

vitalized with love knowledge is positively ignoble. It is simply the vision of the intellect, which is not half so clear or sure as the vision of the heart. As the sight of the natural eye must be interpreted by the nobler mind, so the vision of intellect must be illumined by love. Otherwise a man may (verse 4) think that he knoweth yet know nothing as he ought to know. The Revised Version omits the word "nothing." It is absent from most of the manuscripts, and weakens the thought. Paul does not deny the possibility of an unloving heart knowing things. Indeed, he states that we all have knowledge, verse 1. The weak as well as the strong are informed of the unreality of idols, and that **there is none other God but one**, verse 4. But that is quite a different thing from knowing God. Spiritual things are known only by an inward appropriation. Their verity stands not in our thinking, but in our character. Hence the words of John, which are as philosophical as they are divine, "He who loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love," 1 John 4. 8.

A second reason why knowledge should yield to love is that *it is stronger than ignorance*, and it is a divine principle that the strong should serve the weak. That principle is not directly stated here, but it was a staple of the apostles' teaching and is positively implied in the striking contrast he draws between the strong who had knowledge and the weak who had not. **We know** (verse 4) (that is, Paul and Sosthenes who addressed the letter, and you strong men) that heathen deities have no existence, and so in no way can contaminate the meat. But others who have not that knowledge are by their weakness troubled in their conscience. This very fact is itself a sufficient reason for you to exercise love.

A third reason is that *with those who refrained from eating meat it was a matter of conscience*. With the strong it was not. The latter did no violence to their moral nature by refraining. Their conscience did not impel them to eat. They were at liberty. Hence the Christian brotherhood could be maintained by no violation of moral sense in waiving their right—the same Christian principle that the man strong in knowledge should use his strength for the help of the ignorant. So he who is strong should use his liberty for those who are enslaved. Still another reason for the exercise of love when knowledge comes in conflict with the ignorance of others is that *otherwise the weak are imperiled*.

10. Shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened. The word "emboldened" is a piece of irony. Literally it is "edified." The believer who has knowledge hopes to edify his brother by trampling upon his scruples and showing him how safely he can enter the precincts of idolatry. His weak brother is influenced by him and does violence to

the sacred voice of conscience. He edifies him to his ruin!

12. Weak conscience. Conscience is determined by knowledge, yet is imperative. To do a right thing, believing it to be wrong, will defile the moral sense and obscure its vision.

One final reason for the sovereignty of love in dealing with another's conscience is that without it **ye sin against Christ**. Paul does not tell how by sinning against a feeble brother we sin against Christ; but his thought is fully suggested by the frequency of the recurrence of the term "brother" in these last verses. It was a term by which the early Christians addressed each other. It indicated a family equality as well as the love they bore each other. All worldly distinctions were dropped to a level that seemed insignificant in the presence of the towering heights of spiritual brotherhood. It meant also that they were all children of a common Father. Theirs was a common life in Christ. In any way to mar that brotherhood was a stroke at Christ. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least, of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Thoughts for Young People.

Knowledge and Love.

1. Knowledge is a fine thing; it emancipates a man from many foolish prejudices; it multiplies his power; but it needs to be exercised with love.

2. Knowledge without love is conceited and selfish; shortsighted and limited; it cannot know God or be known of him. Knowledge without love prides itself on liberty of action, and disregards the scruples of those who are weak. It may wound a tender conscience, lead a soul astray, and incur sin against Christ.

3. "Knowledge puffeth up" with regard to wine not less than with regard to the ancient idol-meats. Many a man is quite sure that "he has a right to drink, and it is nobody's business." Yet if he took love for his guiding principle he would abstain.

4. But he who thinks that he knows that moderate drinking will do him no harm is greatly mistaken. It does him no good; it clouds his mind; it dulls his conscience; it injures his health; it may make him a drunkard.

5. We should ask ourselves in all things, "What is the Lord's will?" for Christ is our Master. Do we glorify Christ by drinking?

6. It is noble for a man to abstain for the sake of others who may be influenced by his example. Even if moderate drinking would do no harm to some (which is at best doubtful) it will certainly exercise an injurious influence upon others. We ought to abstain for the sake of our influence. The moderate drinker can do nothing to stop drunkenness and liquor-selling.