The conscience

© by Gerard Feller

**Introduction**

In the Christian spiritual healthcare there seems to be an increasing tension between pastoral care, psychology and recently also neurophysiology.

In the past especially the moralistic and ethical side were emphasized, for example in the pastoral care of Jay Adams, in which the awareness of sin, confession and sanctification represented almost all solutions of spiritual problems. Later, many Christian healthcare workers abandoned that particular unilaterally ethical approach and started to focus more on psychology, especially the development psychology, statistics, and people also got more and more caught up in the humanistic psychology.

Under the influence of the developments in brain sciences and genetics in the past few years, problems have been more and more considered to be a result of biochemical changes and brains disorders.  
Healthcare becomes more and more complicated. Do we have to approach alcoholism for example as a problem of sin, a symptom of an unprocessed trauma or as a neurological or genetic problem? Or indeed as a complicated problem in which several causes and aspects play a role, and what does it matter which method of counseling we choose? Should we cut healthcare in different disciplines which often have a different concept of the human being, or is there a holistic biblical model? In this article I would like to explore the role and the function of the conscience in this field.

**Definition**

The **conscience** (in Greek: syneidèsis, in Latin: conscientia, which means: “knowledge with or within oneself”) compares an acquired or innate ethical standard with a practical situation.

The conscience is developed in the education, because experience teaches us that human tendencies can be kept in control by it.

We may also call the conscience the spiritual capacity to condemn or judge. The inner consciousness of good and evil, the conscious and unconscious imaginations and concepts altogether, according to which man judges the moral value of his own actions, the awareness of obligations, even to the extent that he responds to natural desires and lusts. Biblically, the inner consciousness of good and evil is strongly related to the relationship and communication with God. Adam and Eve took from fruit of the prohibited tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and set for themselves their own thinking and considerations as a standard. The Tree of Life, connected with God in Christ, is the perfect source of the conscience (knowledge). In the Bible the conscience plays an extremely important role, in both the liberation and redemption of the whole human being and in the communication with God and learning to know His will. In Hinduism and Buddhism and the humanistic psychotherapies which are related to these religions, the conscience is not related with for example guilt towards God, but it has the overtone of the concept of maya or ignorance, not being illuminated; and in such a case it lies closer to a development problem than to a moral responsibility.

**The development of the conscience**

Every man has a conscience, which is the awareness that one is not allowed to do everything the way he likes to. It is presented in cartoons as an angel sitting on your shoulder, that whispers all kinds of things in your ear. Little children have a conscience already but no impulse control yet. The society, your faith and the education also play a major role in the development of your conscience. With toddlers the prohibitions only apply when the father or mother who has prohibited them to do something, are also there. This is called the external conscience. Later they will discipline themselves when they do something that they are not supposed to. But despite that, they then still do what ‘they are not supposed to’. Around the age of three years the conscience of the ‘natural man’ that quickly accuses others, develops further, for example the dog that has done something. This is not consciously lying but lying out of fear for ‘the punishment’. Around the fourth year children often know what is allowed and what not, and only at their sixth year, the conscience starts to really develop. Until the seventh year people find it difficult to recognize the difference between fantasy and reality. From the seventh year the child has to learn to develop self control, for example the concept of a delayed reward. An experiment whereby children were presented candy and were told that if they do not touch it for five minutes, they will get twice as much after five minutes. Children who controlled themselves the best, later appeared to be more successful in society.  
We will show further in this article that self control is also a very important factor in the brain development, the formation of the conscience and the whole life. We speak of self control when one can hold on to the identity of who he is and is able to overcome all kinds of natural lusts, like rampant sex, aggressive and strong emotions, all kinds of passions and selfishness, by acting according to his identity, in spite of all those temptations. In the brain physiology and control of our feelings, the prefrontal cortex is very important and in the case of a strongly developed conscience, it plays a decisive role in the interactions and relationships of the thalamus, amygdale and the cingula, and at the reasoning of man. This should lead to a perfect biochemistry wherein the ‘rewarding neurotransmitters’ such as dopamine, serotonins and endorphins are naturally produced in the right way.

**The conscience in biblical view**

Biblically, this skill of controlling the impulses is a fruit and a characteristic of the Holy Spirit. After Adam and Eve took from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the results were ultimately murder and manslaughter and the human race risked to perish because of its own lack of morality and conscience. Knowledge apart from God leads to death, in contrast to knowledge (fellowship, participation in) in God. Knowledge apart from God is characterized in the Bible as foolishness. The fool says in his heart: *“There is no God”* (**Psa 14:1**). Through the gospel of Jesus Christ the fool can become wise by the wisdom of God which is foolishness to the world, namely through the cross (**1Cor 1: 24,25**). With the new birth the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts, spirit (consciousness) and is related to it forever (**Rom 8:35**). The precious blood of Christ purifies the spirit of man, his intuition and conscience.

*“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (**Heb 9:14**).

When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt guilty and hid themselves from God.

Due to the gospel of Christ we are allowed to boldly draw near to God. In this way Christ fulfills for eternity (according to the ordination of Melchizedek) a High priesthood, wherein He sanctifies our life with His life and blood. Due to that we have boldness to stand before God through the cleansing blood of Jesus.

If our conscience is clean, without unconfessed conscious sins, we can experience full fellowship and a deeply inward joy through the Holy Spirit. *“Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled  clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”* (**Heb 10: 22**) A bad conscience is continually accused, which causes the fellowship with Christ to be interrupted and paralyzed. When our conscience is not right, our approach to God is restrained, because we cannot really believe that God has nothing against us.

It robs us from the liberty to have fellowship with Christ. Therefore a Christian ought to be purified from accusations in his conscience, fully purified, specifically through the blood (the life of Christ), so that there is no more accusation (**Rom 8: 33, 34**).

However, if we keep on being conscious of sins, our spirit will be kept focused to eliminate them and there will be no power left to do heavenly things.

When we neglect the voice of the Holy Spirit in our mind, we will become carnal.

**The conscience and knowledge**

A clean conscience does not necessarily mean that the conscience is better than before. It means that we are allowed to come confidently in the presence of Christ by an honest and sincere confession of sins. If we remain in the Spirit and follow the voice of our conscience, we should consider that the conscience is limited by knowledge. The conscience was after all the ‘organ’ with which we could discern the evil from the good. Knowledge differs between believers. Some have a lot of, others less knowledge. This is often determined by education and factors of the environment. Therefore we cannot focus on the standards of the other.

A sin which is not known by us does not influence the fellowship of a believer.

Christians who are still young in the faith, often think that their lack of knowledge (knowing) influence their fellowship with Christ. It is important to realize that God does not expect knowledge from us in the first place (knowledge of the tree of good and evil), but obedience towards His will.

**Conscience and judgment**

God acts with His children depending on the situation. Because there are different levels of knowledge, we ought not to consider something which is hardly a sin to many Christians, to be a heavy sin to other believers. Therefore we are not to ‘judge one another’ (**Lk 6: 36**). Only the Father is able to estimate our level of knowledge. He does not expect mature power with babies!

Christ does not seek experiences of ‘old men’ with young people in faith. He demands obedience (on the basis of one’s existing knowledge). If the Holy Spirit has not revealed our unconscious sins yet, how could we then, based on our conscience, judge our brother who probably at that moment has a knowledge level in his conscience which we ourselves had five years ago?

If we really want to help people, we are not to set detailed demands of obedience, but we should continually advice them to follow the voice of their conscience. When they surrender their will to God, they will receive an equivalent light of the Holy Spirit and then obey it.

**Conscience and empathy**

Paul indicates in different places in the Bible that he exercises his conscience before God and men (among others in **Acts 24:16**). Such exercise of the conscience has got a lot to do with empathy. An important condition for the development of a good conscience is empathy. Besides a cognitive awareness of good and wrong, a development must have taken place wherein one has learnt to attach a feeling to events and actions. If this does not happen, one will not see the difference between a major crime and a minor offense. One can develop a narcissistic personality or an anti social personality disorder, which was formerly called psychopathy.

One knows to be wrong in a way, but he does not have any feeling of guilt, regret or shame.

An extreme example is a serial killer who has no problem with his conscience. Empathy is the insight to understand the other person , which means that you are able to think and feel what your actions do to another person.

Emotions often determine what you ultimately do or not do. If you have the experience of being hurt by something psychologically, you will be inhibited to do the same thing next time, for that very pain is as it were an inner punishment. Freud claimed that the conscience arises when a child masters among others the social standard of the parents and the society. Other scholars claim that the conscience is strongly related to the survival of a group or tribe in which a person participates.

The philosopher Kant was very firm in his opinion: “the conscience is not the result of social processes, but it belongs to man as an autonomously moral individual”. To Kant the conscience was a proof of the existence of God (Die Kritiek der Praktischen Vernunft).

In a sense **Romans 2: 15-16** also speaks about it: *“In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when,  according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”*

But Nietzsche does not worry about the conscience. It is just faith to authority! To Nietzsche therefore the free spirit is “beyond good and evil” ("Jenseits von Gut und Böse")! Jan Kerkhofs, emeritus professor at the faculty of Theology in Leuven, says about the conscience: “Growth to an authentic self” and ‘conscience’ are related together”. That seems also to be true neuro-physiologic-ally.

**The conscience as a function of the brain**

The development of the conscience which we approached psychologically earlier in this article, is also to be approached neuro-physiologically. Here I use the article Emotional synchronizationfrom the book ‘Living with men’ by Dr. Jim Wilder.

The control center – the judgment mechanism, in a certain sense our conscience – of our brain has the goal *to* remember us how to respond as ourselves in all circumstances.

Most scientists see the control center of our identity as something that is found in the prefrontal cortex. That is the part of your head that you tap with your finger when you say that someone is crazy! The center judges the triggers and responds according to the identity of the ‘self’. In other words: it is about a good course of the synchronization process between the inside and the outside, regardless of what happens. As soon as something happens, emotions will arise such as joy, sadness, fright, anger, shame, disgust, despair and humiliation. Sometimes they arise from the inside and sometimes they are also provoked by others around us.

When our control center is undeveloped and unorganized, the synchronization process doesn’t happen properly, which may cause us to lose the control over our lives by these strong emotions. However, if our control center is strong and well trained, we are able to remain ourselves, regardless of the intensity of these feelings. The preparation of dealing with all these emergency situations takes place during the first two years of a child’s life, at least if it can rely on a good relationship and bonding with the mother or educator.

Let me give you a brief tour along the four levels of the control center.

The careful synchronization of the brain activity is actually learnt in phases.

Thereby each phase represents a level of the control center. From below to above this structure works like a huge learning machine.

In order to understand how this works, I first have to explain a little bit more about the anatomy of our brains. First of all it is important to know that the cerebral cortex is the part of our brains wherein the conscious processes take place and in which way our will has an influence.

Therefore, when we confirm that the upper two levels of the control center are to be found in the cerebral cortex, it implies that the processes that take place here, give us an opportunity to choose.

In contrast to that it means that the lowest two levels of the control center lie belowthe cerebral cortex.

This means that these parts are within our subconscious mind. Therefore we cannot control it by our will.

Besides, our control center lies predominantly in the right part of our brains, which is the place where our feelings and creativity are to be found. This means that the control center wherein tense emotions happen, will primarily look for a solution that causes an experience of peace and joy again.

This strong focus on emotional restoration causes a child to deal in a relational way when he is upset. It enables him to regulate and to calm his feelings down and to return to a condition of joy, at least if he has learnt how to deal with this all. The right part of the brain has an important feature which influences the way in which the control center is trained and how it functions. Therefore the memories that are saved here have in common that we are not conscious when they are being addressed.

When we want to perform an operation, it is necessary that we remind ourselves of the skill that we need for it. The only way I can hold a glass of water and empty it, is to learn how to do it and then remember how I have done it earlier. But when I empty a glass of water, I am not conscious of this remembrance at all.

The only thing I can think of is: ‘I am drinking’. In this way the control center remembers who we have learnt to be and in which way we have learnt to act, but we do not think thereby: ‘I remember who I am’. The only thought that we have – in case we have thoughts about it, anyhow - is: ‘This is the way I am’. Actually, the ability to carefully synchronize the brain activity is learned in stages. Thereby each stage represents a level of the control center. From below to above this structure works as a huge learning machine.

**Level One** regards the most basic connections. These connections are very specific and sensory conscious. When Level One asks for the mother, the father does not need to come. When it on the contrary wants the father, then the mother is a mere spectator again. Level One is to be found beneath the cerebral cortex and therefore has an own will. level One determines who is in favor and who does not impress. Our deepest pain and joy come from Level One.

This is where the center of our connections lies. When the signal is on, it is looking for connection. When it is off, it does not. We could therefore also call Level One the *switch of our connections.* When this switch is *on*, our face will sense: ‘I want you!’

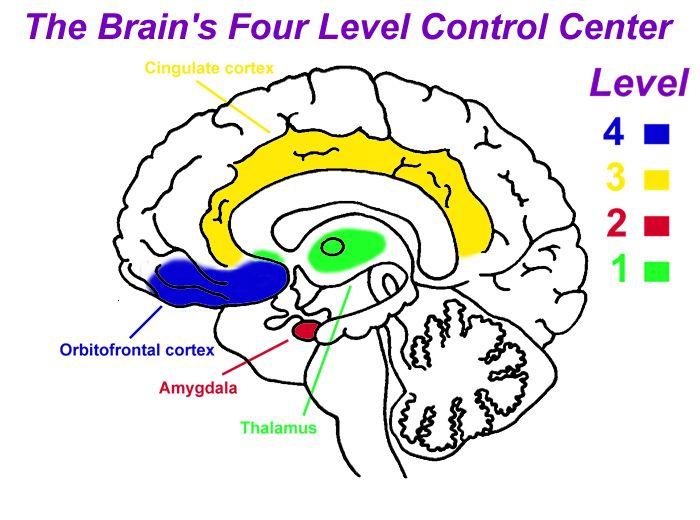
**Level Two** is to be found – like Level One – beneath the cerebral cortex.

Here lies *the center of assessment or judgment*, where our experiences are labeled with the valuation: *good, bad,* or *scary.*

As soon as Level Two has formed an opinion about something, it will not allow it to be changed anymore. Level Two functions as the emotional brain on behalf of Level One and only cares about what it thinks about something or someone.

With the exception of one who is in a coma, Level Two is always alert.

The amygdala (see picture 1) normally takes care of the conditioning of fear, for example that a person immediately experiences an unpleasant feeling when he knows that he is not supposed to do something and ‘remembers’ which punishment is attached to it. Children from whom it seemed that on the age of three the conditioning of fear had no effect, appeared to be convicted for several crimes already at the age of twenty three. (Thus the amygdala has a great influence on the assessment capacity or our conscience, which is further interpreted by the prefrontal cortex. GF)



**The control center of our brains. Copy right: Jim Wilder**

**Picture 1** shows us the brain structures that are often associated with the four levels of the control center.

There is still some insecurity about the question concerning the place where some functions start and end, but there are many indications that they are concentrated on places that are indicated on the map. **Level One** makes use of the thalamus and what is known as the deep limbic structures, like the basal ganglia.

**Level Two** mainly takes place in the amygdala. The cingular cortex contains the mother core of **Level Three**. In science most attention is paid to the orbital prefrontal cortex of Level Four. These structures together are called the limbic system.

**Level three** is the most important synchronization area of the control center. It is located in the cerebral cortex and is therefore open for interaction with other people, especially with those with whom we have built up a relationship. **Level Three** is the emotional brain for two people, which means: it can synchronize with only one other person at the same time. The skill of how to do this is learnt between the second and ninth month in the life of an infant, particularly in the relationship with the mother.

**Level Three** synchronizes many things. Being led by a committed mother or educator, the infant learns to synchronize the lower and higher levels of the brains, thus both the levels that are *below* and the levels that are *within* the cerebral cortex.

**Level Three** not only synchronizes the different lobes of the brain. Also the brains of the baby and the mother – the one brain with the other – are synchronized here. This is the reason why Level Three is also called the *mother core*, because here a synchronization takes place with the mother.

When mother and child are attuned to one another in this way, it means that **Level Three** of the mother has been *downloaded* to the *mother core* of the child.

The more developed brain of the mother has been copied into her baby, including what she knows and the way in which her brain is built up.

(Synchronization with others has a lot to do with the development of empathy, which, as it is earlier mentioned, plays a major role in the development of the conscience. GF)

**Level Four** is our conscious identity center. This is the part of the brains that considers itself as *I*.

**Level Four** is called: ***orbital prefrontal cortex*** (*orbital* means under the eye socket, *prefrontal* means at the front of the brains, *cortex* means the outer layer of the brains). This is the part where our capacity to flexible thinking, moral behavior, personal preferences, and self consciousness are located. (It assesses and examines all information from our emotion and thinking and in that sense it is to be defined as our conscience. GF) The orbitofrontal cortex knows that *I* am the one who is active and who lives his life. It is the most upper level of the control center and – in case all levels are well-trained and well-developed – Level Four has the last word about what our brain and our body do. This capacity of Level Four to continually show ‘a flexibly organized behavior towards a high degree of excitement or tension’, is what Sroufe calls ‘a main characteristic of a steady person’. **Level Four** is the place where the capacity to organize flexibly is located (thus far according to Jim Wilder; the total article is to be read on the Promise website).

**A bad conscience is identifiable in the brains**

Unscrupulous murderers therefore do not have a well functioning frontal cortex that regulates their aggressive emotions. But if a murderer has a normally functioning prefrontal cortex and is therefore able to reason whether something is not good, a bad functioning amygdala still can be a hindrance for him to reason normally.

According to Raine, an English neuroscientist, it seems that many unscrupulous people have a low heart beat. The level of excitement, excitation is lower than normal. In that way one is looking for situations to increase that level. A low heart beat in this category means a lack of fear. One is less concerned about the consequences of his deeds. According to Raine, the ultimate murder brain is recognized by three abnormalities: a greater stratum driven by reward, a smaller amygdala that does not respond to punishment and a malfunction of the prefrontal cortex.

A murderer can still respond unscrupulously, with no compassion for his victims, and no remorse about his deed. He knows that it is wrong but due to his badly functioning amygdala he has no emotion left.

In that sense he also does not feel any difference between big and small mistakes. Due to the lack of empathy he will respond narcissistically to his own needs only and not feel what he does to the other person.

Psychopathic murderers do not feel guilt or remorse. A biblical word is a branded (seared, numb) conscience.

**The conscience as function and exercise in the relationship with God**

Earlier in this article we have described how one becomes born again and how the Holy Spirit is related with the born again believer. The good conscience then is formed by the Holy Spirit ‘who writes the law in his heart’.

There is an amazingly beautiful analogy of the way a mother gives joy to her baby in a natural way by non-verbal contact and how she builds up an identity (of love, to be wanted etc.) by interactions with the baby.

Gradually the identity of the baby, the toddler, begins to take shape by the interactions of the educators. This is comparable with how the Christian identity is built up. By coming in the sight of God again and again, just like a baby continually comes in the sight of the mother, the Holy Spirit will teach us to develop an identity in the faith in Christ.

This happens because we continually ‘synchronize’ with God, purify our conscience and come before His throne (in His presence), and learn to focus on Him and in that way build up an identity which is conformed to Christ.

The Old testamentical blessing expresses it wonderfully:

“*The Lord bless you and keep you;**The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;**The Lord  lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.*’ (**Numbers 6: 24-26**)

Our conscience is trained by seeking the tree of life (Christ) instead of the tree of good and evil, our own standard or that of our environment.

Seeking His countenance continually shapes up our conscience, based on His joy (**Psa. 4:7-8; Psa. 89:16; Psa. 34:5; Psa. 21:7, Heb. 10:19-22; Jn. 15:9-12 etc.**).

The conscience tells us whether our relationship with God and with our fellow man is pure. Whether our thoughts and deeds come forth from our own will or from God. With a spiritual growth you see that those two aspects grow closer to one another. In that way the Holy Spirit can speak to a believer, for example with Paul: *“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, …”*(**Rom. 9:1**). An important secret of a victorious Christian life is a pure, clean conscience.

In **Acts 23: 1** Paul says to the Jewish council, that he had *lived his life in all good conscience before God* (see also **2Tim.1:3**). However, this is a matter of practice that every Christian must master (**Acts 24:16**). Ultimately we should consider the praise or criticism of the people around us with a certain skepticism. They often do not look at the heart. The most important thing for a Christian should not use the testimony of others or of oneself as a touchstone for a good life, but the testimony of our living conscience, wherein God Himself speaks.

That is our only measure. *“For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God..”* (**2Cor.1:12**).

Although Paul would have delivered an impressive record, he is perfectly well aware that only the fact that there is a heavenly High Priest, who washes his sins away, there is a foundation of life. Any kind of glory is out of the question.

Besides a one-time washing of regeneration and renewing (**Titus 3:5**) unto salvation , a continuous washing of our conscience is needed, which takes place when we have confessed the sins, which the Holy Spirit has made us aware of through our conscience, we can walk in holiness and in the grace of God. Only in this way we will be able to understand the will of the Lord in life (**Rom.12:1,2**). An important aspect which, concerning the practice of the conscience before God and men (they go together) is mentioned in the Bible, we find in **1 Peter 3: 15-17**: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be  ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear* *having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil”.* To suffer for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ is grace (**Col. 1:24**). This is not a form of asceticism or looking for suffering ourselves, but a suffering which arises after following God’s voice in our conscience. With a cleansed conscience we learn to understand the voice and the will of God better and better. Sometimes this means that we follow another way than the people around us, yes, than even our brothers and sisters expect of us. It may even lead to captivity, torture and death (**Rom. 8: 36**).

Still, the absolute condition is to remain in the peace of Christ: *“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts (conscience)”* (**Heb. 4: 7b**). Only a good conscience before God and men makes a good testimony. Let us not be discouraged (**1Peter 3:15**) by slander and threat of the opposition, even if people try to combat this good testimony. It will surely not prosper (**verse 16b**).

A good behavior in other matters cannot influence a bad conscience. Slander cannot disturb a good conscience.

**To train the conscience in sensitivity towards the fellow man**

We have already mentioned that the conscience has to be trained, not only towards God but also in relationship to the fellowman. That is the practicing of the right, biblical empathy which is so important for the conscience. That relation of the conscience is explained in the Bible by Paul by the means of the meat offering in those days. Many things that for example are done by ‘mature’ Christians according to the will of God, can become sin when they are blindly copied by ‘babies’. More knowledge leads to a stronger conscience and with it a greater freedom, while lesser knowledge as a cause of a ‘weak conscience’ often leads to great limitations. That is clearly presented to us in the **first epistle to the Corinthians**, when it concerns our attitude towards the meat offering **1Cor.8:4**). Some considered the gods non existing, because there is only one God. To those it meant nothing that the meat was offered to the idols. It was allowed to be eaten. But others, who had been caught in the worship of idols for a long time, saw a strong connection between the offered meat and the idol itself. They did not want to eat it, because their conscience was weak, and due to that they got defiled by eating the meat offered to idols (**verse 7**). The apostle Paul clarifies the different points of view according to the condition of the knowledge of the conscience (**verse 7**). The first ones had more spiritual light and did not sin when they ate from the offered meat. For their conscience did not accuse them. The last ones did not have this particular knowledge (inner security) and felt guilty when they ate it and therefore became guilty. This shows that a greater knowledge can increasingly judge us, but it can also prevent a judgment of our conscience! We therefore should continually ask God for knowledge, because we otherwise can remain narrow in our conscience, but that knowledge must remain in humility, otherwise we will become carnal again just as the Corinthians. As long as our knowledge is insufficient and our conscience accuses us, we are to obey this voice at any price.

It is useless to philosophize about whether a certain matter is a sin or not. That doesn’t give us the right and the liberty to act against our conscience. Be careful, our conscience is an acute measure for the guidance of God in us. We can obey it or sin against it. What is judged by the conscience, is also judged by God.

Until now we have talked only about external things like food. However, when it concerns spiritual matters, our knowledge level can show such differences. God deals with us according to our ‘spiritual age’. With young believers it is often about external matters: clothes, food. When young Christians want to follow the Lord, He often expects of them that they order the external things in obedience. When afterwards the experiences with the Lord increase, then it looks like our liberties also increase. But exactly the ‘further progress’ Christians stand before a great risk. Their conscience is so strong that it risks to sink into ‘insensitivity’. Young believers who desire to serve the Lord wholeheartedly, are obedient in many things, because their conscience is sensitive and easy to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Older believers often have so much knowledge that they risk to overestimate matters with their minds and in that way diminish the sensitivity of their conscience. They are tempted to make decisions only with their mind. In that way they become insensitive to the Holy Spirit. This is a heavy blow to their faith life. It often takes away the freshness from the walk of the believer and causes distance and paralyzes the spiritual absorption.

Although knowledge is not so very necessary, we will not have to follow it only in itself. If we do not watch carefully what our conscience judges intuitively, and replace it by our knowledge, we are carnal.

Who has not experienced that his conscience became restless because of something that his knowledge considered legitimate? Knowledge is acquired by the search of our mind, but which is not always guided by God’s Spirit. It may occur that knowledge and conscience can become a battle against one another. Let each who desires to walk spiritually, train himself in a pure conscience before God and men, so that he may have full boldness to enter into the inner sanctuary, through the blood of Jesus.

**In conclusion**

If we summarize all points of view concerning the development and the functioning of the conscience, many sociological, psychological and neuro-physiological factors seem to support the biblical view on the conscience.

Important aspects such as identity building, impulse control, socialization, self control, group identity, the processing of experiences of knowledge and culture, the development of empathy, synchronization and brain examination and of course not in the least the spiritual life, fit perfectly well in a biblical analysis about the conscience.

Of course the biblical view is normative and not the scientific research.

In the Bible the conscience is characterized from a spiritual dimension in which man is related to God. This relatedness is expressed in the awesome creation which is man in spirit, soul and body. God is the Creator of our body, our spirit and our brains! He receives all honor: *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (**1Thes.5: 23**).

Gerard Feller, August 2015

**Consulted literature**

Gerard Feller: Het geweten, artikel in blad Promise 1999, zie: [**http://www.stichtingpromise.nl/bijbelstudies-bemoedigend/het-geweten.htm**](http://www.stichtingpromise.nl/bijbelstudies-bemoedigend/het-geweten.htm)

Watchman Nee: The Spiritual man, isbn 90-5719-049-4 Uitgever: Importantia

Publishing. [**www.importantia.com**](http://www.importantia.com/) Nederlandse uitgave 2002

Dr. Jim Wilder: Met vreugde man zijn, groeien naar volwassenheid. Uitgeverij Archippus, 448 p., genaaid gebrocheerd. ISBN: 9789079011018, € 24,95. [**www.archippus.nl**](http://www.archippus.nl/) met daarin

het artikel over emotionele synchronisatie wat ook te lezen is op de website van Promise (artikelen Jim Wilder)

[**https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/geweten**](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/geweten)

Bram Bakker (psychiater):: Gewetenloze opvoeding. Artikel in het AD van 20 maart 2010

Dr..H. Dubbeldam: Bewustzijn en visie op de werkelijkheid.[**http://www.ecclesianet.nl/?page=16485230**](http://www.ecclesianet.nl/?page=16485230)

Dr. Adrian Raine: The Anatomy of violence [**https://crim.sas.upenn.edu/people/faculty/adrian-raine**](https://crim.sas.upenn.edu/people/faculty/adrian-raine)

Jan Kerkhofs (emeritus prof. te Leuven): Het geweten. Lannoo nv Tielt België. isbn 9789020947632