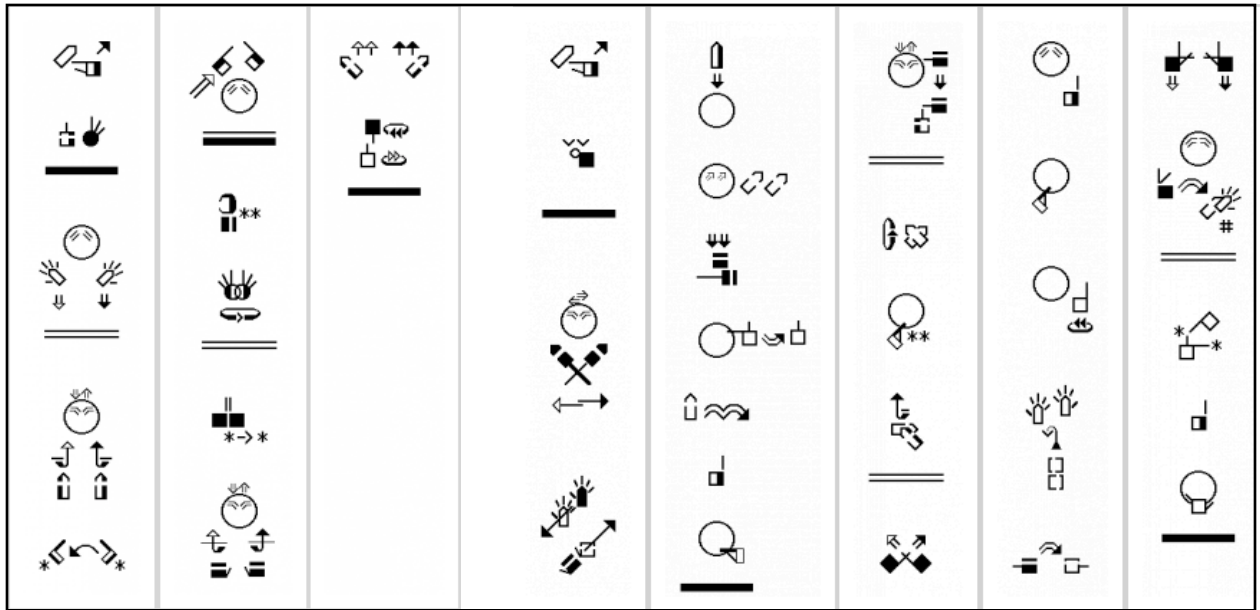


PEACE THROUGH CONFORMITY OR THROUGH LOVE?

Romans 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.



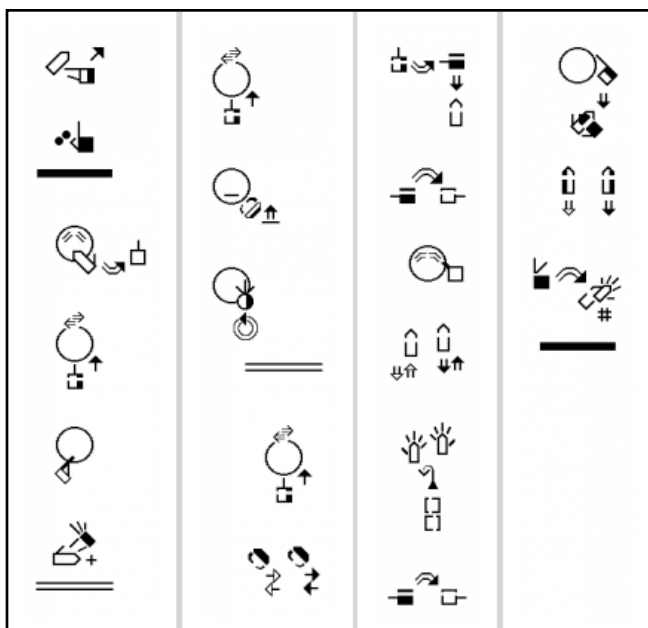
21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Do you enjoy peace or having your way? Do you enjoy encouraging and building others? Do you like to have the preeminence? (**3 John 9**).

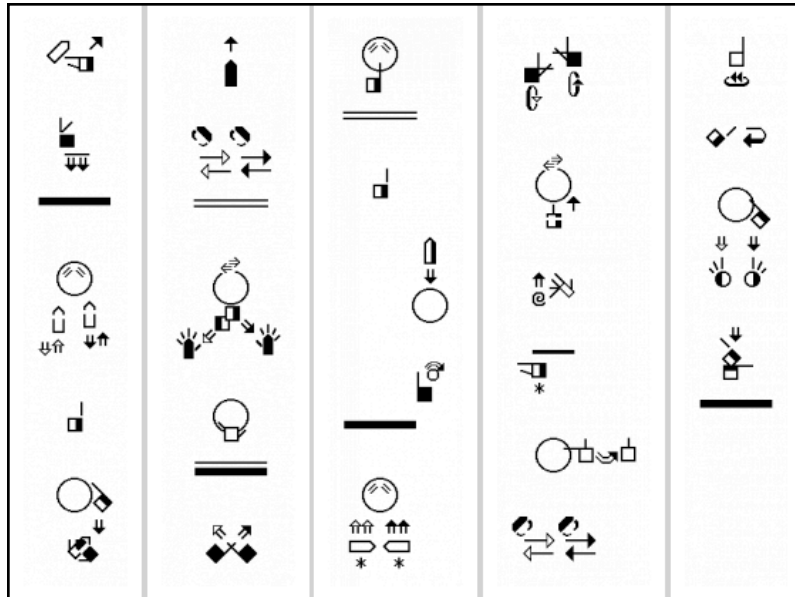
Sometimes we offend others unwittingly in the exercise of our rights. When a mature person realizes this he stops for love's sake.

However, an immature person is inconsiderate and does not care if others are offended by their words or behavior.

How do you want yourself perceived? The mature person would never purposely offend someone; he would never do something intentionally that would cause someone to violate their conscience and thus fall into sin.



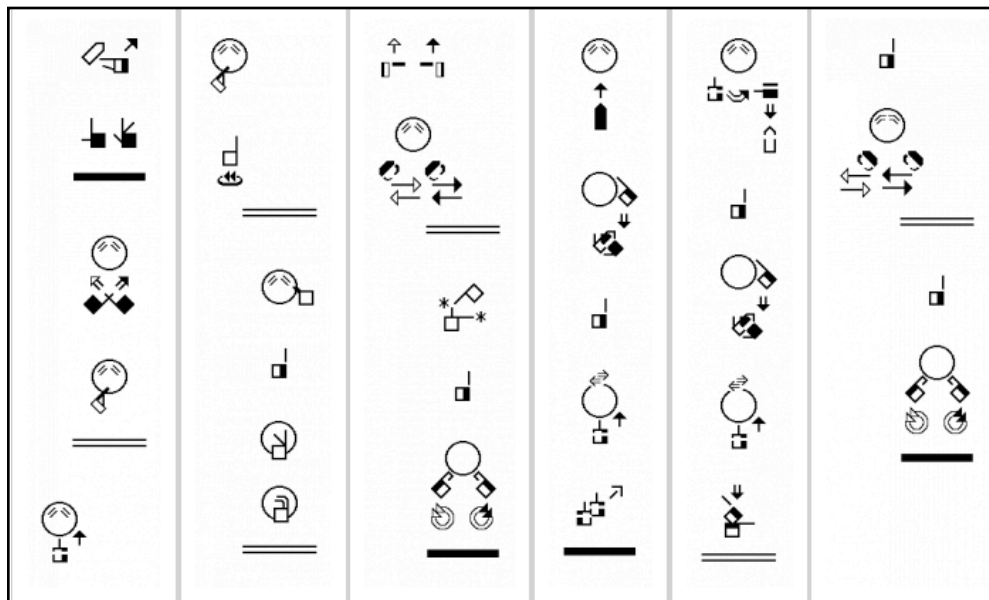
22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.



Our conscience and God's law are to be our primary guides in moral decisions.

In this verse Paul introduces one of the most subjective and controversial principles in the Bible. **“Have it to thyself...”** This idea almost seems hypocritical, hard to understand, and difficult to teach. Yet, it is critical for Church unity. Everyone does not need to know everything we do and think because we also have a private relationship with God.

23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.



However, certainty is required. We must be sure about what the Bible, God's Word allows and forbids. If a person has any doubts it would be better to abstain than to risk being condemned by our own conscience.

Faith in what we believe is God's will keeps our consciences clean. A clean conscience is supposed to be the normal state of a mature Christian. When our conscience tells us we have sinned we are no longer in right relationship with God. We must ask for forgiveness and repent, unless we learn that our conscience was wrong. There is no other way to clear our conscience. **(1 Timothy 1:19)**