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A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

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## MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS.

*(I. Corinthians viii.-x.)*A STUDY IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS, SHOWING THE ETHICAL BASIS  
OF SERVICE.

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I. In the so-called Christian world, what are termed evangelical churches vary from the extremes of ritualistic Episcopacies to the simplest organizations of congregations insisting upon a personal confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a requisite for membership. Especially in the latter form and its approximations, is it patent to the careful observer that, according as one or another party is in the ascendancy, the pendulum of religious life swings within the limits of a few decades from the extreme of rigidly enforced rules that shut in church members like a prison wall, to the opposite extreme of no rule at all, and apparently no boundary line between the church and the world, but instead, the broadest liberty of partnership and intercourse. The one extreme robs Christianity of all attractive power, substitutes Sinai for Calvary, and renders religion obnoxious and life a burden by repetitions of "Thou shalt not." The other robs Christianity of all resisting power, obliterates Calvary from the face of the earth, and renders religion a travesty and life a farce by the removal of all sense of reverence and obligation.

It is an established geometrical fact that two lines extending from the same point, but on opposite sides of a perpendicular, and diverging therefrom, if they fall at equal distances from the foot of the perpendicular, make equal angles with the perpendicular. It is also an established geometrical fact that from a point one perpendicular can be dropped to a line, and but one. Surely, truth is the right line dropped from God, the

Centre, to the chord of man's need, and it is clear that the swing of the pendulum of human caprice must cut this chord of man's need at equal distances from the perpendicular. Is it not possible that God, who gives all truth, would here teach us a measure of spiritual as well as of earthly things, and would lead us to see that the angle with truth made by the position of the pendulum at one extreme is as great as that made by its position at the other?

What then is the perpendicular? Has God's word left us in the dark upon this important subject? Is there no statement that will define and guarantee right liberty of action to those who are declared to be free in Christ Jesus? Is there no message that will reveal a boundary of God's drawing that shall effectually separate believers from the world, and enable them, both individually and collectively, to be strong to attract while they are also strong to resist?—that will leave Calvary the one dominant point in a religion that is neither obnoxious nor a travesty, and whose logical life is neither a burden nor a farce? It must be evident that it will not do to seek this boundary line through any effect of the ordinances committed by the Lord Jesus to the apostles to be perpetuated by those confessing the Redeemer's name. These are designed to be simply declarative of existing conditions, and they may be administered when the eye of man fails to detect that the conditions do not exist. Moreover, it is especially among those and for those in whom these conditions are declared to be real that the boundary line is sought. If the ordinances in themselves were sufficient hedge, why should the churches seek to erect more? Neither will it do to seek this boundary by means of emphasis upon the commands in the Moral Law. These are binding upon all, with only this difference:—they appeal to the unbeliever through the fear of death and to the believer through the fearlessness of love. Besides, those lines drawn by the "Thou shalt not" of what is usually termed a Puritanical Code exclude things not condemned in the Moral Law, and, therefore, not wrong in themselves; things admitted by many to be harmless and innocent; things claimed by some to have been proven helpful and intrinsically good; things acknowledged by

all to be freely used and really enjoyed by the world; things denied by none to have been, at various times, at various places, and under various circumstances, indulged in and abused until their effect becomes pernicious to men in general and antagonistic to the cause of Christ in particular. The question at issue relates to these things, and is, therefore, one belonging neither to the wide reaching Moral Law nor to the inflexible Positive Commands of the Lord Jesus, but must be assigned to the province of Christian Ethics; hence it is evident that the solution cannot lie in the authoritative "Do this" that enjoins the ordinances, nor in the unchangeable "Thou shalt not" that shuts off moral wrong, but that it must be in a deep, root principle that is capable of constant and varied application. "That the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works," this root principle is illustrated and explained by the Holy Spirit through His servant, the Apostle Paul.

## II. Corinth and its Question.

In the great city of Corinth, long given to the worship of idols, there was, in the days of Paul, a body of people professing faith in the Christ whom Paul had preached to them as having been put to death for the sins of men, and having been raised "out from among the dead" for their justification. Wherefore, these people claimed redemption through Him, and, renouncing the gods of their neighbors, they acknowledged their allegiance to the Eternal Triune God. In regard to a custom at this time prevalent in Corinth as in all Grecian cities, in Vol. XXI., page 133, under the head of "Sacrifice," "The Encyclopedia Britannica" says: "If all sacrifices are not convivial entertainments, at least the tendency is to give to all feasts, nay, to all meals, a sacrificial character, by inviting the gods to partake of them (Athenæus, V: 19). Thus the Roman family never rose from supper until a portion of the food had been laid upon the burning hearth as an offering to the Lares, and a similar practice was probably followed in early Greece. At all events the slaughter of an animal (which gave the meal a much more luxurious and festal character, animal food not being in daily use with the mass of the agricultural population

of the Mediterranean lands) seems to have been always sacrificial in early Greece, and even in later times St. Paul assumes that flesh sold in the shambles would often consist of *εἰδωλόθυμα*.

Among the Semites sacrifice and slaughter for food are still more clearly identified; the Hebrews use the same word for both, and the Arabian invocation of the name of Allah over every beast killed for food is but the relic of a sacrificial formula. The part of the gods in such sacrificial meals was often very small, the blood alone (Arabia), or the fat and thighs (Il., i. 460), or small pieces of each joint (Od., xiv. 427), or the blood, the fat, and the kidneys (Lev. iii)."

Evidently, the commonly accepted meaning of all this was that the god, having been thus honored, and being thus a sharer in the feast, the partaker, while gratifying his appetite, became a recipient of the divine favor and blessing; afterward, the meat being offered for sale in the shambles, both dealer and purchaser, so far as they had reason to know or suppose that sacrifice to the gods was a primary intention, became partakers of the altar. Therefore, any profit or pleasure resulting through means of this meat might mean allegiance to the idol, and become questionable accordingly, while at the same time the intrinsic merit of the meat would be by no means impaired. The Corinthian Christians, being familiar with the evils of idolatry, and recognizing only one God and one plan of salvation, were naturally alarmed, and inevitably the question concerning the proper steps to be taken with regard to those using this meat had been sprung among them, and evidently, had been referred to the Apostle Paul. The fact of the presentation of this question and the nature of Paul's answer reveal two parties existing in the church at Corinth, as there have been two parties in the churches of all time—the one party contending that the meat should be placed under a ban, and church lines rigidly drawn thereby; the other party contending that the meat was good, had its proper uses, was often necessary, gave wholesome enjoyment, and that Christian liberty was attacked by its opponents.

It can not be difficult for one who thinks to perceive that the use by the Christians, for either pleasure or profit, of the meat

offered to idols at Corinth stands as the concrete act representing the principle that recurs again and again in the all-important fact of the use by Christians of all ages, for either pleasure or profit, of those things not excluded by positive command of the Master nor forbidden in the Moral Law, therefore not in themselves or in their use wrong; but subject to abuse, and therefore concerning which the pendulum of religious sentiment swings. It can not be less difficult to perceive that the answer given by Paul, the Apostle, in Chapters VIII., IX. and X. of First Corinthians must be the answer of Inspiration for all time to all questions which, not coming under the head of prescribed limitations, may not be answered by definite precept, but which, coming under the wider scope of Christian Ethics, must be answered by the application of a principle as authoritative in its Divine source.

### III. First Postulate—VIII: 1-6.

Paul lays down the first postulate of this principle in Chapter VIII: 1-6, and in verse nine asserts the consequent liberty of the Christian. The fact that the meat had been offered to an idol did not in any wise establish the existence of the god, or, in the Christian's own mind, render partaking thereof an acknowledgement of the idol or divert his worship from the true God: so that it was entirely possible for the Christian to eat this meat, returning humble thanks to the God he served; and under "eat" it is fair to include buy, sell, use, enjoy, or any other presupposed or contained term. Moreover, the sustaining and pleasure-giving properties of the meat were designed to meet the man's normal desires that craved and were satisfied by them. Hence, to forbid this meat was to forbid to a man "the free use of his native powers in the gratification of his normal desires,"\* and one so hampered would instinctively feel that he was deprived of an inherent right which Christianity was meant to confirm. In like manner, it is evident that while certain things both in the lines of business and pleasure have been perverted to the acknowledgement of gods many and base (i. e., have been abused), it is entirely possible for the Christian, holding all things in subjection to the one true God, and receiving all things from Him, in humble service and thanks-

\*Ethics: Noah K. Davis. P. 47.

giving to partake of (i. e., to use) these things and swerve no hair's breadth in the allegiance of his soul. It is also true that in all things created and permitted to go unhedged by the Divine "Thou shalt not" there is some property which meets and satisfies the normal desire for which it was provided. Such being the case, no power in all the universe may come between the Christian and his Lord and deprive him of his recognized right without being guilty of trespass. If the "broad" principles of the Second party which would swing the pendulum to the extreme that removes all restraint were correct, Paul should have stopped right here, leaving the liberty lovers of Corinth and elsewhere quite free to use and enjoy all questionable things as they might see fit, without being subjected to the criticism or hampered by the expostulation of the opposing party. If the prohibitory principles of the First Party which would swing the pendulum to the extreme of limitation were correct, right here would have been the time to lay them down, and Paul would doubtless have exhorted that party to deal rigorously with the offenders and to maintain well defined church lines. Carrying out this same idea, it is not improbable that he would have besought them as the city became Christianized to urge the authorities to take steps to check the use of this meat, and so prevent the spread of idolatry; for no one went farther in opposition to idolatry than the inspired Paul. But the grand old apostle endorsed neither of these two parties. On the contrary, having asserted, in a way that was startling to the members of the First Party, the perfect right of the offenders to continue in the supposed offense, now, in a way that is startling to the members of the Second Party, he turns his attention to them.

#### IV. Considerations for the Meat-eaters.

##### a. VIII: 7-13. Christ's right *through* His servant.

Granting that they had a right to eat this meat (understanding all the terms presupposed by or contained in "eat") and did so, suppose that some one who had not so clear a conception of the God-head, but saw only the customs of the community, being influenced by their example, should eat likewise, but with a different understanding and motive, and so that

one should be led into sin. Paul makes the argument that the Christian, having the right to eat the meat, has also the right to let it alone, and if he sees that his eating might directly or indirectly lead into sin another for whom Christ died, then his own obligation to the Christ,—which is the recognition of the Master's right through him as well as in him—should constrain him to abstain. Suppose the Christian of today, finding profit physical, substantial, or intellectual in some questionable pursuit or recreation, engaging therein with the purest motives, and holding his enjoyment within most prudent bounds, should yet become aware that others, being influenced by his example, were in danger of being drawn into the swift current made by some trend of this same questionable thing toward evil, and of being borne down thereby, and should persist in asserting his right and in carrying out his pleasure, would there not be cause for alarm lest the very liberty with which Christ endowed him might become “a stumbling block to them that are weak” and the enjoyment of it an offense to the Master? It is better far, that one claiming redemption through the Christ should surrender his admitted right and “eat no meat while the world stands.” This argument is based upon the assumption of the higher right of the Redeemer to the ingathering of the souls for which He died, at least being unimpeded by those who have openly confessed His grace. Though the right of the individual may be recognized and conceded, yet if its insistence may be the means, directly or indirectly, of leading another into sin, and so opposing the right of the Master, then it is clear that the exercise of the servant's right becomes in itself a trespass.

b. IX: 1-6. Christ's right *by* His servant.

Again, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he as an apostle has an unquestionable right to marry, as did Peter and others; and yet, he had waived that right, in order that he might give himself more untrammelled to the Gospel work, which in Paul's case necessitated journeyings almost impossible for a woman. Granting fully the right of free action that is involved, yet if the Corinthian meat-eater found that he was thereby hampered when he would speak to his neighbor on the subject of idolatry;



if the acquisitive or pleasure-loving Christian of today finds that his power for usefulness is curtailed by the pursuits that he has chosen, and that he may not be so efficient in the great matter of soul-saving, for which especially the Master left him here, then surely, the right of the Master in His servant should take precedence over the right of the servant in his pursuit, and the servant of the Lord Jesus should be the first to recognize that fact. The argument is that the right of the servant to gratify his normal desires by means of this "meat," though justly conceded, should voluntarily yield its claim before the higher right of the Master to gratify—by means of His servant—His desire to secure the salvation of souls;—right acknowledging right, and supremacy being a right. Whenever the rights of Christians, collectively or individually, antagonize the right of the Christ by the Christian, the same Shepherd-Lord who made clear Paul's duty in regard to marriage, and who in His providence brought fact and principles before the consciences of the meat-eating Corinthians, will bring the fact clearly and persistently before the conscience of each one in whom the Master's right is endangered, even if attention must be enforced by the stone from the unerring sling.

c. IX: 9-23. Christ's right *with* His servant.

It is one of the elementary teachings of Christianity that those who preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel, and upon this Paul always insisted. But if at the same time he had claimed the support that was rightly his, it is easy to see that there would not have been wanting those who would have insisted that Paul had a personal motive in laying down this principle, and, obviously, this would have weakened the force of his whole preaching. He uses this as a third illustration and argument for the great idea that he is trying to explain, and shows that although he had a perfect right under the divine ordinance to claim support from the churches, he yielded the right, because its insistence would have greatly weakened, if it had not nullified his entire teaching. Therefore Paul made tents for a living and was chargeable to no man, while he taught the young church at Corinth that it must support its preachers; thus yielding a just right to render more

emphatic the declaration of a basic principle. The argument is that the right of the Christian to pleasure or profit should be held loyally subordinate to the right of the Christ as the Christian is permitted co-partnership in the establishment of Gospel truth. It is not hard to see Paul's application. It would be almost impossible for A, who is a Christian in Corinth deriving both pleasure and profit from this meat, to convince his neighbor C, who is an idolater, that he ought not to touch it, or his neighbor B, who has been trying to win C to the Christ, that he is trespassing upon Christian advancement by limiting Christian liberty in his avowed efforts to secure rigid measures. If instead of the meat that was questionable at Corinth something that is questionable today be substituted, will not the facts of the case remain unaltered? It becomes simply a question as to the relative importance of the disputed right, which represents Christ's partnership with the Christian in things temporal, and the truth to be taught, which represents the Christian's partnership with the Christ in things eternal. If the interests of the two partnerships should conflict, from which would the Master first withdraw? And yet, Paul insists that it is the right of each Christian to study his own position and to choose before the Lord, and therefore, encroachment upon that right is a trespass.

d. IX: 23-27, X: 1-13. Christ's right *in* His servant.

So far in the argument, the point of view has been objective, leading the meat-eater to consider the Master's higher right to gratify His normal desires through, by, and with the instrumentality of His servants, the redeemed:—these living to confess and rejoice in an inseparable union with their Lord. Now the matter is reached from a subjective standpoint, the meat-eater being invited for a moment to consider himself, as the apostle uses a familiar illustration. All at Corinth were familiar with the famous Olympian Games. All knew the rigorous training to which the contestants were subjected, and with what perfect willingness they consented to be deprived of anything that hindered or was supposed to hinder their personal physical development. All contestants entered the race, but all did not receive the crown. That was awarded to him whose achieve-

ment proved most thorough subjection, and therefore, most thorough development of the physical nature. And the prize was only an olive wreath and the glory of winning it! A kindred illustration is made from the Jews. All left Egypt, yet all did not share in the glories of Palestine;—for there were many among them who desired more their present ease and gratification than the prize that lay beyond, and were not willing to submit, under training, to the deprivation and discipline that were essential to achievement. The first and lower appeal of this argument is that regardless of relation to others, if the individual insisting upon an admitted right thereby places in jeopardy a higher—because a more enduring—privilege, self-interest demands that he yield the right which is good for the sake of the privilege which is better. Herein lies the question of expediency which is so intimately connected with the question of “Meat offered to idols”. But this argument has its second and deeper significance. For it is obvious that if the insistence of a right forfeits a privilege that is higher, and thereby prevents development into that which was possible, a grievous trespass has been committed not only against those who might have been stimulated or helped by the development attained, but also against the Saviour who has the supreme right in His servant to the service of the highest development attainable. All Christians,—both those of Corinth and those of today,—are accepted in Christ, and are therefore saved; but all do not wear the same crown nor have the same reward. Paul pleads that the Christian, by insisting upon his right, may cut short his privilege of higher attainment, thereby limiting his future service, and so dim the splendor of his crown. Precisely as if he, Paul, having insisted upon his support from the churches, had thereby been less able to gain the confidence of the Corinthians, and consequently, winning fewer souls for Christ, would, on sound business principles, have had less share with Christ in glory. As a matter of expediency, not only would he yield the present right for the sake of the future privilege and its reward, but he understood that it was to the interest of the Saviour that he should win more souls, and the glory of the Master would be enhanced by the develop-

ment and attainment of His servant;—for the Christian's highest and best is the right of the Christ. So the question resolves itself not into the maintenance or deprivation of a right, but into the suppression or development of powers granted by the Spirit for the Master's sake, and, more deeply, into the choice between claiming from others the recognition of a right for one's self and claiming from one's self the recognition of a right for the Lord Jesus. Paul was jealous for the Christ and earnestly desired to awaken in his brethren this holy zeal.

e. X: 15-21. Christ's right *from* His servant.

It was a recognized fact among the ancients,—among all people who erected an altar and offered sacrifices thereon,—that those who partook of the sacrifice, by that act, acknowledged themselves sharers in its benefits. This was thoroughly understood in the old Jewish economy. Likewise, those who partook of the emblems of the body and the blood of Jesus stood before the world as confessed beneficiaries of that greatest sacrifice;—and such was the Divine intention. In all the sacrificial feasts of the heathen this was the idea designed to be conveyed, and the idea invariably received by those who from the outside witnessed the partaking. The fact that some single partaker attached no value to the sacrifice, and in no wise meant his partaking to be a confession of its benefits (while this fact concerning himself might be literally true) did not at all prevent his position from being misunderstood by those outside and by others partaking. All saw that he partook, and he knew how the act would be invariably construed. If he declined to be considered a beneficiary by those who might not be able to know or understand his individual motives, (X: 28), then by the foundation premise that he was free in Christ, he could be under no constraint to partake. He had full power to refuse; but partaking, he must abide the consequences of being misunderstood. Furthermore, Christians recognize—so Paul argues—but two great, controlling powers,—God and the devil. Ignoring the idol, (which is the basis of the claim of the Christian's right,—VIII: 4-6, —) one must perceive the fact that sacrifice which is not directed by God and offered to

God is instigated by the evil one, and, albeit indirectly, betokens subjection to Satan. These are plain statements, but it is necessary to confront plain statements when searching for the truth. God and Satan are thoroughly antagonistic, and therefore it is a supreme contradiction for one to stand before the world as a partaker of a sacrifice offered to God and also of another sacrifice which, by his own premise, he must acknowledge is "sacrificed to devils". The argument is that what is not directly subservient to God and intended for His glory, is directly against Him, and eventually will be so proven. The question is resolved not into the right of the Christian to use for profit or pleasure that which God has not forbidden, nor into the purity of his motive, but into the higher right of the Lord Jesus to the unquestionable allegiance of His blood-bought servant who is clothed in the livery of His own righteousness. Paul would remind not only the Corinthian meat-eater, but also the Christian of today of the constant liability of this higher right to be assailed by his action. In such a case, would not the insistence of the lower right become a serious trespass?

f. X: 20-22. The Spirit jealous for Christ.

But Paul has already entered upon the weightiest part of his argument. It is not so much a question whether the Christian, denying the right of his fellow-man to sit in judgment upon his act or to question his allegiance, shall be uninterrupted in his right to use and enjoy that which God has not forbidden, as it is whether the Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to guard the interests of the Son, will insist upon the right of the crucified and glorified Saviour to receive honor through, by, with, in, and from the daily lives of those whom He saved at so great cost to Himself, regardless of any and all cost to them. Will the Holy Spirit view with complacency the dishonor thrust upon the Christ as the act of His redeemed—albeit, that act arose from lack of reflection alone—is interpreted by the world as acknowledging a benefit received from an altar whose erection was instigated by the Arch-adversary? It is obvious that the Spirit will vindicate the honor of the Son,—but the question arises, How? The benefits of the great Messianic sacrifice having once been bestowed, the promise is that they shall

never be withdrawn nor the beneficiary be repudiated. No one teaches this more emphatically than Paul (Romans, VIII: 31-39), but he argues here that it is an unwise thing for that beneficiary to provoke the Lord to jealousy;—that is, for the servant to insist upon a right until the Holy Spirit shall be constrained to insist upon the higher right of the Master. In such a case, the honor of the Christ and the sanctity of His sacrifice will be vindicated by putting upon the servant the measure of reproach else thrust upon the Master until the servant is thereby led to a realization of the principle involved, and, having been made to perceive his position, is at last brought to open confession of it and to unquestionable and unquestioned allegiance.

Although here Paul simply reminds the Corinthians of a condition possible as the result of their insistence upon their rights, yet elsewhere Inspiration has not been silent with regard to the ills resulting from the provoking of God to jealousy. When Israel of the Type provoked Jehovah to jealousy by affiliation with idolaters, though this affiliation began in the natural and seemingly proper interchange of national courtesies, (I. Kings, III: 1-3, IX: 16; II. Kings XX: 12-13), the divine protection was withdrawn and the nation was permitted to drink this chosen cup of affliction and its unseen consequences even to the dregs of the Babylonish captivity. Having been taught the cause by the experimental knowledge of the effect, Israel learned that her right to liberty as God's chosen was subservient to God's right to allegiance from the people that He had redeemed, and after the Second Temple had asserted the supremacy of Jehovah in the hearts of His own, as He had done to Egypt, God measured out to Babylon the punishment of her arrogance and pride. Paul trembled lest the Corinthian Israel of the Antitype should thus provoke an unchangeable God to jealousy and find their boasted spiritual liberty ending in a spiritual captivity and afterward in a Second Temple whose corner-stone would be laid not only with joy and thanksgiving but with lamentations and bitter tears. Is the Father less jealous today?—or the Holy Spirit less watchful of the honor of the Son? If we could only stop and think that for every

right that the Christian has in Christ—and certainly, he has none apart from Christ—the Christ has a corresponding, and necessarily, a higher right in the Christian! When these rights are at issue, it is not hard to understand for which the Holy Spirit will demand and obtain the precedence.

V. Right here, it may be well to draw a comparison not only between the positions but between the characters of the Christian meat-eaters of Corinth, and the Christian liberty-lovers of today, and between those of both eras who would maintain rigid measures with relation to all questionable things: for human nature is unchanged, and these same classes would doubtless have occupied each other's place, if they had lived in each other's age. Evidently, the meat-eaters of Corinth were bold, fearless men; men who were the Cavaliers of Christianity; men who desired and demanded that *their* actions should be considered above reproach; men with strong social instincts; men of independent natures who were disposed to do their own thinking and to act accordingly:—yet, they were quick rather than deep thinkers, and, like Cavaliers of all ages, were men more given to action than to thought. They had accepted Christ honestly and sincerely; they ignored the idol; they knew that the meat was good and that it supplied a normal desire of their lives; they believed that God gave it, and that God desired the welfare and the happiness of His children. If they saw fit to use it for their sustenance or pleasure, they could not see that it concerned others, (who might likewise do their own thinking,) especially, since they did not at all insist—as did the other party—that their action should be imitated. Is not this a pen-portrait of many a Christian today, who is conscious of sincerity in accepting the Saviour, and who feels that his actions are the subject of harsh and unjust criticism? But these Corinthians were wrong in one premise:—their actions did concern others. Paul showed them that they concerned the idolaters at Corinth; that they concerned their Christian brethren who might be helped or hindered by them; that they concerned the cause of Christ and all who were working for that cause; that they concerned the better part of themselves far more than they themselves thought; and

more, that they concerned the Master who died to save them;—and yet the Holy Spirit had taught His apostle to recognize their asserted right.

Members of the other party were men who did their thinking in prescribed lines, and then in turn, wished to prescribe those same lines for others; men who had the courage of their convictions, if made sure that they were in proven paths, but lacking the dash and boldness requisite for broader investigations; men in whom the social instinct was less marked and whose religion inclined to an ascetic form; men who were the Puritans of Christianity, not one whit less stern with themselves than they were disposed to be with others, and yet evidently moved by a desire to bring all to their own standard of piety, peaceably, if they could, but by appeal to a higher power, and forcibly, if they must. The shallowness and consequent apparent carelessness of the Second Party were shocking to the First; while the narrowness and consequent apparent bigotry of the First Party were intolerable to the Second, and at Corinth, as in every age of history, religious or political, wherever the Puritan and the Cavalier have come together, the clash was inevitable;—for each must learn that the effective Christian is neither Puritan nor Cavalier, and yet he is both in Jesus Christ.

#### VI. X: 23-33.

Finally, Paul gives the terse summing up. He reiterates the right of the Christian to whom “there is but one God, the Father,—and one Lord Jesus Christ” to use all things that God has made, no man forbidding, but he urges that each individual Christian should hold this right subservient to Christ’s interest in himself or in others,—that is, to the Saviour’s right to honor and glory through, by, with, in, and from the soul that He has saved. If eating the meat will help him to serve the Master, then no man may interpose, “for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof”; but if there is the slightest reason to believe that the exercise of his right would, in any wise, conflict with the Master’s right where he is concerned, then surely, that which was lawful would become “not expedient”; and that which is “not expedient” in the Master’s name, being against



Him, necessarily becomes a trespass. Therefore, the great law of Christian Ethics is laid down in verse 31:—"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This is the climax of altruism, and is the perpendicular drawn from the Divine Center to the chord of man's need. In its deep, root principle, which is capable of extensive and varied and constant application, we find the true boundary effectually separating the believer from the world yet leaving his liberty unrestrained,—since all things are placed under his control and subjected to his service to the end that he may glorify his Saviour,—narrowing his actions to the interests of One Person, and thereby broadening them to the interests of all humanity.

That the maxim quoted is one belonging exclusively to Christian Ethics is clear, because the secret of its meaning is reached only through an acceptance of the vicarious atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus and the consequent acknowledgment of Him as Saviour, and therefore Master. It appeals to no one visible church organization with more emphasis than to another, but seeks its way to the heart of every individual member of the great Spiritual Church, the Bride of the First-born. Its principle has never been attained by height or depth of human philosophy, and to the world its wisdom is folly. For the unregenerate man, there is no argument connected with the Lord Jesus that can have any weight whatever, even though he may be a member of some ecclesiastical body. Until he has answered the one great question relating to the acceptance or rejection of the Christ as his Saviour, there is no other question concerning the Divine Son offered by Inspiration for his consideration. God never appeals to the sinner's love as a constraining power. He simply offers His own as witnessed by the Cross, and reserves him for later judgment, if that is refused. Finally, this maxim, with its far-reaching possibilities, is made the peculiar property of Christian Ethics because it is so ordained that the blood-redeemed, for whom all things work together for good, shall constitute the controlling factor of the world, and to them belongs the right, dearer than all others, of ultimately deciding all perplexing

questions with which humanity ecclesiastical or non-ecclesiastical is confronted:—the decision of the many units attaining unity in Jesus Christ. Shall that right, for the sake of any personal gratification, be neglected or surrendered?

It is a foregone conclusion that when each Christian, on his knees, in the fear of the Lord, faces this great question of "Meat offered to Idols" and decides it in the light of eternity, that then, and only then, will the constantly recurring difficulties with which he is confronted be finally solved;—solved at the tribunal of his soul with a decision that no power, civil or ecclesiastical, may render or reverse; solved without bickering, animosity or complaint; solved in the supreme assertion of the soul's liberty in Christ, which is always quick to recognize the prerogative and the limit of soul-liberty in another; solved in that true humility that reverences the Father as the Giver of all good, and that which He has given or ordained as good. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the solution of this question, being contained not in a "Thou shalt" or a "Thou shalt not" of unyielding Law, but in this maxim of Christian Ethics that is to be applied to each presented condition, may be found by no individual Christian for another; by Christians of one generation for those of another generation; by Christians of one land or clime for those of other countries. The fact that in the days of Paul it conflicted with Christ's rights where he was concerned for the Corinthian Christian to eat meat by no means proves that it would have been wrong for the Jerusalem Christian (idolatry not being a practice among the Jews) of the same period, or for the Christian of the United States today. On the other hand, the fact that indulgence in anything which in itself is so simple and so wholesome as meat might be trespass upon the rights of the Master and fraught with proportionate ill to the servant and loss of good to humanity proves that nothing can be exempt from the condition of this question. At the same time, it is true that this condition—"offered to idols", i. e., perverted to evil—is, with regard to some articles, pursuits, and pleasures, more emphatic, more widely recognized, and more frequent in various times or places, than may be predicated concerning others. It is as if in certain cases was

erected the signal of special danger. It behooves the Christian to be on the alert, beginning every day afresh, constantly trusting the promise "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy steps."

Finally, to the careful thinker, it must be evident that the Christian's responsibility for the existence and spread of evil about him reaches to the last atom of his willingness that God should be glorified wherever he is concerned and at all costs to himself;—and no farther. But that is a limit that more and more as it is comprehended will serve to keep his eye fixed steadily upon the Master as the great Captain not only of his but also of the world's salvation. For whatever the Christian is, whatever he does, he is first and above all things, by the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, a soldier of Jesus Christ; and the war is against evil, the contest is for immortal souls, and the victory is to the Master's glory. Whatever, then, will make him more efficient in soul-winning, that let him do. Whatever will lessen,—no, no, that will not increase his efficiency in soul-winning—that let him, exercising his God-given liberty, prayerfully and carefully avoid. Day by day, in humility and fear, yet in the grateful consciousness of his kingly powers, let him draw for himself this boundary:—"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."