

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Irish Biblical Studies* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ibs-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ibs-01.php)

Terence McCaughey, Conscience and Decision-Making in some  
Early Christian Communities

When we turn to the dictionaries and word books, we find that the word *συνείδησις* is one of the few words the early Christians used which does not bear connotational resonances from its having been used in the LXX. /1 A cognate term *σύνεσις* does occur fairly frequently in the LXX with the meaning "understanding" - a meaning which *συνείδησις* often has in the NT as we will be noting.

One thing is clear however. The early Christians did not invent the term. They found it in popular usage and made use of it. /2 Scholars are pretty well agreed that it had once been a technical term in the philosophical schools - like many of the words we use - but had ceased to be so and was by Paul's time being used fairly loosely and with varied meaning. Paul is the first writer in the NT to use it, though it seems likely that he is picking up a term which had already been employed in the Corinthian community's letters to him. /3

A close study of Paul's usage reveals that *συνείδησις* often means "consciousness/awareness" - in this respect very like the cognate *σύνεσις* in the LXX - rather than what modern English means by "conscience".

In fact the apostle Paul is in no way to be hailed as a hero of the introspective conscience. When he wrote, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom 7.19), he is not giving expression to what C.G. Jung called the "individuation Process". /4 Nor is he in line with the tradition of mediaeval piety which has its roots in Augustine and its most familiar expression in the anguish of that Augustinian professor of Scripture, Martin Luther. That tradition of interpretation of Acts which pictures him, racked with doubts, finally falling to the ground in repentance on the Damascus road is not corroborated by his own writings. What he says himself argues for a "robust" conscience - as "touching the law, blameless" (Phil 3.6).

It has been suggested that Paul's so-called "doctrine" of justification arises out of a prior question concerning the role of Israel and of the Torah in the light of God's perceived universal call to the whole race in and through Jesus Christ. /5 Rpmans 7 could be said to be Paul's third attempt in the extant epistolary literature to grapple with this question.

That it most often means "awareness/consciousness" becomes clear when one considers the individual occurrences in context.

A. 2 Corinthians 4.1-6: "commending ourselves to the awareness of men in the sight of/face of God"

In this passage Paul is commending his own participation in the ministry of the New Covenant. He has begun by repudiating any sort of self-commendation - the Corinthians are themselves his "letter of commendation" (2 Cor 3.2-3). The ministry which Paul and his associates exercise is one which comes into being sola gratia (2 Cor 4.1). Renouncing any kind of occultism he has not modified the scandal inherent in the Gospel (v2a) and now commends himself to people's awareness and perception "in the sight of God", i.e. their awareness of how things may appear to God and therefore ultimately are. In vv4-5 he goes on to show how lack of awareness of the Gospel is the work of Satan who "blinds" the "minds" of unbelievers so that they do not perceive in Jesus Christ any good news or gospel at all - much less do they see him as the very "image (εἰκὼν) of God" (v4). The glory referred to in v4 is not that of Christ's ministers. It is God's glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ (v6) and illuminating the character and conduct of the apostles with the light of the new creation, to the end that many others may come to a knowledge of God's glory.

In this passage then Paul appeals to the readers' experience of himself and others as evidence of God's work in them - "in the sight of God we commend ourselves to your awareness" (of how things really and ultimately are).

B. 2 Corinthians 5. 11-21

"What we are", he says in v11, "is known to God" (i.e. finally and fully only to God), "and I hope it is also known to your conscience" (i.e. to your awareness of what we really are).....that is, "ambassadors of Christ" (v20) i.e. the ones through whom God is making his appeal. This is not what the sickly little apostle necessarily appeared to be on all occasions. That is why he urges them to consider that the grace of God is so great that he can take even such as we are and make us apostles.

Indeed from now on we do not estimate anyone merely from the human point of view (v16). How dangerous it is to do so must surely be clear to those who at one point dismissed Jesus himself by estimating him only from the human point of view, he suggests (v16b). Now, however, we perceive that in the life and death of Jesus God was all the time at work, reconciling the world to himself. Those who have this awareness of what is really happening recognize a new Creation as wonderful as the first one, in which God is taking the despised and the weak, the "nothings" of the world, and making them something. It is to their perception/consciousness of this that Paul is appealing.

C. 1 Corinthians 4. 1-7

In this passage the denominative verb  $\sigma\upsilon\nu\omicron\iota\delta\alpha$  is used to refer to knowledge of "the moral quality of the subject's own acts and character." /6 Paul says (v4): "I am not aware of anything (against myself)"....the  $\sigma\upsilon\nu\omicron\iota\delta\alpha$  (cf con-scientia) implies an original indication in the word of shared awareness. So in v4 Paul is speaking of guilty knowledge about himself, knowledge he has about himself which would witness to him against himself, but which he claims here not to have. In fact it turns out that, just as in popular usage, so also in Paul, the "consciousness/awareness" is narrowed down on occasion to mean consciousness of incongruity, or even guilt - my awareness that my acts and/or character do not tally with things-as-they-really-are.

This would seem to be the semantic significance of

Romans 13.5 where the apostle who has just fitted the rulers of this world into the divine order of things (13.4) proceeds to advise his readers to be subject to them - not alone in order to avoid "the wrath of God" but also "for conscience sake" (οὐ μόνον διὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν, 13.5). The consciousness in other words has developed a negative aspect: it shows up what I am not and how I have transgressed the basic pattern of the created order.

But συνείδησις/σύνοιδα have also a much more positive aspect for Paul than Pierce will generally allow. The consciousness under discussion here has two characteristics:-

- (a) it gives us a sense of obligation, and
- (b) it gives this to all people, even to the Gentiles who have no knowledge of the Torah and who have never come to faith.

E. At Romans 2.14ff Paul speaks of the Gentiles in these terms:

"When Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law (Torah). They show that they have the law written on their hearts (in their intentionality) while their "conscience" (RSV) also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that Day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus."

A number of points are to be noted in this passage.

First, that "conscience" here again means an awareness of how things ought to be, a perception which is practical rather than speculative in its outworking. It seems clear that Paul is intending to say that some Gentiles may from time to time both perceive and actually perform what can properly be said to be the Will of God. He does not intend to give the impression that by force of what centuries later came to be called "Natural Theology"

the Gentiles in general have come to "that obedience which faith is" (Rom 1.5, English translation of Bultmann's phrase). He has already made that abundantly clear in Romans 1.18-23, a passage which, it has been suggested /8, may be borrowed and/or adapted from a synagogue sermon. In that passage (Rom 1.20c-21) he says emphatically that the Gentiles are "without excuse; for although they 'knew' God they did not honour him as God .....and their senseless minds were darkened.....etc."

Secondly, it would appear from this passage that the "conscience/ awareness" of the Gentiles leads them to an inarticulate and sporadic obedience, but in its positive aspect it proves unreliable. Left to themselves they are not capable of obedience - as a group whatever about individuals. The irony for Paul lies in the fact that neither are the Jews - even though they were the recipients of Covenant and Torah, whatever about individuals like Abraham whose faithful obedience predates both.

Paul's main concern in Romans, as elsewhere in his epistles is, however, with the "conscience/consciousness" of groups and, in particular, with those Christian communities he had helped to found and continued affectionately to fear for and to love. The conscience of these groups and their perception of how things are and ultimately must be is given shape and form through commitment to what the community takes to be the significance of Jesus. Consciousness of the realm of grace now forms the context of any specifically Christian action and behaviour.

It is no surprise then to find that mention of *συνείδησις* is commonly made in the context of eschatological hope. It will be on "that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus", that the witness of conscience will be tested and proved (Rom 2.15-16)

E. At Romans 9.1 Paul speaks of his "conscience bearing witness in the Holy Spirit". This phrase parallels the immediately preceding phrase, "I am

speaking the truth in Christ" thus:

- (a) I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not  
= lying;  
(b) my conscience bears me witness in the Holy  
Spirit.....

And the Spirit is the witness to the reality of the New Age.

#### F. 2 Corinthians 1.12

This eschatological dimension comes to expression here where Paul writes:

"For our "boast" (i.e. the grounds for any 'boasting' we might conceivably engage in) is this: - the testimony (μαρτύριον) of our conscience (RSV) (i.e. the testimony of our consciousness) that we have in fact behaved in the world, and still more toward you people, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God. For we write you nothing that you cannot read and understand. I hope you will understand (as you have understood in part), so that you can be proud of us as we can of you on the day of the Lord Jesus."

On that day what is now veiled to Paul's readers (and in a measure to himself, 1 Cor 13.12) will be made perfectly clear. Things as they really are (including his ministry) will be seen for what they really are. The New Creation will be revealed. Meanwhile, the interim period is one of uncertainty living in Christ's present, trusting in his past, hoping for his future.

The conscience or Christian consciousness is spoken of again and again in the NT in terms of witness (μαρτύριον), a witness to what is not yet or, more accurately, to that which is not yet wholly visible. In this, the operation of συνείδησις or Christian consciousness parallels the witness of the Holy Spirit whom Paul speaks of as an "earnest" (ἀρραβών) and indication, a firstfruits of the world that is to be, a confirmation of the disturbing assertion that the way to the Cross is in fact God's way. The connection between the two has already been adverted to with reference to Romans 9.1 above.

Implicit in what has just been said is the conviction

that *συνεῖδησις* belongs to the realm of faith rather than knowledge or sight. We do not respond adequately to its witness, but neither does it always speak with absolute clarity. Paul does not claim that sort of clarity of vision for himself or for any other Christian either - not even for their "prophecy". /9

In this connection it is worth noting that when Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 about Christians eating meat offered to idols or not, he uses the word *συνεῖδησις*. But when he came to deal with a similar question in Romans 14, he speaks not of *συνεῖδησις* but of "faith".

In fact, Paul does not ever claim on behalf of Christians that their religion gives them the kind of overall knowledge or Christian answer to the deepest and most imponderable mysteries posed by our human existence. What we have been granted, he suggests (1 Cor 2.16), is something rather more valuable - the *νοῦς Χριστοῦ*, "the mind of Christ". By "mind", as Bultmann and many others have pointed out, /10 he does not mean "intelligence" or "intellectual faculties" but understanding, intelligent planning, intentionality.

This word *νοῦς* is the one he uses in Romans 1.28 where the "lawless mind" to which God has abandoned the heathen is their depraved inclination. The word has much the same force in 1 Cor 1.10 and Rom 12.2 as Bultmann points out.

The will/intention/mind of God manifests itself to the Christian consciousness (which it actually forms) in the mysterious agony and abandonment of the crucified Jesus. But this is the precise element of the kerygma which the Corinthian Christians had been ignoring with disastrous results for their life together and their praxis in general.

We might turn now to two questions, the first of which is more quickly dealt with than the second:-

- (1) What status does he give to *συνεῖδησις* ?
- (2) Under what constraints would he consider it to be



operating?

The first can be answered by saying that he sets a very high value upon it, as is clear from 1 Cor 8 and 10. But it does operate within fairly clearly discernible constraints, as is clear from the sentence cited above (1 Cor 4.4), "I know nothing against myself....but I am not thereby justified."

Pierce is probably right (op.cit.88) in saying that Paul most often thinks of conscience as showing up the incongruous. In this function it operates negatively but cannot act positively to acquit or justify. In Rom 2.14ff he is clear that it proves inadequate in the quest for obedience. At best it appears to be provisional (Pierce, 88), - faith's consciousness/awareness in the quest for an adequate praxis in those ambiguities of human existence which Matthew represents Jesus himself as taking seriously. (Matt 12.22-28)

There is an even graver limitation set upon the individual or group conscience in Paul's view, however, and that comes to light clearly in 1 Cor 8 and 10 and at Rom 14 with reference to the propriety or otherwise of eating meat which has been ritually slaughtered.

In 1 Cor 8 the cleavage is between what he calls "knowledge" to which high-flying Christians of Corinth lay claim and "love" on which they are perhaps somewhat deficient. The discussion is set under the motto, "knowledge puffs up but love builds up". The apostle then goes on to make it clear that he shares the "knowledge" of the sophisticated who recognize that if there are no such things as other gods it does not matter whether the meat has been prayed over in their temples or not. That is not in question. What is in question is the wisdom of insisting on exercise of the freedom which this knowledge affords (1 Cor 8.10)

The "weak" brother here is referred to as having what in a kind of shorthand allusive way he calls a "weak-conscience". This phrase may be the coinage of his "strong" Corinthian correspondents who no doubt

communicated by letter. /12 But however that may be, the "weak conscience" can scarcely be other than a way of describing the condition of those who have an inadequate grasp of things as they really are, or are believed by the Christian to be. Paul intends that those who are deemed to be "strong" should not (by the exercise of their strength) be the occasion of stunting the eventual growth of the less developed awareness of the "weak" into some more robust and profound.

In chapter 10 Paul asks his readers to consider what implications must be drawn on this question by those who consider that in the eucharistic meal they themselves partake of the body and blood of their Lord - a participation which bound them (diverse as they were socially, racially and culturally) into one body. He suggests that it would be consistent and prudent not even to appear to partake of the table of demons by participating in communal meals at local festivals.

In response presumably to those who have made the texts cited in 1 Cor 10.23,26 into their slogans, Paul points out that the exercise of freedom is not always helpful. Indeed it has been his delicately maintained view that the non-exercise of freedom can become the only genuine exercise of the freedom we have in Christ. This is the principle enunciated in the intervening chapter (1 Cor 9.19-23), and it is exemplified in his resistance to the circumcision of the gentile Titus (Gal 2.3-4) on the one hand and his own circumcizing of Timothy, who through his mother was technically a Jew, on the other. /13 His obedience to the counsel offered by James in Acts 21.17-26 is no doubt another example of this principle at work in practice.

While accepting Theissen's identification of who the "weak" in Corinth were, we might go on to a point he does not make. Paul's position is the paradoxical one that his weaknesses are the only boast he can have. He who shared the awareness of the "strong", nevertheless reckons with the weakness of the "weak". "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak....I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I might share its

blessings" (1 Cor 9.22-23). He does not say that to the strong he becomes strong! In 1 Cor 10 and certainly in Rom 14, there is an implied if not direct question as to just how confident one can really be in differentiating "weak" and "strong".

It is of the first importance to recognize that the point at issue in 1 Cor 8 and 10 and in Rom 14 is different in kind from that at issue between Paul and Barnabas in Gal 2. where Paul accused Barnabas and others of ὑπόκρισις (RSV, "insincerity"). This word is used to indicate the way in which Barnabas who had a well-developed consciousness of the implications of table-fellowship, under pressure proceeded to act on a less well-developed one. The essential character of the gospel is at stake in the Antioch encounter (Gal 2.11ff), and this leaves no choice in the matter. A good deal less is at stake in Corinth in the meat question - which could arise only rarely for the poorer members anyway.  
/14

C.A. Pierce is no doubt right in saying that later NT writings give the perfectly correct impression "that Paul allots only a minor place to συνείδησις because the Christian, having died to sin, should be free from the pain of conscience." But that is emphatically not the whole story. The Paul who wrote to the somewhat disillusioned Galatian Christians that those who are "spiritual" should restore the one who trespassed "in a spirit of gentleness" certainly knew the realities of failure /16 and was well aware of the need for a continual refining of Christian awareness and consciousness.

This is well illustrated by the opening section of Philippians (1.9-11), in which he again sets "knowledge" (now to be refined by "discernment") under the formative and creative power of "love":-

"It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with all knowledge (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει) and discernment (καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει),<sup>c</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ (cf above), filled

with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

The Pastoral Epistles represent a change with continuity in usage. In them we begin to read for the first time about "a pure conscience" (καθαρά συνείδησις, 1 Tim 3.9; 2 Tim 1.3; but cf 1 Tim 1.5,19; Titus 1.15). But we are now in a world rather different from Paul's. Dibelius may have been too hard in calling these letters the earliest documents of "bourgeois Christianity", but it is true to say that in the face of heresy, the Christian consciousness of how things really will be/are gives way to "the faith once delivered to the saints", and Christian "knowledge" (γνῶσις) has achieved an altogether more propositional character. Christian "awareness" is being replaced by orthodoxy in belief and orthodoxy is to be expressed in conduct that will not reflect unfavourably upon the Church.

The position in the post-pauline churches for whom the Pastorals were written or the church to which Hebrews belong would merit treatment on their own, the latter especially in the light of the writer's ideas on atonement and "perfecting", but I would prefer to say something here about another church in the documents of which the word συνείδησις is never mentioned but which nevertheless shows certain significant characteristics in common with Pauline material, i.e. the "Community of the Beloved Disciple", as Raymond Brown has attractively named it. /17

Here we have to do with a community in which the command to love can be given again and again with eloquence and earnestness, but without (apparently) any effort such as Paul made in 1 Cor 13 and elsewhere in paraenetic passages, to give it a profile. Except for the notably isolated identification of the relation between God and the world in John 3.16 (however significant) this community's answer to the ethical problem is the one we associate mostly with the exclusive sects - a calling out of the world and into the community.

Certainly John's gospel gives vivid expression to the perception that the believing community, as it returns Christ's love, sees and recognizes what others fail to see, e.g. Mary Magdalene in the garden (20.16) or the Beloved Disciple at the grave (20.8) or, in the boat, recognizing at a distance (21.7a). Questions as to what it will mean in practice to love are not generally raised or answered (John 21.15-17 notwithstanding), except to say that whoever still fears has not yet been perfected in love (1 John 4.18). The author of 1 John is clearly aware of the continuing power of sin, even inside the Christian community. In this he appears to differ with the secessionists who, if Brown is right, had broken off from his community and had the idea that they were sinless, having moved into the New Age. He accuses them of failing to "love the brothers" (2.9-11; 3.11-18; 4.20), and love of the brothers may indeed have seemed too mundane to a group who had committed themselves (like some in Corinth?) to a wholly other-world Saviour. Brown is no doubt right in saying /18 that one of the main differences between the writer of 1 John and his opponents is "precisely that for him the earthly life of Jesus matters."

Jesus is the "first Paraclete", as is implied in his sending of another one. /19 He is identified as the Spirit of Truth and will guide them into all truth, "for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come....." (John 16.13f). He will "bear witness to me" (16.26). The Spirit bears witness that the Father and the Son are one, that the Father sent the Son. It is as the risen Christ bestows the Spirit in chapter 20 that he makes the disciples part of this movement within the Godhead itself.

In other words, the Paraclete will function in a way not dissimilar from Paul's *συνεἰδήσις* under the Holy Spirit.

(1) He will "witness" to the significance of Jesus, and create in the community an awareness as to how things really are and as to what movement is at work in him. Every time this perception takes precedence in the minds

of believers over alternative interpretations of events, then the Prince of this world and his presuppositions are judged (16.11) and even cast out. (This is no doubt the meaning of John 12.27-32).

(2) For all that this community believed itself to be the community of the Last Time. It also lived through its trials and ordered its life in anticipation (John 16.13b) of an incalculably wonderful future which is Christ's and only his.

It is worthy of note that in both pauline and johannine literature the anathemata are reserved for what we today would call dogmatic divergence, e.g. Gal 1.7-9; 20-23; 1 John 2.20-23; 4.2-3. But to have got the gospel wrong in the way Paul believes the Galatians now have or the writer of 1 John is convinced those he is referring to in this passage have, is to mistake the nature of things as they really are, and inevitably as a result the life and praxis of those who are so mistaken will be affected. That is why it is both methodologically and historically mistaken to try to tease apart kerygma and didache. /20

One last aspect of the question of conscience or the development and refinement of Christian awareness which is receiving increased attention again from scholars today is the social milieu and the authority structures within which it was all taking place. This is not the place even to attempt to paraphrase what scholars like Malherbe, Theissen or Holmberg are telling us, but certain points might be deemed useful:

1. In the NT we can discern various emergent structures in the churches for which, say, Matthew's Gospel, Paul's letters and Luke-Acts were written. In some cases the structures of authority can be discerned much more clearly than in other, due to the nature of the particular genre or the subject-matter being treated

2. Various functionaries in the churches use various modes of communication, e.g. prophecy, sentences of Holy Law, cataphesis, etc. though of course individuals may well in varying circumstances use more than one mode. All these would have some function in the refining of Christian awareness in the living community.

3. The NT writers do not "pull rank". Neither Paul nor John relies on any kind of succession as church officers for obvious reasons. The writer of 1 John speaks as a "presbyter" (undefined), but primarily he writes as one who shares with those whom he addresses in anointing by the Holy Spirit. /21

So also Paul who, for all his reference to his pneumatic gifts and energetic defence of his apostolate, actually identifies (1 Cor 15.8f) his apostolate with that of those who were called to it before him. In no way, however, does he hide behind an "office" in grappling with the problems of his churches. Significantly enough, he has recourse to such intimate and emotionally charged figures as fatherhood and motherhood (Gal 4.19 etc) and recommends that they be "imitators" (μιμηταί) of him as he too is of Christ, (1 Cor 11.1) in their growth into maturity (1 Cor 3.1f), a growth which he sometimes fails to see in them.

4. In Paul's modest though sometimes exasperated exercise of the authority he undoubtedly deemed himself to have (in spite of the fact that there were few if any sanctions available to him), it is worthy of note (a) that he responds in the Corinthian correspondence to a number of enquiries or reports from a position of clarity. He knows what they should do, but he does not explicitly force the issue. He leaves it to them.

(b) that in the course of the two letters about the Collection which probably form 2 Cor 8 and 9, he disclaims the idea that what he is putting forward is in the nature of a "command", ἐπιταγή (8.8). He nevertheless brings enormous psychological pressure to bear by means of

(i) an appeal to kenotic christology (8.9) which is picked up again in the second letter (9.13). This appeal to the kerygmatic core of the gospel is the specifically Christian element in his appeal to the Corinthians to get on with the Collection. It alone should form their awareness of what to do, but he backs it up with

(ii) reference to the generosity of the Macedonians which should put the people of Corinth on their mettle

(8.1-7 and 9.1-4);

(iii) use of Exodus 16.18 (at 8.15) and of Psalm 112.9 (at 9.9), as if they were Wisdom sayings;

(iv) Use of sayings from popular folk wisdom, (9.6); and

(v) the assertion that it must be a freewill offering, which only serves to increase the psychological pressure on them to make it (9.5c,7)!

1 Corinthians offers examples of the apostle's counsel at varying levels of authority. Clearly the charge to the married woman not to separate from her husband (7.10-11) for which he uses the word παραγγέλλειν and which is referred to later (7.25) by the strong word ἐπιταγή, has a normative force greater than the word addressed to mixed-marriage partners (7.12-16) which begins: "To the rest, I say, - not the Lord...etc". Interesting enough, this "I say...etc." is given support in the immediately following paragraph (7.17-24) by reference to the regulations which the apostle applies in "all the churches". The verb here is διατάσσομαι which he uses again (1 Cor 11.34) with reference to directions on what are clearly secondary matters. (The primary matter in 11.17-32 concerning the misuse of the sacramental meal is settled by recourse to the primal authority of παράδοσις, "tradition" (vv23-24). /22 Clearly a generally accepted mode of conducting affairs is already emerging in the pauline churches - cf 11.16 - which it is enough to allude to.

In 1 Cor 7,8,10 as in Rom 14.2, 2 Cor 8-9 and Philemon (where it has been suggested that Paul uses less normative force than was available to him), there is no doubt that, whether he has a "command" or "word" of the Lord or not, he at least is clear in his own mind as to what his correspondents should do, even though he leaves them (faute de mieux) to make up their own minds.

It happens to be the case that the NT documents give us more information as to the relationship between the apostle Paul and his churches than about others. But in other letters, in Luke-Acts, and in the Gospel of Matthew, it is clear that we glimpse yet other authority structures, other modes of communication, prophecy, homily, παράκλησις



(encouragement), παραίνεσις (exhortation), παράδοσις (tradition), which in varying combinations must have helped to form the conscience of the earliest Christian groupings. But the study of that is another day's work.

#### Notes

(This paper was originally delivered in a somewhat different form under the title "Conscience in the NT" at the annual Glenstal Ecumenical Conference in June 1982. Sections on the Pastorals and Hebrews have been omitted from this version).

1. An exception would be Wisdom 17.10
2. See Pierce, Conscience in the NT, London 1955, 21-65.
3. See Gerd Theissen, "Die Starken und Schwachen in Korinth. Soziologische Analyse eines theologischen Streites" (EvTh 35, 1975, 155-172)
4. See D. Cox, Jung and St. Paul, 1959
5. In the 19th century by Wrede, and most recently by K. Stendhal.
6. Pierce 22.
7. op.cit., 40-53
8. By E. Sanders, O. Michel and others.
9. 1 Cor 13.9-13  
It is furthermore to be noted that the comments (1 Cor 8.7 and 1 Cor 13.12) on the meat controversy serve to highlight the relative insignificance of "knowledge" as against "love". See below
10. On νοῦς, see Bultmann, NT Theology, Vol 1, 211-20.
11. ibid 211.
12. The "weak" point of view is more likely to have been transmitted by oral transmission. See G. Theissen, loc.cit.
13. I am accepting the historical reliability of Acts account of this and of Acts 21.12-26.
14. See Theissen, loc.cit. 15. op.cit.109

16. I take it that the epistle to the Galatians is occasioned by Paul's hearing about the remedy for disillusionment offered by the subsequent teachers. Gal 6.1 refers to falling into "trespass" (παράπτωμα) and I take it that the inevitable regression into trespass was what left the Galatians so open to the legalism of the subsequent teachers. See H.R. Weber, Kreuz, Stuttgart 1975.
17. In the title of his book, The Community of the Beloved Disciple.
18. op.cit. 170
19. John 14.16
20. As a good deal of recent NT work has been making clear - notably J.I.H. McDonald, Kerygma and Didache, Cambridge 1980.
21. R.E. Brown, op.cit. 141-2
22. See McDonald, op.cit. 107ff.

The Rev Terence McCaughey is Senior Lecturer in Irish in Trinity College, Dublin, and a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He is a graduate in Arts of Cambridge University and in Divinity at New College, Edinburgh where he specialized in NT.