

Conscience and The Eye of God



A MASONIC SYMBOL for triune God depicts an eye within an equilateral triangle. The all-seeing eye opens upon all points in space and all moments in time and is everywhere in all dimensions of being. It is itself the domain in which all creation, visible and invisible, is seen, as in, “God saw everything that he had made and, behold, it was very good.”

In the evolution of human consciousness, the ancient Egyptians conceived of the sun as the eye of God. The more morally developed and somber Jewish people proscribed graven images, reserving to Jehovah light too terrible to be seen, yet from Whom nothing is hid. Thus the Psalmist says (139):

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways.... Wither shall I go from thy spirit? or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.... Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (versification omitted).

The Lord asked Adam in the Garden “Where art thou?” not because He couldn’t see him, but because, having fallen from etheric consciousness, Adam could no longer see God. Additionally, having acted out of personal interest against the Lord’s commandment, he felt the first pangs of shame and hid himself. Sin causes “spiritual cataract” and the reflex to hide from the light.

While virtue sees, vice seeks not to be seen, for its deeds are unsightly.

The Hebrew law was given to the ancient Jews to discipline their desire natures. The “cunning” that developed describes the use of the mind to devise ways of getting what one wants while still appearing “law-abiding,” which includes refraining in public from doing what one condones in private. This is one definition of hypocrisy.

Whatever the belief to the contrary, all are under sin: “There is no man that sinneth not” (1 Kings 8:46). “There’s none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Furthermore, “there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalms 14:3). More emphatically, St. John says that “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” and we make Jesus Christ “a liar” (1 John 1:8, 10). We speak not of man measuring himself. For then he stands tall, indeed, some tower in their self-conferred splendor. But honesty before God brings a vastly different scale to these self-viewings. Then humility shatters these splendid images as so much mirroring glass. Then one is abased before God’s splendor and goodness and would rather hide under a rock. This abasement, however, can lead to confession and soul cleansing, to the proper attribution of all glory and power to God. Then does the justified one seek God through the very love He gives us, without which, as St.

Paul writes, we are nothing.

Christ Jesus made clear that wherever one performs an act, be it in public or private, in one's mind or in the extended world, the effects are spiritually of like nature, for motive is the determining factor. Viewed esoterically, to covet is to steal, to lust is to commit adultery, to be angry, bear false witness, maliciously gossip, and hate is to murder. Thus, all breaking of the commandments is but the breaking of one—the first: Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. The violation of this commandment is idolatry, which is worshiping or wanting above its due, what is not God. Whenever we give to something or someone other than God Himself the first place in our thoughts or our feelings, we break this commandment. Says the Evangelist, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world....For all that is in the world...is not of the Father” (1 John 2:15-16).

Through the law comes knowledge of sin. From sin comes the fear-based belief that God is not looking out *for* me, He is looking *at* me, so that everything I do is judged against the law and “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom. 3:20). When we know the law, it becomes apparent that, given allowance for the slow-grinding mills of the gods, there is nothing we can “get away with.” This realization exerts a negative and restraining influence until we learn that what we do to others we do to ourselves, be it for good or ill. The tendency to experience self-generated destiny in the material world as injustice is corrected in the desire world where we see the consequences of our actions coming to us from outside as if proceeding from an independent agent.

Sin is a word that can cause a good deal of squirming among the world's well adjusted, can even provoke hostility. Sin can be positive or negative. Falling short of ideals, omissions, slips, inward taints, describe *negative* sins. *Positive* sins involve violations of laws, trespassing boundaries, lawlessness. Those who would purge the language of this archaic term and rescue self-flagellants from their vindictive beliefs are simply endangered species, even if they presently abound. Sin may be quaint or offensive in the world's eyes, but the material world, in a sense, is a mote in the eye of God, and He would that man might pass on from it and know his Creator in spirit and in truth. Though one be a sinner, he is also a son of God. Nothing in himself, yet

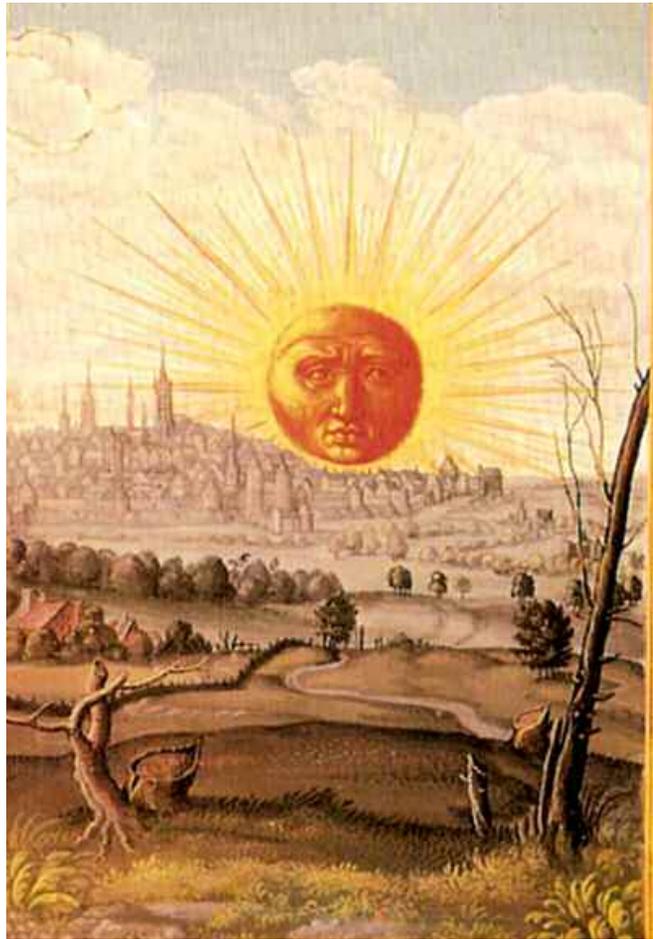


Plate 22 of *Splendor Solis*, Manuscript illuminations, 1582, British Museum, London

Illustrating the ultimate phase of the alchemical quest for the Philosopher's Stone or Solar tincture, the purified Cosmic Sun, the Christ, unites with the fertile Earth, or purified soul: "that which is above unites with that which is below."

through Christ he is given potential for God-likeness. This reality is ever a scandal to the militantly secular mentality.

If God is represented as an eye, the all-seeing God is also the Source of light, that in which anything that is seen, and in Him is no darkness at all. Christ, His Son, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world, became human that He might experience and overcome the death resulting from humanity's sins and mark out a path of light back to the Father. He walks before us and takes the strongest buffets. He meets the Adversary and subdues him with light. He gives us the power of His Name to do our Father's will. We are the sinners, yet it was He, sinless (John 3:5), Who was made sin for us, for only such a One could make the acceptable (effectual) sacrifice.

By virtue of Christ's gift to a dark world, a new light

dawns in man's inner world. Through Him the eye of God as omnipotent Judge becomes the heart of God, which is radiant love. God implants in us His Identity as love through its embodiment—Christ Jesus. Love is the fulfilling of the law. If law generates sin, and if there is none without sin, love redeems from sin by grace, a free and unmerited gift.

While self-generated sins must be personally atoned for, the sin that Christ came to take unto His Person was a cosmic sin. That is why a cosmic Being was required to intervene in human evolution. Nor could human goodness, doing good, suffice to offset the objective sin that brought death and spiritual darkening into the course of human development.

This sin not only results in the human spirit's virtual entombment in flesh, it causes a soul captivity, a being in bondage to the law, to the thousand threads of ritual and legalistic observance which restrict human consciousness, like Gulliver strung down by Lilliputians. Sin is lack of freedom. St. Paul was truly free because he was in bondage to Christ.

Christ took on human servitude to contend with and overcome the power that enslaves, that shuts out the creative, enfranchising light and life of the spirit. His human breakthrough was the result of an uttermost downgoing, sifting to the dregs and darkest pockets of flesh-deadening obliquity. Christ rose from the dead with the fruit of His victory. He harrowed hell, gave new impulse for the rising of limboed souls, and, after the Ascension, began to pour into the soul of individual and collective humanity the means to be renewed in spirit—not by unaided human will, but through His indwelling the planet and each person, who becomes a Christ-bearer, a Christ-revealer.

With the divine Eye upon us we are ever aware of the lowliness of our being, even as God calls us through Christ to be like Him. Not knowing what this is, we yet measure ourselves against the implied perfection. The God's Eye symbolizes our aspiration's bull's-eye. And how often does our aim diverge from, and our will's

trajectory fall short of, the mark! This deficiency exactly translates the Greek term *hamartia*, for which the word *sin*, carrying its freight of burdensome associations, has been given as the English cognate. *Hamartia* was a term used in archery. It was also used in a technical sense by Aristotle in describing the cause for the pivotal *crisis*, or turning point, in Greek drama, when a mistake in identity, a certain fault in perception or understanding, is brought to light. Is not much of our sin and error the result of mistaken identity, of our not knowing or not believing that we are made in our Creator's image, and that only in this likeness, spirit of His Spirit, does He see us? To have the image of divine

perfection ever before us is at the same time to draw it forth from our innermost being as our essence. What would we *not* do and say if we always remembered *who* we are in truth—sons and daughters of the living God?

God's Eye first arrests us, even accuses us. We would flee from it, hide

from it. We try. Since we can't turn it off, we turn ourselves off. We shut down those parts of ourself where the sense of being seen is most acute, where this knowledge of the high reaches of our being merge with the One Who confirms our God-like potential. We become earthbound, spiritually foreshortened. We may flirt with atheism and amoralism, or dress up our escapist perspective as secular humanism—allowing for most anything that isn't too outrageous, because life, we try to convince ourselves, is a one-shot affair made chaotically relative by the presumed absence of God, and thus God-based absolutes.

But our true nature does not indefinitely allow for these evasions and indulgences. The great and constant effort at self-deception gives no adequate payoff. Misery and desperation, if nothing else, bring us to our right minds. Then the Eye ceases to condemn us and, like the sun which gives life, it encourages us, reminding us not only of our goal, but of the self-same means to attain it.

The Eye of God ever upon us is, we come to discover,

The Eye of God ever upon us is, we come to discover, God's Eye in us. Conscience is the inner eye by which we eventually discover the contours and content of spiritual worlds.

God's Eye in us. Conscience is the inner eye by which we eventually discover the contours and content of spiritual worlds. As the loving eye of the parent silently secures and promotes the learning of the child, awakening it to its own self-viewing and self-moderating capability, so God's light as the Holy Spirit subtly informs and illumines our minds, teaching, rebuking, delaying responses to importunate requests, nurturing our capacity for inward seeing.

The more we become confirmed in the indwelling God, the less likely are we to do ungodly deeds. We realize that the body as God's temple is not a metaphor but a simple statement of fact, and as its caretaker and minister, we keep its vessels clean, its spaces sanctified, the service of consciousness sober and spirit-oriented. Analogous to the tolling of canonical hours, we regularly remind ourselves of our primary purpose and refresh ourselves with God-directed silence and prayer.

Our Identity is given by God. The world gives its own forms of identity and has its own callings. They may become so central to our life that what we do may equate with and signify who we think we are. To look good in the world's eye we may cultivate a persona provided by a job or cultural role at the expense of our person or soul which languishes before the eye of the spirit. We do well to heed the biblical injunction to keep the eye single (Luke 11:34) and to predicate our Identity on God Who gives it, not on paper ID's and worldly titles, rankings, and human approbation. What the world gives it takes away. The world, in fact, does not give. It loans the raw material for masks and sheathes that we specialize and appear in, foremost being the physical body, which is always changing.

The Wise Men, being wise, saw the Star and journeyed toward it. Why was not the entire world converging on the place where it shone? That place was deserted, save for a few clear-souled shepherds. It was not a worldly light that appeared in the heavens. *Those* lights lit the taverns in Bethlehem. It was a spiritual light whose perception required spiritual vision.

The German language gives a particularly spatial sense to the concept of sin. The words *sünde* and *sonderung* have the same Latin origin as the English *sunder*, meaning to separate. Sin is the separation which results from what we do, itself the result of the state of mind from which sinful actions arise. To be sundered from God, to feel not merely estranged from but a



Created by Ariel Agemian exclusively for the Confraternity of the Precious Blood

“Why dost thou not provide against the day of Judgment.”

Consideration of the dire and dreadful consequences of our unregenerate actions serves more to deter obvious wrongdoing than does meditation on Christ's loving sacrifice inspire us to good deeds born of devotion and selflessness.

stranger to the divine Presence and Will may occasion sinful living, and, far more grave, may so darken moral consciousness that such living is no longer considered wrong.

The One Whom David described, the Yahweh of the Old Testament, the severe Judge, was reflected in Mosaic law. Such too was the Hebrew conception of the Messiah, the One Who was to come in the last days and judge humanity. But the dispensation inaugurated by Christ Jesus introduces into the soul of man a new impulse to action based on love and understanding, overriding the motives of fear and coercion produced by the Law. Particularly does conscience, the internal eye and seat of hidden authority, play an increasingly dominant role as a control and guide to thought and conduct in the Christian era. In the eye of retrospection

we review each day's deeds and individually assume the role of the divine judge, assessing the merits of our conduct, invoking the purgative fires of remorse when warranted.

Interestingly, conscience, as both word and concept, does not have its origin in Hebrew antiquity but in classical Greece. What was originally the content of involuntary clairvoyance and seen as the action of avenging gods of destiny, known as Erinyes (the Eumenides were the dispensers of fortunate destiny), was later attributed to that internal understanding first described by the Greek playwright Euripides in the term *syneidesis*, whose Latin equivalent was *consciencia*, meaning *to know together with*. The Greek Stoics first discerned the emergence of the ego impulse and articulated a philosophic basis for conscience. In particular, the philosopher Athenodorus, the teacher of Caesar Augustus, introduced the concept of conscience into ethics. He lived in Tarsus two decades of his life at the time Saul was growing up in that city.

As Paul uses *conscience* (*syneidesis*, which contains as roots both the words for 'seeing' and 'knowing'), and he is the first biblical writer to employ the term, he always designates the higher or true Self, the Christ. The voice of his conscience is other than and above his unregenerate self. It can and at times does override his own voice. And he calls on it to seal his Christian intention. He assures the Romans that "I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience, which is guided by the Holy Spirit, is my witness" (Rom. 7:1). Our conscience is independent of our in-the-world self. While it can be ignored, it cannot be deluded or compromised. Yet it may ratify actions intended by our functional self. Thus, "We are allowed to boast, for the testimony of our conscience speaks for us" (2 Cor. 1:12). Since the Damascus event, conscience, for Paul, has become the occult voice for Christ, a higher member of the spiritual constitution that can both speak against or for man as a separate element, an element which is, at the same time, his Christ Self, his I-essence.

Saul of Tarsus, in the service of a pantocratic, judgmental divine Eye and blinded by the outward law, represents a humanity that continues to crucify Christ. Paul the initiate saint represents a humanity that sees a world transformed by the love of the indwelling Christ.

Goethe's observation that the eye of the body was

"fashioned through the light for the light" and is able to perceive the light because it is itself of a solar nature, has its spiritual parallel in the ability to see the Christ because He is the indwelling essence of man, the I spirit. Thus the Christ in Paul opened his eyes on the road to Damascus to the vision of the planetary Christ abiding in the earthsphere.

The Damascus event is the classic representation of conscience awakened by the light of Christ. The true nature of our actions is thrown into high relief and instantly evaluated, bringing immediate understanding and the experience of guilt for wrongdoing. Although Paul was prostrate with shock and searing remorse by the enormity of his error, he also knew the incomprehensible grace of forgiveness through Christ's mercy. While his subsequent heroic labors in the vineyard of Christ could be seen as restitution for prior wrongs, they spring from love, a sense of absolution and spiritual communion he never knew as a Pharisee, whose prescribed conduct was not governed by conscience but by fear. For conscience is an enlightened inner tribunal, an unimpeachable, independent council. Henceforth Paul lives from out of his initiate Self, as in "not I but Christ in me."

Conscience designates the Law that has been inscribed in the fleshy tablet of the heart, whether by the Mosaic legal tradition or by inspired, conscientious living. The apostle to the pagan world writes, "When the nations of the world who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, then those who have no external law bear a law of their own in their hearts...[and] the conscience that speaks in them expresses the same thing" (Rom. 2:14, 15 ff, trans. Bock).

Paul makes the distinction between conscience which bears witness to one's actions and the analytic thinking faculty which accuses or excuses. Conscience proceeds from a higher level than brain-bound thinking. The etheric heart is the mouth of the life spirit that speaks the superconscious wisdom of intuition. Thus, the beatitude "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Emil Bock writes in his book *Saint Paul* (Floris Books, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1993, translated from the German) that the Damascus event portrays "the anticipated unfolding and further development of conscience that will be available one day to all human beings. A

direct Christ experience, not dependent on any external tradition, is available to those in whom conscience blossoms forth into an organ of vision.” That is, the active cultivation of conscience will develop the clairvoyant faculty by which we will see, face to face, the etheric Christ.

Does this mean that Christ at some future time will come into our lives and illumine our mind? Rather it means we shall grow into the knowledge and experience that He is already here. For again Paul, referring to the Damascus incident, says “When it pleased God to reveal his Son [not *to me* but] *in me*.” It is God’s efficacious grace that reveals His Son, but Christ already indwells. We need to develop the means by which this indwelling can be perceived, and conscience is that means—the voice for God.

As Paul uses the term, conscience is not the purely negative, exclusionary function that makes of the phrase

“guilty conscience” a tautology. This same negative reading of the word is employed by Hamlet when he soliloquizes, “thus does conscience make cowards of us all.” But it is not cowardice to refrain from an act of inhumanity such as the Dane contemplated. More recently, Raskolnikov, in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, sought to prove that he was above the dictates of “bourgeois” conscience by gratuitously killing an old woman. But he was tormented by remorse because he had violated his own essential humanity.

Unfortunately, traditional Christian usage continues to associate conscience with the accusing voice of guilt rather than, as originally conceived, and as used by Paul, designating that inner authority that points to positive ideals and future goals. Max Heindel calls conscience “a divine fire” that sacrifices (in the sense of a holy offering) the flesh for the sake of the spirit.

Another highly qualified occultist writes the following about conscience: “Thus, we see how the *external* comprehension for the idea of the divinity of Christ Jesus is born in the East [by being born in a Semitic



Folio 250 recto, in Latin manuscript 2, in the Urbino Collection of the Vatican Library

The artist of the above illumination has recast the Damascus event in a medieval context, with castle in the distance and both Saul (not yet renamed Paul) and his accompanying Jewish soldiers dressed in the clothes of that era. Saul has been thrown from his horse. His companions are oblivious of his vision of Christ Jesus, Whose golden mandorla is filled with three Cherubim and four angels. The Latin caption at the foot of the illustration translates as “Paul serving Christ Jesus.”

body prepared according to the mandates of Hebrew law]—but how what the human consciousness develops as the conscience approaches this form from the West [out of Greece]...Thus East and West cooperate with each other. We see how the sun of the Christ nature dawns in the East [Palestine]; and we see how the Christ-eye in the human conscience is prepared in the West in order to understand the Christ. This is why we see the victorious march of Christendom developing, not towards the East but westward...Christianity takes hold of the western world because it was in the West that Christendom had to fashion its organ in the first place. There we see Christendom linked to what has become the most profound factor of culture for the West: The concept of conscience, tied to Christianity.”

Conscience is like a window on God through which the ideal image of Man is projected before his consciousness, teaching him not merely to avoid the instinctual life, but inspiring him through acts of nobility and generosity to realize his divine potential. □

—C.W.