

## Stunted Gods (2)

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In this series of article we have been examining some of the ideas that we tend to have about God. Because of culture, tradition, or immaturity, we tend to craft an image of God in our mind that is rather limited, and does not accurately or completely reflect His true nature.

### Resident Policeman

It is very tempting for some to put all of their trust in a personal conscience, as if “that little voice in the back of my head” is the final authority on all moral matters. *“To many people conscience is almost all that they have by way of knowledge of God. This still small voice which makes them feel guilty and unhappy before, during, and after wrong-doing, is God speaking to them. It is this which, to some extent at least, controls their conduct”* (**Your God Is Too Small**, Phillips, p. 15). Now no serious advocate of adult religion would deny the function of the conscience in guiding us through the struggles of right and wrong, but to make conscience into God is a highly dangerous things to do. It is not always true that our “gut feelings” on a matter are the best barometer of a situation’s morality. After all, conscience is not perfect and it can be perverted by those whose desire for sin is strong! Not only that, but who really wants to love, worship, and serve God if all He is is a nagging voice that keeps us rather negatively on the path of virtue?

If conscience is God speaking to us, then why do so few follow God’s model for marriage (**Matthew 19**)? Why does conscience sometimes contradict God’s instructions on worship? Church organization? Homosexuality? Drunkenness? It seems that our consciences have failed us pretty miserably as gods if the current state of the world is any indication! Consider a few though-provoking scriptures:

- *“Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, and they did not even know how to blush; Therefore they shall fall among those who fall...”* (**Jeremiah 8:12**). Because of habit, the Israelites did not even know how to blush in embarrassment for their sins. They did not know how to feel guilty! Where was conscience in this scenario? A lesson that we learn is that bad habits eventually wear down our built-in moral compass, to the point that it does not even function any longer.
- Paul also serves as an example of a failed conscience. *“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (**Acts 26:9**). As far as he was concerned, what he did to the Christians was right. His conscience never bothered him when he imprisoned and persecuted Christians before his conversion. *“I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord”* (**1 Corinthians 4:4**). What we learn here is that it is not conscience that determines right and wrong, but the objective standards of God.
- There was no problem with the consciences of the first century Jews who continued to evade Christ’s call (**Romans 10:2**).
- Similarly, there is not a hint of guilt in the voices of the unrepentant and false Christians in **Matthew 7:15-23**.

- It is highly doubtful that the consciences of men like Jeroboam, Pharaoh, Samson, and Saul were operating properly at the times of their respective sins. In a sense, even David had a conscience malfunction when he sinned repeatedly in his affair with Bathsheba.

God is not a resident policeman, who gives you legal advice every now and then, or sends little messages to your consciousness urging you to choose one path or another. That is a very small image of God, and one that is inaccurate considering the history of mankind. *“Many, even among professed Christians, are made miserable by a morbidly developed conscience, which they quite wrongly consider to be the voice of God”* (p. 18).