christ, he knows the fellowship of

the sufferings of Christ, **FOR** he has thus **been made conformable unto the death of Christ!**

Note some passages which deal with baptism. Rom 6:4-5. Paul said we are buried by baptism into death. We are raised up from baptism to walk a new life. He declared that we are planted in the likeness of the death of Christ and that we are also in the likeness of his resurrection. In Col. 2:12, Paul declared that we are buried, quickened and raised up even as Christ was buried, quickened and raised up. The apostle described this process as "obeying the form of doctrine delivered" (Rom. 6:17-18).

In Eph. 2:1, Paul said people who were "dead in trespasses and sins had been quickened." In verse 6, he said these people were "raised up together" with Christ. Paul told the Colossian brethren that they had "risen with Christ" Col. 3:1.

When we get it all together, we **die** with Christ when we repent or make up our mind that we will cease to live in sin. What we do is die to the practice of sin. Then we are **buried** with Christ when we are baptized. We are **quickened** with Christ when God forgives our trespasses and sins. Then we are **raised** with Christ when we come from baptism to walk a new life. Thus we obey the form of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:17-18). We are saved through faith in the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead (Col. 2:12). We are raised up to walk a new life (Rom. 6:4). We are thus made a new creature in Christ (II Cor.5:17).

Sprinkling and pouring and calling it baptism will not suffice. Being immersed, thinking we are already alive unto God, will not suffice. But when we scripturally repent and are baptized for the remission of sins, we are made conformable unto the death of Christ and thus experience the power of his resurrection. We will have thus known the fellowship of his sufferings. Repent and be baptized for remission of sins or die and be buried that you may be resurrected. Be made conformable unto his death and know the power of his resurrection and you will **KNOW HIM!** Baptism saves us by the resurrection of Christ (I Pet. 3:21).

Considering The Conscience

Vaughn D. Shofner

“Let your conscience be your guide,” is a shibboleth that identifies the religious ways of countless persons. Others say that we should not allow the conscience to influence in any way. And others say the “conscience is a creature of education,” and therefore the information supplied it must be correct in order for its urgings to be correct. So, we need to seriously consider the conscience.

The word, in ancient languages and our own, has many things written about the definition of it. It is actually “a knowing with oneself.” It distinguishes between what is morally good and bad, urging to do good and shun the bad. Just as there is to some degree an in-born knowledge that a Superior Being exists, so the conscience is to some degree an innate consciousness that there is right and there is wrong, and a knowledge that there should be punishment for doing wrong.

The history of the aborigines of the darkest, uncivilized regions prove this. There are many heathens who have no knowledge of God’s truth whose lives are kept on a higher plane of morality than countless thousands who are blessed with civilized enlightenment. Many heathens conscientiously keep the sanctity of one man and one woman in companionship for life, while America with all its educational attainments has little respect for this God-given principle, generally. History further attests to the existence of this inbred consciousness as we read of confessions and acknowledgments made by heathens of their crimes. By appointment of creation, unemotional reasoning discerns that a sinner (wrongdoer) deserves punishment, and presumes that a higher power will yield to the entreaties and penitent demonstrations of intelligent creatures. Historical temples and altars testify that the inherent ability possessed by unlearned heathens caused them to attempt to satisfy a higher justice by the sacrifices of human victims whose life blood flowed from those heathen altars.

I therefore conclude that humanity comes equipped with a conscience, and only by disuse can it be atrophied into nonexistence. I also learn that the improper use of it; that is, the mocking it, the suppressing it, the ignoring it will render it “seared” or “dead,” impervious to right and wrong and of no use. I am aware of the fact that the urgings of a conscience are not always right, not necessarily right, but by appointment of creation we possess it to treat as we will.

Paul said, Acts 23:1, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” In Acts 24:15, 16 he said, “. . . there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” Notice that he did not suppress his conscience, but gave heed to the urgings. And notice that he was concerned and exercised himself because of his knowledge of the resurrection of the

just and the unjust. That he had always lived in good conscience must mean that he paid attention to the in-born sense of morality. Being fair and honest in his attempts to live right made it impossible for him to override his conscience, or refuse to use it. However, much of the time of which he speaks of living in all good conscience, he was persecuting Christianity, and at that time the good conscience did not produce good deeds.

Many persons unequivocally teach that a person can’t afford to follow his conscience. It seems to me that there is no way to keep from following the conscience for the person who is striving to live right. Holy Scripture teaches us that we should follow our consciences. For example, Rom. 14:22, 23, “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Meyer in Word Studies, in explanation of this statement includes, “So far as it brings with it the moral confidence as to what in general and under given circumstances is the right christian mode of action.” And I have not heard a student of the New Testament state differently from the idea that to violate one’s conscience is to sin. He that doubteth has a pang of conscience, and to override it is wrong, is not of faith. It seems to me that we need to pay attention to our consciences, but we must be careful that the promptings originate from the correct information.

Peter gives us some information about the conscience. “This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (I Pet. 2:19). I take that to mean that a man is encouraged to follow his conscience in service to God, even if it brings suffering. However, I am aware of the fact that the leadership of the conscience which is praised is toward God. And I am also aware of the fact that the only thing we know about God comes through his revealed Word, and I conclude therefore that the prompting of the conscience toward God was possible only by way of the process of education.

Again Peter says, “. . . be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, . . . having a good conscience . . .” (I Pet. 3:15, 16). This teaches the value of a good conscience which is obtained by answering the gainsayer, or unlearned, about the hope a Christian has, and the last words of verse 15 tell us that it has to do with the “good manner of life in Christ.” Again we see the need to keep the conscience correctly informed.

In verse 21 of this chapter, Peter tells of salvation by baptism, and explains, “(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.)” The gospel of Christ teaches the way of salvation by baptism from the time of the Great Commission of it, and demands the knowledge of this plan in order to have the answer of a good conscience toward God. How can a salvation-seeker refuse to heed his conscience?

(see next page)

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

Barry Hudson

"I think that I am the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I walked on the water to Christ, I confessed him as the Christ, the son of God, I saw him standing with Elijah and Moses, and I've never wavered from following him," Peter boldly asserted.

"No, I'm the greatest in the kingdom," John declared, "I'm the youngest, able to do more service to Jesus; I'm the disciple that Jesus loves. I'm his favorite. Why, he almost told me that I will sit next to him in the kingdom."

"You can't say that. I've worked so hard to gain that seat. I keep all the money that will keep this kingdom in operating condition. Without me, you wouldn't have any money to do the work of the kingdom in the future," Judas answered.

"My mom told me that she was going to ask Jesus if I could sit on the right hand of Jesus. My parents have a lot of influence, so I'm pretty sure I'll get to sit next to him," James proudly said.

"I don't make a show of myself before men but I have done more than any of you. I'm sick of the rest of you getting all the credit, when I've done more than all of you put together," Andrew said defensively.

"But I've given up more. I was successful as a tax collector. I was doing very well in the business but I

There are some of us who deny the statement, "the conscience is a creature of education." They say there is no way to educate a feeling, an emotion. Whether that is true, I see no need to argue, but the direction of the feeling, emotion, depends entirely upon the educational processes through which the possessor of the feeling has gone! That is irrefutable! And, by the way, what is "subjective faith?" It certainly is not a material entity, but it is the confidence as to things hoped for, the conviction as to things unseen. But, gentle reader, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). And I have no disposition to argue that a "good conscience toward God" cometh any other way! I see no error in the statements, "faith is a creature of education" and "conscience is a creature of education."

I write again some of the words I used in closing the writing of a tract on conscience more than two decades ago: "Our souls have a nature inherently related to God, and therefore possess the power to receive and appropriate him to them that they may live eternally with him . . . Let us keep alive the spark of celestial fire known as the conscience, allowing the glad tidings of God's grace to lift us to the sphere of intelligence presented therein, and in this way be ready and able to enjoy the blessings of heaven when time is no more!"

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gave it all up to follow Jesus. Most of you were just fishermen but I gave up a position in the government to follow Christ, so I know he will pick me to sit next to him," Levi (Matthew) said.

"I've done more than any of you. Why, I brought Nathanael to Jesus. When the multitude was almost starving to death, I brought the little boy to Jesus, which resulted in a miracle. I'm better than all of you," replied Philip.

"This is ridiculous! I've known for a long time that I was to sit on the right hand of Jesus; I just didn't tell you. I have a friend that said Jesus told him that I would be first in his sight," Thomas boasted.

And so the discussion continued. Jesus, hearing the uproar, came to see what the problem was. He saw his followers bickering among themselves, coming close to striking blows to one another.

"What seems to be the problem here?" Jesus asked.

"Maybe you can solve the problem. We've been discussing who is the greatest in your sight. I guess now is the best time to find out. Will you tell us?" Peter asked.

Jesus knew he would have to handle this situation carefully. If he picked one over the others, the one chosen would be the subject to contempt and might cause some of his followers to go away from him. After all, if they didn't get a reward for their efforts, they might as well go back to their old jobs.

"Go get that little boy for me," Jesus said. "Except ye become as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. You sound just like little children, fighting among yourselves. But even children don't continue to do what you are doing. They eventually seek to regain their friendship with the person they argued with. All of you are seeking to be ambitious and gain a seat next to me in my kingdom. You don't know what you ask. This little child wants only to please me by doing anything that I would request of him. He doesn't do it expecting a reward but does it because he loves me. Not only that, but you have become affected by the ways of the world. This child doesn't care what the world can do for him, he only wants to serve me. He puts his trust and faith in me and isn't concerned about his position but only that he is doing what I would have him to do. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Have you humbled yourself to do service to others? "No man can truly be free who serves only himself." Let us be servants to one another so we may further, rather than hinder, the cause of the kingdom.

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It is in knowledge as in swimming; he who flounders and splashes on the surface makes more noise and attracts more attention than the pearl diver who quietly dives in quest of treasures at the bottom. —W. Irving

I Stood in the Presence of Death

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Not long ago, with another Christian, I stood at the bedside of a man dying of cancer in a hospital. He knew he had not long to live, and had accepted the fact of his soon-coming death. He was completely paralyzed and without sensation from the waist down. The loathsome disease had progressed to the point of softening his bones. As careful as the attendants were, and I verified this carefulness by my observation, they had accidentally broken one of his legs a week or so before. He was in considerable pain, and knew he had no chance of recovery, and his only hope for release from his physical agony was death.

But he was disturbed for reasons other than his cancer. A long time prior to this, he had been taught the first principles of the oracles of God. While recognizing truth and its application to him, he put off obedience. It was "not convenient"; besides, he was enjoying things he knew he would have to give up to become a Christian. Now he fully knew he was about to die, and that he was not prepared to do so. This, not his physical condition, was the cause of his mental anguish.

We talked for a few minutes, if the sounds he made could be called "talk." He wanted to hear again Christ's call for sinners to come to Him. In ten minutes or so, he urgently requested I baptize him.

It was not easy. His condition was so bad we were convinced to move him from the hospital to the nearest place suitable for immersion would cause him much pain and possibly kill him too. One of the nurses suggested trying a large tub in the hospital. The attending doctor gave his permission, so we carefully shifted him from his bed to a stretcher, and from there to the tub, which by this time was filled with water. Getting him into it was not easy. After baptizing him, getting him back out, onto the stretcher again and then returning him to bed was even more difficult. I know we hurt him, for several times he was unable to keep from groaning.

But now he was no longer troubled in heart. He was completely relaxed and content. Why he waited as long as he did, coming as close to death as he did before being baptized, I do not know. It is doubtful he really knew either. But God in His compassion extended this man mercy: our new brother in Christ lived just short of *eight days* after being immersed.

I stood in the presence of death . . . then in the presence of life powerful enough to overcome death. Our brother "squeaked through." But we all stand in the presence of death daily. Oh, not necessarily physical death, but surely separation from God (Isa. 59:1, 2). And unlike this man, most of these will pass through

physical death in their present condition, unprepared. The only hope of these lost ones is those of us who know the gospel of Christ and are willing to take it to them.

Without this gospel and ourselves as God's messengers in bringing it to the lost, we will all continue to stand in the presence of death daily . . . and one day, we will stand in the presence of our own death for having failed to do as God would have us do (Jas. 4:17), not having tried to bring life to the lost, as was brought to our dying brother.

Will you stand in the presence of your own spiritual death?

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VOLUME 18	NUMBER 10
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THE REFLECTOR is published monthly by the church of Christ meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale, AL 35068.

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