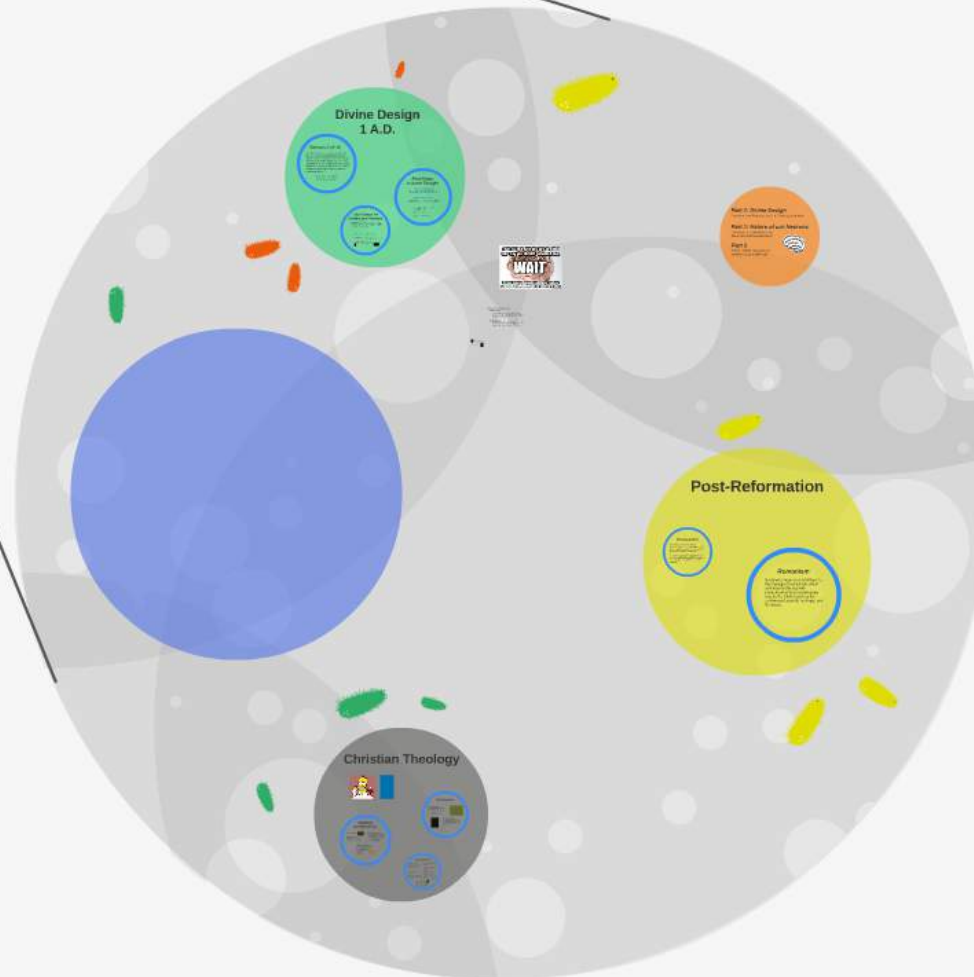


Human Conscience

Part 1: The Christian Tradition

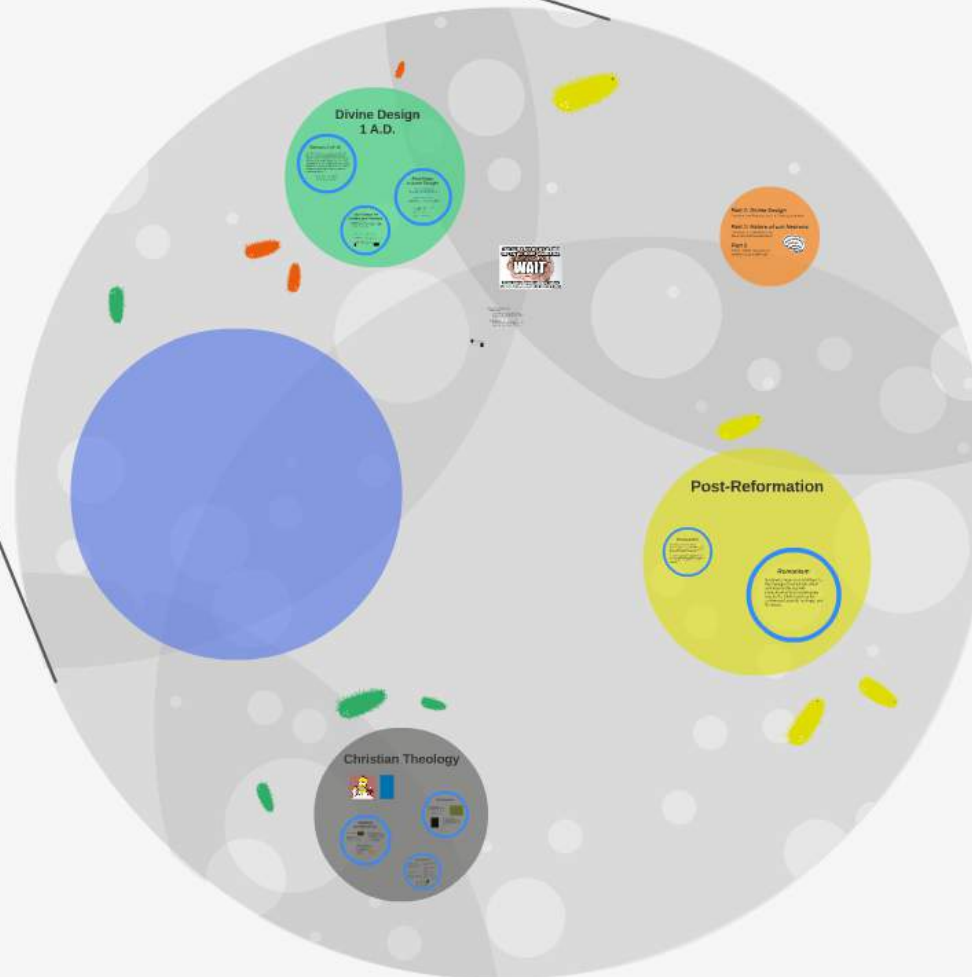
Rev. Charles St-Onge



Human Conscience

Part 1: The Christian Tradition

Rev. Charles St-Onge



Yeah its like 2am and you've had a long day you should go to bed now.

WAIT

Heres a bunch of regrets and things you hate about yourself... lets talk about them for a while

Evidence for the Existence of God

Late 20th Century

There is evidence for a Creator within creation (intelligent design). Something does not come out of nothing, therefore the something of the universe must have come from God.

Early 21st Century

Our sense that there is a "right" and "wrong" in the world, a sense of justice, is the indicator of a transcendent Law and, therefore, a Law Giver.



Dr. John Lennox

"Science can tell you that if you add strychnine to someone's drink, it will kill her, but it cannot tell you whether it is morally right or wrong to put strychnine in your grandmother's tea in order to get your hands on her property."

How does an immaterial morality fit into a materialist conception of the world, and of the brain?



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of the



Part 1: Divine Design

Conscience in Philosophical and Theological History

Part 2: Nature of our Neurons

Conscience as understood by
Darwinism and Neodarwinism

Part 3

A 21st century apologetic for
conscience as a divine gift



Divine Design 1 A.D.

Romans 2:14-15

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

conscience: *suneidesis*
What does it mean?

Early Usage in Greek Thought

→
Not a guide for future behavior...

←
...But reflection on past behavior.

What does it mean? Indebted to the Stoics as a part of the
philosophical background of the early church fathers for the
purpose of the text (Romans 2:14-15).

What does it mean? What is the Greek word? My
conscience. I feel that I am guilty of a great crime.
... conscience is a Greek word.

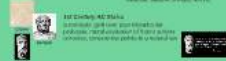
The Untranslated basis of a Greek word, from
the Greek word for the Greek word of having conscience
of himself.

Later Usage for Greeks and Romans

With Plato, begins to be seen as a guide
for future behavior, and not simply a guilty
reflection on past actions.

The use of the Greek word, which is the same as the Greek
word, in the text (Romans 2:14-15).

The Untranslated basis of a Greek word, from
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Romans 2:14-15

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What does it mean?

Early Usage in Greek Thought



Not a guide for future behavior...



...But reflection on past behavior.

"While the modern understanding sees the conscience as a part of the self, functioning to help one discern right from wrong, conscience for the ancients was a knowledge of the self comprised of past actions performed by that self" (Reinhard 2012:409).

"What ails thee? What is thy deadly sickness?" "My conscience; I know that I am guilty of an awful crime."

Euripides, in his play Orestes, 408 BC

"The universal moral law is not 'of such a force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes of heaven."

Sophocles, in his play Antigone, 400s BC

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"The law, being the tyrant [ed: ruler] of man, many times constrains us against nature."

Plato, in his play Protagoras, 4th BC

The Nicomachean Ethics, describes certain human actions as being intrinsically "wrong" - murder, theft, adultery.

Aristotle, student of Plato, 4th BC



Cicero



Seneca



Epictetus

1st Century AD Stoics

suneidesis: guilt over past misbehavior

prolepsis: moral evaluation of future actions

conscius, conscientia: points to a natural law

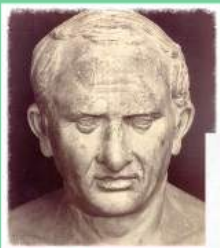


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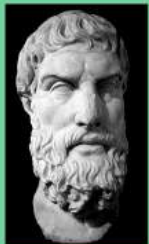
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Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle: Some things are within your control. And some things are not.

—Epictetus



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Christian Theology



Medieval Scholasticism

General Principles

- Christian scholasticism is a school of thought within Christianity
- Emphasized logic and reason in the study of theology
- Rooted in Augustinian and Aristotelian thought
- Flourished in the 12th and 13th centuries
- Often used logic to resolve theological questions
- Considered a key to medieval education



Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

- Influenced by Aristotle, developed Thomistic thought
- Made a case for the existence of God
- Emphasized the role of reason in theology
- Argued for the compatibility of faith and reason
- His work was influential in the development of Catholic theology

William of Ockham (1287-1347)

- Opposed the idea of universals
- Emphasized the role of individual things

John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

- "Lollard" movement
- Emphasized the role of the Bible
- His work was influential in the development of Protestantism



Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

- Emphasized the role of faith in salvation
- Opposed the idea of indulgences
- His work was influential in the development of Protestantism



John Calvin (1509-1564)

- Emphasized the role of predestination in salvation
- His work was influential in the development of Protestantism
- His work was influential in the development of the Presbyterian Church



Early Fathers

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD)

- Emphasized the role of reason in theology
- His work was influential in the development of Christian apologetics

Tertullian (160-220 AD)

- Emphasized the role of faith in salvation
- His work was influential in the development of Christian apologetics

Augustine (354-430 AD)

- Emphasized the role of grace in salvation
- His work was influential in the development of Christian apologetics

Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD)

- Emphasized the role of reason in theology
- His work was influential in the development of Christian apologetics

Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)

- Emphasized the role of the Pope in the Church
- His work was influential in the development of Christian apologetics

Early Fathers

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD)

Humans know what is wrong, and their conscience will inform them when they do something wrong, unless they have been taught or trained to trade "natural" ideas for "unnatural" ones.

"Every race knows that adultery, and fornication, and homicide, and such like, are sinful..."

Tertullian (155-240 AD)

Conscience can point people towards God, not simply towards proper action.

"The greater part, therefore, of the human race, although they knew not even the name of Moses, much less his writings, yet knew the God of Moses; and even when idolatry overshadowed the world with its extreme prevalence, men still spoke of Him separately by His own name as God..."

Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD)

The conscience operates in the realm of reason; passions are what cause us to sin or operate contrary to reason and the law.

"Everything that is contrary to right reason is sin. Accordingly, therefore, the philosophers think fit to define the most generic passions thus: lust, as desire disobedient to reason; fear, as weakness disobedient to reason; pleasure, as an elation of the spirit disobedient to reason."

Jerome (347-420 AD)

The spelling mistake that changes theology forever, creating a Medieval idea of a "deep" and "shallow" conscience in all people. Also connected *syneidesis* with *conscientia*.

"Most people interpret the man, the lion and the ox as the rational, emotional and appetitive parts of the soul, following Plato's division, who calls them the *logikan* and *thymikon* and *epithymetikon*, locating reason in the brain, emotion in the gall bladder and appetite in the liver. And they posit a fourth part which is above and beyond these three, and which the Greeks call *synteresis*: that spark of conscience which was not even extinguished in the breast of Cain..."

Augustine (354-430 AD)

Introduces a more nuanced moral theology. Conscience helps us apply reason to moral questions, but isn't reason itself.



"Not looking at the matter spoken of, but solely at the intention of the speaker, the man who unwittingly says what is false, thinking all the time that it is true, is a better man than the one who unwittingly says what is true, but in his conscience intends to deceive."

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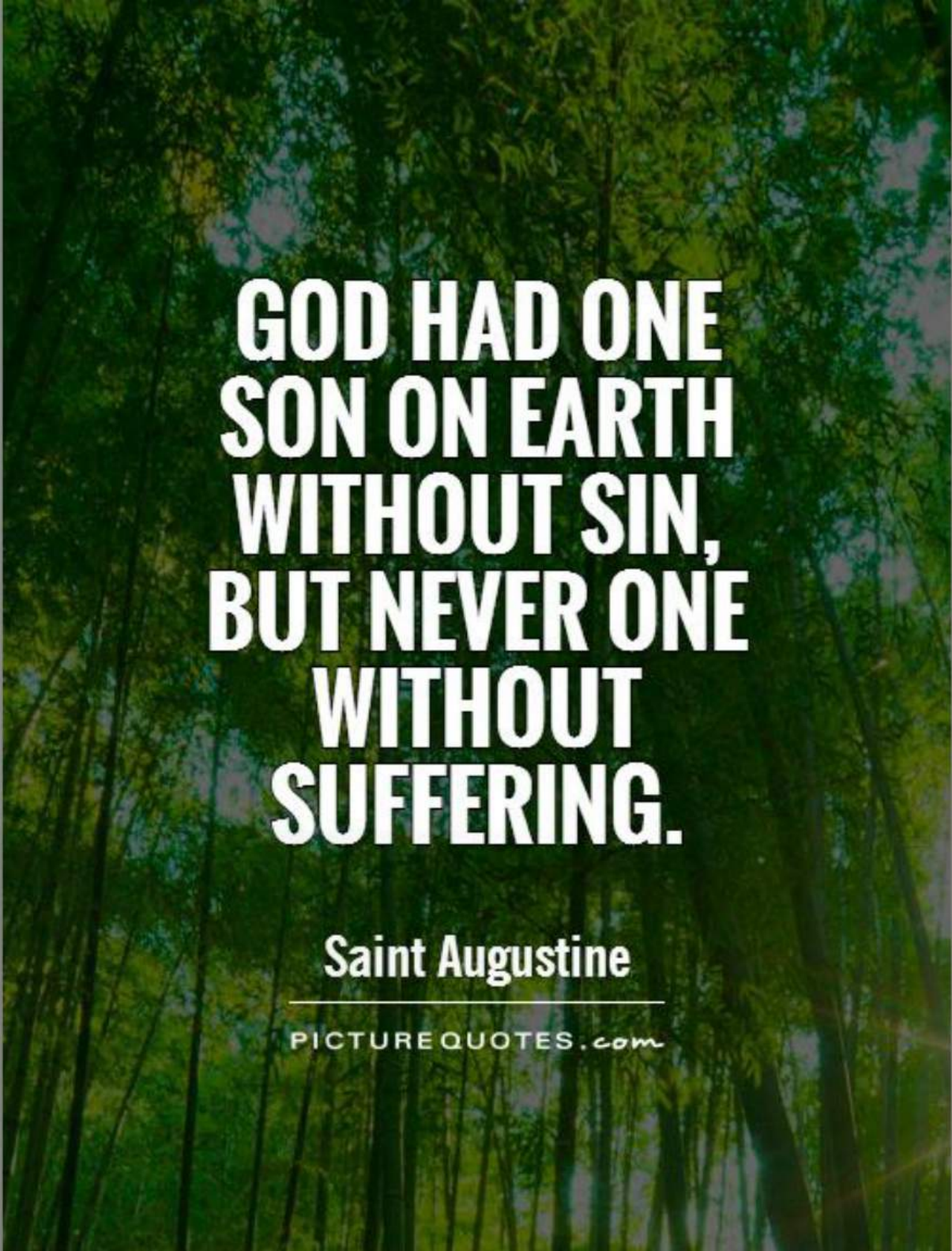


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**GOD HAD ONE
SON ON EARTH
WITHOUT SIN,
BUT NEVER ONE
WITHOUT
SUFFERING.**

Saint Augustine

PICTUREQUOTES.com

Medieval Scholasticism

General Principles



- Conscience enables us to discern right from wrong
- Enables study of natural and revealed law
- Natural and revealed law do not contradict
- Humans have:
 - syntereisis (sic): inborn knowledge of God
 - conscientia: guide for moral action

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

- Influenced by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Humans strive for three ends, to bring happiness
 - *Life*: preserve their own being
 - *Animals*: pro-creation, bringing up of offspring
 - *Humans only*: act according to reason
- Animals follow instinct, humans follow reason
- Conscience reason must be trained
- Conscience can also be *untrained*

William of Ockham (1287-1347)

- Questioned humans ability to reason, morally
- Had a less optimistic view than Aquinas

John Wyclif (1331-1384)

- "Conscience" led him to translate the Bible!
- It can lead one to oppose established order



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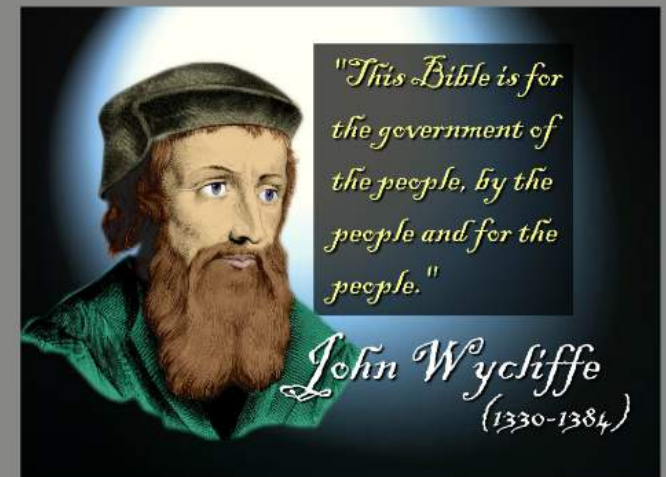
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*"This Bible is for
the government of
the people, by the
people and for the
people."*

*John Wycliffe
(1330-1384)*

Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

- Conscience is more instinctual, less rational
- Tendency to want to do good, to see good done
- Unsure of conscience in non-Christians

"If natural law and reason would stick in all heads... then fools, children and women could rule as well and leads wars as David, Augustus, Hannibal, and Phormios must be as good as Hannibal. Yes, all men should be equal and no one would rule the other...But God has created it thus, that men are unequal and one should govern the other."
- Luther, WA 51:212



John Calvin (1509-1564)

- Concerned with the role of conscience in rendering all people guilty before God, apart from Christ
- Like Luther, believed natural law was not a "set of laws" but the conscience tending towards good
- Scripture should not be used by civil government to establish secular law
- All people have a prolepsis, a tendency, to good

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Post-Reformation

Protestantism

From the 1600s to 20th century, Protestantism focused on Scripture and less on natural law, which they saw as a Romanist, scholastic invention.

This left Protestantism crippled when it came to addressing moral issues outside the Church and in wider society (see: Nazism).

Romanism

Retained a vigorous commitment to the theology of natural law, which continues to this day with pronouncements on social issues outside the Church such as the environment, poverty, marriage, and life issues.

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