

May 31

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Romans 14:21

IT is a very serious crime against the law of love and against the Lord's injunction, to cause one of His brethren to stumble

R4005-4007 "THINGS LAWFUL NOT EXPEDIENT--1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-33 ...Golden Text--"It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."--Romans 14:21...

"AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

...The Apostle shows that the New Creature, while not restrained by law, is restrained from many things by his own nature. Begotten of the spirit of love, and loving his neighbor as himself, he is bound to think not only of what would be harmless to himself but also to consider what would be helpful or injurious to his neighbor: hence, as the Apostle says, none of us should seek his own welfare merely, but each also his neighbor's welfare. In a word, the Apostle shows that the New Creature is his brother's keeper... Not that he should interfere with his brother's rights, privileges and interests, and be a busybody in other men's matters, but that he should allow the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love, to so thoroughly fill his own heart that he would be a helper and not a stumbling-block to the brethren and to the world...

The law of our liberty in Christ, love, must govern our conduct automatically on every occasion. The Lord wishes us to learn, not as children, certain fixed rules, but as philosophers the fixed principles which can be applied.

THE PRINCIPLE OF WIDE APPLICATION

All who have been begotten of the holy Spirit of love will perceive that the principles governing the New Creation are of very wide application indeed. The committee selecting this for our lesson desired that we forget not the application of this principle to the subject of temperance in respect to alcoholic liquors. Surely so grave an evil should not be overlooked, and to it we might advantageously add the influence of other narcotics -- opium, morphine, cocaine, etc. These evils which so seriously tempt the human race, which have wrecked so many lives, blighted so many prospects, destroyed so many homes, and which annually consume an amount of wealth which, applied properly, would mean so much of comfort, blessing and elevation to the race, certainly demand thought from all who have been begotten of the holy Spirit of love. Such

(Matthew 18:6), but it would also be a crime in His sight for us to stumble others,--to hinder them from becoming brethren, and of the household of faith. Hence, it is clear that although knowledge might remove all prohibition of our consciences and all restraints of our liberty, yet love must first come in and approve the liberty before we can exer-

cannot be indifferent to the interests of their brethren nor to the interests of mankind in general...

"ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD"

The Apostle sums up his argument in favor of loving consideration for our brethren and liberty of conscience for ourselves--"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." More than thirty years ago this text was so impressed upon the mind of the writer that he had it beautifully painted on glass and it still greets the eyes of visitors to the WATCH TOWER office, the Bible House parlor and the Editor's study."

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. 10:31

R4007 Continued: "It is difficult to imagine a more comprehensive statement of the Christian's liberty and limitations than is expressed in these words. To whatever extent one learns to govern thoughts, words and deeds by this glorious precept he is becoming more and more filled with the spirit of the law of love, strengthened in character and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. This limitation to what would be to "the glory of God" will enter into and affect all the affairs of life if we will only permit it.

A dear brother now deceased told us on the occasion of our first meeting that for years he had been a nominal Christian, first a Congregationalist and subsequently an Episcopalian, and always found of his personal liberty; but how, failing to see the other side of the question, he had allowed his liberty to lead him into various excesses. He felt that he was exercising his personal liberty when he drank wine and occasionally played a social game of cards with the rector of his Church, and generally he felt at liberty to do whatever would not be in violation of the laws of the land.

His inquiry was, "Brother Russell, can you explain to me the change which has come over my life: I do not understand it myself. My friends used to hand me tracts in opposition to wine and tobacco, etc., but I pooh-poohed them and said in effect, 'I am as good as you; mind your own business

cise it. Love places a firm command upon us, saying, --Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. Love, therefore, and not knowledge, not liberty, must finally decide every question. Z.'03-43 R3145:6

and let me mind mine. I am violating no law, I am merely exercising my personal liberty.' But, Brother Russell, since I read MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. 1, a change has come over me, and those practices which I once considered my liberty I now esteem to be my snares and avoid them. The matter came about in this way: I first asked myself, Is that time spent with the rector playing cards a profitable use of my time? Are you doing it to the glory of God? And as for the wine, do you use that to the glory of God? I was obliged to answer both questions in the negative and discontinued both practices. It was not long after this that I found myself striking a match and about to light my usual cigar. The thought of doing all things to the glory of God came to my mind afresh and I said, 'Can you smoke that cigar to the glory of God?' It took a little time to decide the question, for I had been in the habit of smoking on an average ten cigars a day. That match went out and I struck another while still thinking. I finally decided that I could not smoke the cigar to God's glory and I threw it away. It was only a short time after that I found myself feeling for my fine-cut tobacco, and about to take it as a substitute for the cigar. Again the question arose, Can you chew the tobacco to the glory of God? My judgment answered, No! and I threw away the tobacco. I have never used either since. Conscious that the thing that had influenced me to this course was the reading of the DAWN I reexamined the volume carefully, but could find in it no tirade against the practices I had just discontinued -- no recommendations even along sumptuary lines. I want to ask you what it was in the DAWN that effected such a revolution in my life." We replied that the DAWN, instead of attacking the branches of evil, followed the Scriptural course of laying the ax to the root of the tree. Whoever realizes the true meaning of his consecration vow, the true significance of his begetting of the holy Spirit, the true meaning of the perfect law of liberty under which he has come, the law of love, will find it ample for the regulation of all of life's affairs, for he must seek thereafter that whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does all shall be to the glory of God."

R5323 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER

--NOVEMBER 9.--ROMANS 14:7-21.--

"It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."--Romans 14:21--Diaglott.

THIS lesson makes, perhaps, the strongest appeal of anything in the Bible in favor of total abstinence from the use of intoxicating liquors. True, it is addressed only to Christians, as is the entire New Testament. Nevertheless, many who have not become followers of Jesus can appreciate the argument here, and to many such it will appeal --not along the highest Christian lines, but along the lines of the Golden Rule.

To make a distinction between the Golden Rule, the acknowledged standard for all mankind, and a Christian's rule of life will be considered by many, doubtless, as a distinction without a difference.

But this is not true. The Golden Rule, that one should do to others as he would be done by, is a simple rule of justice. All should recognize it. All should follow it, as none will dispute it.

The rule for Christian living, as taught by the Master and exemplified by Him, is far more exacting than the Golden Rule, which is applicable to all men. Those who become followers of Christ are, of course, subject to the Golden Rule, but they voluntarily place themselves under a far more stringent rule. Their Covenant with the Lord is that in the doing of His will--the doing of righteousness -- they will ever stand ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself.

This is what the Apostle meant when he declared that Christ pleased not Himself. Even though His will was a perfect one, He renounced His rights, privileges, liberties, that He might serve humanity, and thus lay the foundation for carrying out the Heavenly Father's glorious purposes respecting our race.

The present call of the Church is for those who have the "same mind which was also in Christ Jesus." It is a call for sacrificers. As St. Paul declares, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1.) This sacrificing is not to be done in a foolish or aimless way. We are not to sacrifice the things that are right and proper, simply that we may suffer. Right and proper things we may enjoy, except as God shall open our eyes to see privileges and opportunities for self-denial which would enable us to forward His cause, and to minister grace and truth to those for whom Christ died.

"NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF"

Let us first consider our lesson from the standpoint of the consecrated people of God, and afterwards from the standpoint of others who love righteousness, but who have not, as yet, joined the Lord and His faithful, self-sacrificing band of followers.

As for the world, they *do* live to themselves and die to themselves. That is to say, their own personal interests stand first with them. Only to Christ and the Church could these words apply; for none others than these have entered into such a Covenant of self-renunciation, giving up the present with all of its privileges and interests in exchange for a promise of a spiritual life hereafter, in the resurrection.

All these, by the terms of their Covenant, are to live unto the Lord--to do His will and not their own will, to serve Him and not to serve self, to lay down their lives in fighting a good fight against sin. All these, when they die, will be dying unto the Lord, in the sense that they are counted as members of the Body of Christ, every member of which must die to the flesh before the entire Body complete can be glorified beyond the veil. To these, therefore, apply the words, "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."

This being true, the Christian is to have no will of his own as respects his living or his dying, or any of his affairs. Everything is to be fully committed and submitted to the great Head of the Church. Christ's death on behalf of all is efficacious, not only for the dead, but also for the living. All who recognize Him, and are fully consecrated to His service, trust Him fully, in life and in death.

The Apostle proceeds to show that we who constitute the Church which is the Body of Christ are not judges one of another, that all judgment is vested in the Head, the Redeemer of all. Each one now accepted as a member of the Church must ultimately stand the inspection of the Head of the Church; for our present membership in His Body is a probationary one. Loyalty, faithfulness to the Head of the Church now, will bring to us eventually membership in His glorious Body, the Church beyond the veil--His joint-heirs in the Kingdom--His Bride.

The Apostle's argument, then, is that we should avoid condemning one another, and content ourselves with encouraging each other in the good way. Since it is written that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to God, this proves that our final accounting as members of the Church of Christ will be to God, or to our Lord Jesus as His Representative.

LET US, THEN, JUDGE OURSELVES

The Apostle's argument also is that, instead of judging, condemning, fellow-members of the consecrated Body, we should be full of sympathy for them. We should realize that we do not know thoroughly their trials, their difficulties, their environments, their heredities. This should make us very sympathetic towards all the brethren. Our keen sense of justice, our love of righteousness, our hatred of iniquity, should find its principal exercise in self-criticism, and in watchfulness not to do anything that would stumble a brother--not to do anything that would discourage a brother or cause him to fall away from the faith and the works which the Lord requires.

What a wonderful lesson is this in battling against self, rather than against enemies! How many find it easy to excuse their own weaknesses while they are very captious and critical as respects the shortcomings of others! How the Lord warned His people against such an attitude saying, "With what [soever kind of] judgment ye judge [a brother], ye shall be judged" [yourself of the Lord].--Matthew 7:2.

If you are hypercritical and wish to measure others up to the full standard of perfection, you are thus recognizing a high standard, and that recognition on your part will make it proper for the Lord to measure you by that high standard. If we could but remember this--that the merciful will obtain mercy--how glad we all would be to be

extremely merciful to others, extremely lenient in our judgments and reproofs, hoping that the Lord would be correspondingly lenient with us!--James 2:13.

The Lord is not in this establishing a low standard, and wishing His people to think lightly of their own weaknesses and failures, and those of others. He is, on the contrary, setting up a high standard of love, sympathy, and kindness. Love is the principal thing, in God's sight. Whoever, therefore, has love and sympathy most highly developed, the Lord may well esteem as highly developed along the lines most essential in His sight, most essential for a place in His Mediatorial Kingdom.

NOTHING UNCLEAN OF ITSELF

"I know and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean [unholy] of itself," writes the Apostle. The Apostle is referring not to filthiness of clothing or person, but to foods which were to the Jew made improper, ceremonially unclean. In other words, while the Jew was forbidden the use of swine, rabbits, oysters, etc., it was not that these foods would make him actually impure or evil in God's sight, but that the restrictions were imposed as tests of his loyalty and obedience to God, just as the forbidden fruit of Eden was thereafter unclean to Adam and Eve.

The Apostle's argument is that to the Jew who died to all hope of attaining eternal life through keeping the Law Covenant, and who became united to Christ, the restrictions of the Law Covenant would no longer be binding. And, of course, to the Gentile, who never was under the Law Covenant, its restrictions would have no application when he accepted Christ.

Having stated this broad ground, the Apostle admits that if any man had his reasoning faculties so twisted on the subject that he thought himself under obligations, he would be responsible according to his mind or judgment on the subject. If, for instance, a Christian thought that he was obliged to avoid eating pork, that thought in his mind would constitute an obligation; for for him to violate his conscience would mean that he had willingly, knowingly, committed sin; for he would be wrong in doing what he thought was wrong, however harmless the matter might be in itself.

But now comes the final argument: Anybody realizing his own liberty, as the Apostle did, might eat freely, according to his convenience, without any reproof from his conscience or in the sight of God. But the brother still in the dark respecting his liberty should have consideration--should not be urged to violate his conscience. Rather, the brother of enlightened mind should yield to the other, and abstain from using his liberty, lest he should tempt his brother to violate his conscience.

This question of eating ceremonially unclean meat, or meat theoretically unclean because it had been first waved before an idol, is a question which no longer is a live issue among Christians; for general intelligence on the subject has gained the mastery everywhere.

The special application of this lesson to Christians is along a still different line. For instance, suppose that one brother had from childhood been accustomed to drinking beer, ale, etc., and that in his estimation it did him no injury. But suppose a number of brethren, less strong than he, physically and mentally, could not touch intoxicants without harming themselves; and suppose that the example of the drinking brother would continue to be a temptation to the others. What should be his course?

The argument of the Apostle would seem to be that the brother who is strong, mentally, morally and physically, should gladly abstain from anything that would stumble his brother, or anybody else upon whom he exercised an influence. "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." (Romans 14:15.) If Christ loved the world so much as to leave His Heavenly riches and glory to die for sinners, should not we, in proportion as we have His Spirit, be glad to lay down our lives for the brethren, as the Apostle elsewhere exhorts us? And if so, should we not be much more ready to abstain from the use of comparatively trifling liberties for the sake of our weaker brother, for whom Christ died? This is a strong argument. Who can deny it?

"Let not then your good be evil spoken of." Your knowledge, your appreciation, of your liberties is a good thing, a desirable thing; nevertheless, you should so govern your exercise of that liberty that none will misunderstand it, and think you an evil-doer. Rather restrain yourself of your liberties, preserve others from the temptation too strong for them, and increase your own influence by faithfully abstaining from everything that might appear to be an evil in the sight of others, however right it might be in your own sight, and however correct your own judgment of the Divine Law on the subject might be.

"NOT MEAT AND DRINK"

The Apostle adds another argument (v.17). He remarks, For the advantages connected with our membership in the embryo Kingdom of God consist not in the greater privileges and liberties we have in eating and drinking, but consist rather in the righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit which are ours because we are probationary members of this Kingdom Class. He who thus serves Christ is well pleasing to God and is approved of men. "Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace and things whereby we

may edify one another. Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. All things indeed are clean; but evil for that man who eateth with offense. It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."

The application of the Golden Rule on the part of the world would seem to be a settlement of many questions of the present time. Do unto others weaker than yourself, in precept and example, what you would have them do for you in precept and example, if you were the weaker and they the stronger.

R3144 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

"KNOWLEDGE PUFFETH UP; BUT LOVE BUILDETH UP"

--1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13--FEBRUARY 15--

"Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace."--Rom. 14:19.

ABOUT three and a half years after the Apostle Paul left Corinth he wrote to the Church there the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and our present lesson concerns one of its important topics. The question of religious liberty, and the propriety or impropriety of eating meat which had been offered to idols, might at first seem unnecessary to discuss; but, as the Apostle handles the subject in our lesson, he develops from it a valuable lesson along general principles, valuable to the Church now, as well as then, in connection with various other matters.

Some of the Corinthian Church had evidently made considerable progress in knowledge, and heartily appreciated the fact that since an idol is nothing, meat offered to the idol cannot in any sense of the word be injured. Nevertheless, in the conference of the apostles at Jerusalem it had been specially recommended to the Church at Antioch and to all Christian converts from the Gentiles "that they should abstain from meats offered to idols." Some of the brethren at Corinth perceived that there could be no sin in the eating of such meat where their consciences were not violated, and concluded that the admonitions of the Apostles were not a law to the Church, but a recommendation, and had proceeded to use their liberties--to eat meat offered to idols, thinking, perhaps, thus to show not only their Christian liberty, but also that they entirely disregarded an idol.

It will help us to sympathize with them to remember that they were in daily contact with heathen neighbors who would repeatedly invite them to feasts, entertainments, weddings, etc., at which they were sure to be served with food that had been offered to idols, and which was supposed to be the better therefor. To abstain, under such circumstances, would mean more or less of an insult to their friends, and the practical ostracism of themselves. Some of the brethren took the view that they could partake of such refreshments without the least injury to their consciences, and at the same time show their heathen neighbors that they were not narrow and bigoted, but broad-minded;--or perhaps explain the matter by saying, "Your god is nothing anyway, and could not injure the meat."

The Apostle intimates that the majority of the Church had such knowledge as enabled them to discern that an image of wood or stone, being no god, could neither improve nor injure the food in any sense or degree; but that this knowledge did not necessarily mean a great growth in spirituality. A very small mite of soap will make a large air bubble; and so, a comparatively little knowledge might puff one up greatly, without any solidity of character. He points out the advantage, therefore, of measuring oneself by growth in love, rather than by growth merely in knowledge--though, of course, to be great in both knowledge and love would be the ideal condition. The same lesson the Apostle inculcates further on (1 Cor. 13:2) asserting "though I have all knowledge and have not love I am nothing." Knowledge without love would be an injury, and to consider it otherwise would imply that real knowledge has not yet been secured; but, says the Apostle, to the contrary of this, "If any man love God, the same is known to him."--acquainted with him. We might have a great deal of knowledge, and yet not know God, and not be known or recognized by him; but no man can have a large development of true love in his character without personally knowing the Lord and obtaining the spirit of love through fellowship with him. Hence, the getting of love is sure to build us up substantially (avoiding the inflation of pride) in all the various graces of the spirit, including meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, knowledge, wisdom from above and the spirit of a sound mind.

Having laid down this premise, the Apostle proceeds to build his argument thereon, and to show that although it is true, as claimed, that the idol could do no injury to the food, nevertheless with Christians love must have the last word on the matter. Love, after securing knowledge and liberty, will look about to see what

effect the use of liberty might have upon others; and would perceive that by reason of differing conditions of mental strength, perception, reasoning faculties, etc., all could not have exactly the same standpoint of knowledge and appreciation of principles. Love, therefore, would forbid the use of knowledge and liberty if it perceived that their exercise might work injury to another.

True, there is only one God, and idols, therefore, are nothing as gods; nevertheless, the appreciation of idols as gods had become so ingrained in the thought of many that it would be impossible for them fully to divest themselves of some respect for the idols--impossible for them to eat meat that had been offered to idols without the feeling that in some sense of the word they had done wrong--had been contaminated or injured by the unholy associations. This would be true also of food offered to the heavenly bodies worshipped as gods--the sun, moon and stars.

Knowledge is beneficial;--"To us there is but one God, the Father;" of, or from whom, as the first cause or Creator, all things came, including ourselves; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, by, or through whom all things, including ourselves, have been brought into existence. The knowledge which would enable us to discern this matter clearly would assuredly be of advantage. But some dear brethren did not possess ability to reason clearly from this premise, and they had a claim upon their stronger brethren under the Law of Love.

We must pause a moment in our consideration of vs. 6, not because the Apostle's language is in any measure obscure; but because the Adversary seeks continually to wrest the Scriptures, and to misrepresent their plain teachings, and thus to mislead the Lord's flock. We refer to the false teaching abroad today, that this statement, "Of whom are all things," signifies that all the sin, all the wickedness, etc., of the world are from God; are his direct work, traceable to him as their author or fountain. Surely it is nothing short of blasphemy for anyone who has first tasted of the good Word of God, and been made a partaker of the holy spirit, thus to attribute to God the various evils which, throughout the Scriptures are uniformly condemned, and which God declares he will ultimately--"in due time"--destroy! The Scriptures are clear in their statement that "all his work is perfect;" that "God is not the author of confusion;" that "God tempteth no man," and is not in accord with any suggestion to the effect that evil may be done so that good results may follow. (Deut. 32:4; Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 14:33; Jas. 1:13; 1 Pet. 3:11.) It is in full agreement with the declaration that "all his work is perfect," that having made Satan a perfect being, as also he made our race perfect, representatively in Adam, God has not hindered his free moral agents from taking a course of sin in violation of his commands. His wisdom and power are such that he will eventually bring a blessing out of these evils to those who are not in sympathy with them, but the evils themselves, yea, and "all the wicked, will he *destroy*."--Psa. 145:20.

The Apostle proceeds in his argument to show that it is not the food that we eat that makes us acceptable to God, neither our abstaining from any particular food. Our relationship to God is that of the New Creation, a heart relationship; and the blessing which the Lord gives us is as newly begotten children,--not along the lines of the flesh, but along the lines of the spiritual and heart development, which shall ultimately be perfected in the resurrection.

True, "whom the Son makes free is free indeed," and we all should "seek to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free;" but it is also true that we need to be on guard lest we use our liberty in such a manner as would stumble others more weak than ourselves, --not so able to use the liberty of Christ discriminatingly. The liberty wherewith Christ makes free may be viewed from two standpoints: if it gives us liberty to eat without restraint, in a manner that the Jews were not at liberty to eat, it gives us liberty also to

abstain;--and whoever has the spirit of Christ and is seeking to follow in his steps has already covenanted to the Lord to use his liberty, not in the promotion of his fleshly desires, ambitions and appetites; but in self-sacrifice, following in the footsteps of the Master, seeking to lay down his life, even, on behalf of the brethren --for their assistance. How different are these two uses of liberty! Its selfish use would mean self-gratification, regardless of the interests of others; its loving use would prompt to self-sacrifice in the interests of others.

But why?--what principle is involved that would make it incumbent upon one whose conscience is clear to consider the conscience of another? Why not let the person of the weak conscience take care of his own conscience, and eat or abstain from eating as he felt disposed? The Apostle explains that this would be all right if it were possible; but that the person of weaker mind, feebleness of powers, is likely to be weaker in every respect and, hence, more susceptible to the leadings of others--into paths which his conscience could not approve, because of his weaker reasoning powers or inferior knowledge. One might, without violation of conscience, eat meat that had been offered to idols, or even sit at a feast in an idol temple, without injury to his conscience; but the other, *feeling* that such a course was wrong, might endeavor to follow the example of his stronger brother, and thus might violate his conscience, which would make it a sin to him. Every violation of conscience, whether the thing itself be right or wrong, is a step in the direction of wilful sin--it is a downward course, leading further and further away from the communion and fellowship with the Lord, and into grosser and grosser transgressions of conscience and, hence, possibly leading to the Second Death. Thus the Apostle presents the matter: "For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, --the brother for whose sake Christ died."

The question is not, Would it be a sin to eat the meat offered to idols? but, Would it be sin against the spirit of love, the law of the New Creation, to do *anything* which could reasonably prove a cause of stumbling to our brother;--not only to the brethren in Christ, the Church, but even to a fellow-creature according to the flesh?--for Christ died for the sins of the whole world. ⁽¹⁾It is a very serious crime against the law of love and against the Lord's injunction, to cause one of his brethren to stumble (Rom. 14:13,21; Matt. 18:6), but it would also be a crime in his sight for us to stumble others,--to hinder them from becoming brethren, and of the household of faith. Hence, it is clear that although knowledge might remove all prohibition of our consciences and all restraints of our liberty, yet love must first come in and approve the liberty before we can exercise it. Love places a firm command upon us, saying,--Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. Love, therefore, and not knowledge, not liberty, must finally decide every question.

Let us take our stand with the Lord, and determine that so far from using our liberties in any manner that might do injury to others we will refuse so to use them; and will rather *sacrifice* them for the benefit of others;--even as our Master, as our Redeemer, gave all that he had. Let us adopt the words of the Apostle in the last verse of this lesson, and determine once for all that anything that would injure a brother we will not do--any liberty of ours, however reasonable in itself, that would work our brother's injury, that liberty we will not exercise; we will surrender it in his interest; we will sacrifice it; we will to that extent, on his behalf, lay down our life for him.

There is, perhaps, occasionally a danger of misapplication of this principle; as, for instance, the Doukhobors might say to us, We regard that it is wrong to eat any meat and wrong even to use the skins of animals for shoes, and you are to condescend to our weak consciences in this matter, and ought not to eat meat or wear shoes either. We answer that that is not a similar question to the one which the Apostle has explained in which we should surrender our liberties. On the contrary, the Word of the Lord and the customs of society are all opposed to these bewildered people, and to yield to their mental unbalance on this question would be to assist them in a wrong direction. Our abstaining from eating meat or from the wearing of shoes would in no sense of the word help them to better views; nor does our eating of meat or wearing of leather in any sense of the word *interfere with their consciences*. Other brethren have an antipathy to the use of instrumental music in the worship of God, as there used to be people who objected to having meeting places heated and provided with comfortable seats. These may sometimes abuse the Apostle's argument, claiming that their consciences are injured by the liberties of the brethren; and that such liberties should be abridged in their interest. Our answer to them must also be,--that

they misapply the Apostle's argument: it is not his meaning that the Lord's people are to favor the mental crotchets of each other in such a manner as would be to the general injury of the Church. Superstitions are not to be encouraged in the Church, nor its spiritual advantages and liberties sacrificed on account of them. Nevertheless, love must always have a voice in all of the affairs of the Lord's people; and even such as would mistakenly impose upon their brethren upon the score of weakness, should be treated with love, and their objections, etc., should be reasoned upon. They should see that they have full liberty to do any and everything that the Lord requires of them, abstaining from every appearance of evil, and that their brethren should be accorded the same privileges. If they cannot conscientiously sing with instrumental music or sing hymns, let them keep silence, or for the time do their singing at home. Praising God with instruments is a very different question from eating in an idol's temple.

A somewhat similar question to this one which the Apostle decided, may come before us today in respect to attendance at public worship in the nominal churches, Protestant and Catholic--including the propriety of partaking of the "sacrament" or the "Mass." On such a question each has personal liberty; each should be fully persuaded in his own mind, and follow the direction of his own conscience. In our judgment it would be a much more serious offense to partake of the Mass in Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic or High Episcopal Church services, than to sit in an idol temple and partake of the foods offered to the idols; because the Mass is particularly an abomination before the Lord. (Heb. 7:25; 10:14.) As respects participation in the Lord's Supper, as observed by the majority of Protestants: We could see no harm in this of itself;--those participating might intelligently reverence and worship God in such a manner, even though realizing the inappropriateness, according to the Scriptures, of such a celebration. We would, however, think that a regular participation in the services of Babylon and in her misinterpretation of the Lord's Supper would be reprehensible;--injurious to our own spiritual progress, and dangerous also in the stumbling of some weaker in their discernments. Our advice, therefore, would be that on the one hand we do not feel such a restraint that we would fear to enter a nominal church building to hear a service there; and on the other hand that we do not seem to give our assent to their errors by regular attendance and participation--except at such meetings as would afford us full opportunity for the presentation of the truth.

Another illustration of this principle in our times, is found in the liquor question. There will be no dispute that it would be wrong for any man to get drunk --to lose his senses, and additionally to render himself liable to do injury to others, and surely to dishonor his Creator. The question of liberty comes in only in respect to the use of liquors in such a manner as would work no dishonor to God and no injury either to ourselves or to our neighbors. All recognize the fact that intoxicating liquors are a dangerous temptation to the world in general, and our suggestion to the brethren who feel that they have full power of self-control in the use of liquors, is that they apply the argument of the Apostle in this lesson, and determine whether they could not more honor the Lord and help those who are weaker than themselves by using their liberty in the direction of total abstinence,--sacrifice of rights,--rather than by using it in moderate drinking.

So far as we are able to discern, intoxication is one of the most terrible evils scourging our race at the present time. Many are so weak through the fall, by heredity, that they are totally unable to resist the control of intoxicants, if once they yield to them. Is it too much to ask of those who have consecrated their lives to the Lord, to righteousness and to the blessing of others, that they should deny themselves in this matter, and thus lay down some liberties and privileges in the interest of the brethren, and in the interest of the world in general?

Similar arguments might be urged respecting the use of tobacco, cards and the various implements which the Adversary uses in luring mankind into sin. The whole, be it noted, is the argument of love. In proportion as we grow in the graces of our Lord, in his spirit of love, we will be glad, not only to put away all filthiness of the flesh for our own sakes, and to be more like the Lord, but also, at the instance of love, we would desire to put away from us everything that might have an evil influence upon others, whatever we might consider our personal liberties to be in respect to them.

Our Golden Text is in place here--it appeals to all who have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. "Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace"--for the blessing of others and for our own blessing and upbuilding as new creatures in Christ, members of his body.

⁽¹⁾ May 31 Manna, Rom. 14:21