

## The Conscience of a Conservative by Barry Goldwater

Editor's Note: Members, I read this book over 30 years ago when studying Political Science. It is as current as if it were written today. It is now re-printed in Paperback edited by Barry Goldwater's granddaughter CC Goldwater who produced the wonderful documentary on Goldwater in recent years. There is a commentary in the re-print by George F. Will Commentator for the Washington Post. The following are some excerpts from the book.

"In a country where it is now generally understood and proclaimed that the people's welfare depends on individual self reliance rather than on state paternalism, Congress annually deliberates over whether the increase in government welfarism should be small or large.

In a country where it is now generally understood and proclaimed that the federal government spends too much, Congress annually deliberates over whether to raise the federal budget by a few billion dollars or by many billion.

In a country where it is now generally understood and proclaimed that individual liberty depends on decentralized government, Congress annually deliberates over whether vigorous or halting steps should be taken to bring state government into line with federal policy.

In a country where it is now generally understood and proclaimed that Communism is an enemy bound to destroy us, Congress annually deliberates over means of "co-existing" with the Soviet Union.

And so the question arises: Why have American people been unable to translate their views into appropriate political action? Why should the nation's underlying allegiance to Conservative principles have failed to produce corresponding deeds in Washington?

.... I do not blame my brethren in government, all of whom work hard and conscientiously at their jobs. I blame Conservatives--ourselves--myself.

Conservatism, we are told, is out-of-date. The charge is preposterous and we ought boldly to say so. The laws of God, and of nature, have no dateline. The principles on which the Conservative political position is based have been established by a process that has nothing to do with the social, economic and political landscape that changes from decade to decade and from century to century. These principles are derived from the nature of man, and from the truths that God has revealed about His creation. Circumstances do change. So do the problems that are shaped by circumstances. But the principles that govern the solution of the problems do not. To suggest that the Conservative philosophy is out of date is akin to saying that the Golden Rule, or the Ten Commandments or Aristotle's Politics are out of date. The Conservative approach is nothing more or less than an attempt to apply the wisdom and experience and the revealed truths of the past to the problems of today.

The root difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals of today is that Conservatives take account of the whole man, while the Liberals tend to look only at the material side of man's nature. The Conservative believes that man is, in part, an economic; an animal creature; but that he is also a spiritual creature with spiritual needs and spiritual desires. What is more, these needs and desires reflect the superior side of man's nature and thus take precedence over his economic wants. Conservatism therefore looks upon the enhancement of man's spiritual nature as the primary concern of political philosophy. Liberals, on the other hand,--in the name of a concern for "human beings"--regard the satisfaction of economic wants as the dominant mission of society. They are, moreover, in a hurry. So that their characteristic approach is to harness the society's political and economic forces into a collective effort to compel "progress." In this approach, I believe they fight against Nature."

### **Kudos**

"The new Conscience of a Conservative takes what might be called the 'anti-fusionist' side in the Goldwater wars...The Conscience of a Conservative continues to be read today because it isn't a political tract, a soulless campaign book of the sort generated by every other modern presidential effort."

**Daniel McCarthy, The American Conservative**

Praise for the original edition: "Goldwater's conservatism is not isolationism, nor is it a cold-blooded commitment to the 'haves' as against the 'have-nots.' It is the creed of a fighter who has both a warm heart and a clear mind."

**John Chamberlain, Wall Street Journal**