

The Golden Rule

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets."—Matt. 7:12.

"How wise are God's commands,
How just his precepts are!"

OUR conception of God measures our highest ideals and principles. Whoever, therefore, has a mean or slipshod conception of the Almighty is bound to be more or less mean and slipshod in his conduct of life, for every man or woman to some extent worships his own highest ideal. And this is authorized by our Redeemer's words, "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven." Our forefathers during the dark ages burned one another at the stake, and otherwise tortured one another, because of their misconception of the Divine character; because their ideals were too low. They truly believed what they formulated in their creeds and handed down to us; namely, that God in the present time is gathering from amongst men a handful of saints for the heavenly condition and that he will turn over the remainder—all who walk not after the spirit, but after the flesh—to eternal torment at the hands of demons.

Having before their minds this misconception of the Bible teachings, they merely copy that misconception. That civilized men have gotten beyond those standards of the dark ages is a matter for congratulation. We regret, nevertheless, that their freedom from an error has not brought them all the blessing that it should. They have attained the higher ideal mostly by ignoring the Bible, by denying its infallibility, by accepting their own judgment and reasoning in supposed contradiction of the Bible teachings. How sad is the fact that a majority of the noble minds of Christendom today deny that the Bible is a divinely inspired revelation of God and consider it merely the work of well-intentioned but ignorant men, in comparison with whom the theologians of today are past-masters every way, quite competent to write, out of their own wits, matter much superior to that of the Bible, the Divine inspiration of which they deny.

The Foundation of God's Throne

The Bible declaration that justice is the foundation of the divine Kingdom or Throne gives the mind pictorially an appreciation of the value of justice in its relationship to every element of the divine character. "Be just before you are generous," is a proverb amongst men, which evidently is in full accord with what the Scriptures declare of God's character. He is first just—never anything less than just. His wisdom, his power, his love must all co-ordinate with and rest upon this quality of Justice. And so it is with all those who would copy this character. They must first be just. A character built upon a foundation to any extent ignoring this is faulty, improper, sinful. The first man, made in God's image and moral likeness, must have had justice as the foundation of his character. And all of his descendants still possess this quality, though in varying degrees. We call it also conscientiousness, righteousness. Some indeed have this quality in so weak a degree that it is easily overbalanced by their other stronger qualities of mind, such as acquisitiveness, approbation, etc. It is for this reason that prisons are necessary to restrain all the stronger organs of men's minds and to encourage their conscientiousness, their sense of justice, righteousness. These standards of righteousness have, from the first, been considered and esteemed the Divine standards, and are still so esteemed, except by atheists.

During the dark ages reasoning minds tried the various expedients whereby to harmonize the justice of God with the "doctrines of demons," which misrepresented the Divine Program for mankind. (I Tim. 4:1) But in our day the dawning light from every quarter reveals to the awakened conscience the fact that the old creeds require of humanity far higher standards than they accredit to our Maker. We are to be just, generous, kind, loving. The pattern held up to us in the misleading creeds portrays our Almighty Creator as claiming all of those qualities, but by his course of dealing with humanity violating them, every one.

Who, with an enlightened mind, can any longer claim that it would be just or kind or loving for God to bring into being a race of intelligent creatures, for the great mass of whom he had no better provision than an eternity of torture, and knew all this before he created them? Who can deny that it would have been more just, more kind,

more wise and more loving to leave the entire race uncreated than to make provision for the eternal torture of 999 out of every 1,000 of them, or a worse proportion, for surely the saints do not number one in a thousand of the world's population?

"Thy Righteous Acts Shall Be Made Manifest"

The Bible freely tells us that many features of the Divine plan are now hidden in mystery, but the last book of the Bible, which prophetically pictures the future, assures us that in God's due time "The mystery shall be finished, which he hath declared to his servants, the prophets." (Rev. 10:7.) The same book assures us that in God's due time, when the mystery is cleared, "All nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy righteous acts have been made manifest."—(Rev. 15:4.) We are now living in the time when the "mystery" is ending and the righteous dealings of God, from the Scriptural standpoint, may be clearly seen.

But these revelations are not meant for the world in general now, but merely for "the elect," the "sanctified in Christ Jesus." "To you it is given to know the mysteries;" to outsiders these things are spoken in parables and dark sayings. (Matt. 13:11, 13.) But not until the elect shall be glorified and the Millennial Kingdom established will the "mystery" be made fully known to the world and every knee bow and every tongue confess. Hence, only those of a contrite heart may now see, now understand, the real character of God, his real purposes toward man, etc. Thus our Lord declares, "This is life eternal that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—Jno. 17:3.

To the class addressed by our Lord, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see," and for these alone, is the message that the hell of the Bible is the tomb, the state of death. They were all condemned to death through Adam's sin and not one, according to the Scriptures, was condemned to eternal torment. It is for these to see and appreciate the love of God, which has made provision for the salvation of all men from the present state of degradation and sin and death. These alone may see that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and not merely the sins of the church. These may see that the blessings of salvation are for two classes of mankind—now for the saintly class, "the called according to God's purpose," and who are promised a share in the First Resurrection; and then during the Millennial Age, salvation for all of the race—an opportunity for restitution to man's original estate in the image and likeness of God.

The Golden Rule for the Church

They make a great mistake who suppose that the Golden Rule, or indeed any of the messages of the Scriptures, were intended for the world of mankind. No; they are for the Church only, and this is shown not only by the fact that our Lord's words were addressed to his disciples, but also by the fact that the Apostolic Epistles similarly are addressed to the saints and the household of faith. Others cannot see, understand, appreciate, in the proper degree. The worldly mind can and does appreciate the maxim, "Honesty is the best policy"—in the long run, but it cannot appreciate the sentiment of our text, in the sense of being willing to adopt this as a principle and as a rule of life.

In harmony with this thought, we seek to impress the import of our text only upon those blessed of the Father who have been drawn, called, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and whose eyes to

some extent have seen justice to be the foundation of the Divine character. The Golden Rule does not express all of the Christian's duty; he is expected to make progress in conduct and character development much beyond this. But this further progress marks his development in love. The Golden Rule marks the very lowest standard which must measure our dealings with others in the Church and in the world—justice. In a word our text, although far above the ordinary course of humanity, should be in use every day and every hour by every follower of Christ. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." That our Lord was not giving this as a Gospel standard and love standard, we note the fact that he added the words, "This is the Law and the Prophets"—this is the teaching or demand of the law and the prophets upon all who would seek to do righteousness—Justice.

The measure of our development as New Creatures in Christ is whatever we attain in love above the standard of the Golden Rule. Justice demands us to render to others as we would have them render to us. Love says, I demand nothing, but show you the length and height and depth of Love Divine and wait expectantly to note your appreciation of this and how you will seek to be copies of God's dear Son, who laid down his life on our behalf. Addressing those who had made a consecration to discipleship, to walk in the Lord's footsteps, St. Paul says, "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren"—after the example of Jesus.

"Love Worketh No Ill"

All of the Lord's people are to love him and the brethren; yea, even their enemies. However, let us now stop short of love and merely consider what the simple justice of the Golden Rule would imply in our conduct. How do our daily lives square with this Golden Rule of absolute justice, omitting love entirely?

If you are an employer, do you treat your employee in harmony with this rule and do unto him as you would have him do unto you, if your positions were reversed? If you are an employee, inquire of yourself, "Do I treat my employer and his business as I would have him treat me and my business, if our relationship were reversed?" Do you treat your butcher, your baker, your grocer, etc., as you would like to have them treat you, if your positions were reversed? Are you polite to them and not inclined to give them unnecessary trouble? Do you pay them promptly? Or, if you are the tradesman, do you treat your customers as you would wish to have them treat you, if conditions were reversed? Do you charge them a reasonable price only? Do you give them proper weight and measure? Do you properly represent your goods to them, as you would have them represented to you? Are you a good neighbor? Do you see to it that your children are not a nuisance to others; that your chickens are not permitted to damage your neighbor's garden; that your dog is not a ferocious one, and that his bark does not keep the neighborhood awake? In a word, do you treat your neighbor justly, along the lines of the Golden Rule, doing unto him only as you would wish him to do to you?

Let us now step into your home and measure things there by the Golden Rule. As husbands, how do you treat your wives? As wives, how do you treat your husbands? Can you apply the Golden Rule to your words, to your conduct, to your demands of each other? Or do you act meanly, selfishly, taking advantage of each other, to the limit that the other will forbear? Do you deal with your children according to the lines of the Golden Rule? Are you an ideal parent, according to your own advanced standard of what a parent's duty should be to his children? Do you remember that you have a responsibility for their training; a responsibility so far as your circumstances will permit, for their environment and happiness and education and general preparation for usefulness in life? Or are you indifferent to their interests, neglectful of your responsibilities? Do you recognize that your children have certain rights and that these increase as they near maturity, or are you forgetful of these, disposed to keep the children under the restraints of childhood, souring their dispositions and making them unhappy, until they resent the injustice and a family quarrel results? As children, are you thoughtful of your parents, their welfare, their wishes, their happiness, as you would like your children to be thoughtful of yours? Do you remember the hours and weeks of feebleness and sickness and toil which you cost them in your infancy, and are you seeking to repay those kindnesses and seeking to make their last days the

happiest of their lives? Are you observing the Golden Rule toward your parents? How is it in your relationship to your brothers and sisters? When they borrow your things without leave, do you retaliate by borrowing theirs without leave, and thus keep up a continual fret and vexation of spirit in the family? Or do you practice the Golden Rule of justice and do nothing to your brother and sister, or their belongings, that you would not wish them to do to you or your things?

The Golden Rule in Church

Surely in the Church you should remember the Golden Rule laid down by the Head of the Church. Nevertheless, I am sure that if you are unjust in your own family, and to your business associates, you will be unjust also in your dealing with the "Church, which is the Body of Christ." He that is unjust in little things would be unjust in greater ones. He who is faithful in little things will be faithful in the greater ones. He who practices the Golden Rule during the six days of his contact with business will surely be faithful on the seventh, but faithfulness to the Golden Rule on the one day only will never win Divine approval.

If I have taken upon me a denominational name, which stands for a denominational creed, do I really believe that creed and endorse it and uphold it? Or am I in a measure out of accord with it? Does it misrepresent me, or do I misrepresent it? Am I doing to my associates, and to the Lord, the Head of the Church, as I would have them do to me? If not, I should square my conduct by the Golden Rule. I should be honest with my Lord, with my brethren and with myself, and make no false professions. Do I treat all the brethren as such, as the Apostle says, "Without partiality and without hypocrisy?" Or do I pick out some of special class or calibre or style, and measurably ignore some of the poorer or less literate, who, perhaps, need my assistance more? Am I doing to all these a brother's part, as I would that they should do to me, if our positions were transposed? As the pastor, am I thoughtful of the interests of the brethren? Do I watch out for their liberties? Do I seek to impart to them freely whatever knowledge I possess, or am I trying to hoodwink them and to keep them in ignorance, and to hold them down? In a word, am I doing for the Lord's sheep, as an under-shepherd, what I would wish to be done to me by an under-shepherd, if I were one of the Lord's sheep under his care? Or, as one of the Lord's sheep, under a pastoral head, am I seeking by word and act to encourage and assist the pastor, as I would like to have the Lord's people do for me, if I were in pastoral service?

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