

For the Torch of Reason.

Is the Golden Rule a Safe Guide?

A great many thousand years ago, when mankind had begun to have a vague conception that we owe a duty to others in the struggle for life and existence, and when we had departed a very little from the plane of lower animals—the time when might was right, when the weak gave way and perished to sustain and nourish the strong, under the great law of the Survival of the Fittest—some mind conceived and proposed the idea that we should do unto others as we would have them do to us. Ages passed and when thought could be written, and language, that attribute which allows man to think abstractly and from concepts form precepts, and which explains the difference between man and other animals, the great missing link, as it were, was perfected more fully, the principle found its way into the literature of all the nations about in the order of their evolutionary progress. China credits it to Confucius; India to the great Buddha, Gautama, and the Hebrews to Christ.

While good people of all ages have been insisting that we should do unto others as we would have them do to us, the majority of men have been doing unto others as they had ability and power to do, if indeed they have not in the main, followed the more popular rule, Do unto others as they do to you, that is, stand up for your rights. If a man injures you, pay him back. Fathers have punished their children for not fighting back their playmates. Nations have drenched the earth with blood of many wars, in spite of this good rule. Churches instigated massacres, priests played tyrants, and kings have been demons, yet all the time the golden rule has been taught. In the name of the Humble Master men have waged the most cruel and savage warfare, and committed the most barbarous crimes. In the history of men no moral principle has caused so much sorrow, built as many dungeons, lifted as many scaffolds, set up as many stakes for burning the weak and innocent.

Let us take this wonderful rule of ethics and examine it carefully. It looks as innocent and beautiful as a rose sparkling with dew, in the morning sun, but lurking in it is the poison sap that has brought half the world's misery and continues it today.

The one thing that makes the golden rule so disastrous a guide for moral conduct can be seen when I propose a new and better rule and which I ask every reader to substitute in place of the time honored old one. The new rule is this: "Do unto others as they should do to you."

This rule lifts the standard of moral judgment above the preju-

dice of men and sets it so far above personal opinion that one has no alternative but to consult the greatest and highest authority as to what is duty, then apply it to the case in question. Men are not often governed by opinions or knowledge, they are usually governed by selfish interests or personal prejudice. Herein lies the secret of our alarmingly slow progress in moral evolution. Men have reasoned to their own ends. The master says, "If I did not know any more than that slave, I would as soon be a slave, therefore I will keep him in slavery, and thus I do unto others as I would be done by."

The rich man says to the beggar, "When I was poor, I did ask help from no one. I worked hard. I fought my own battles. Why should I help you? I would not ask you to help me if our places were reversed."

So indefinitely we could illustrate the damnable influence of the so-called golden rule. The horrors of that phrase, "as you would have them do to you," cannot be painted. While selfish aims have built churches, and superstition has prompted charity, competition in social institutions, has founded schools and colleges, the same spirit that the lion manifests when he springs upon the helpless deer, is ever present, and we can easily hear in our minds, the lion's philosophy: "Deer were created for lions. Their soft flesh was provided by an all-wise Creator. If I was a deer I would expect to fulfill my purpose, and I would rejoice in being honored by making of my flesh a dinner for any respectable lion." If the lion could quote scriptures just at this point he would doubtless add: "The poor ye have with ye always."

It is not my purpose to discuss any question of sociology. I wish to announce my belief that the "Golden Rule" is unsafe as a guide for conduct. I propose that we insist on a higher standard of duty than personal opinion. There may be some little excuse for one specie preying upon another when it becomes a question of food or life, but among men, there is a duty that the whole race owes to the individual and no organized system has any right to destroy the right that came with life itself—the right of sustenance. There is a common level on which all men, of every rank meet: It is that as animals they must have air to breathe, food and water to nourish the flesh, and a certain amount of clothing and shelter. The normal temperature of the blood of a king is exactly the same as that of a serf.

Destroy the golden rule and put the one proposed in its place, and the social problems are all solved. Men will be good because they have no motive to be bad. The unbiased general intelligence of the race aided

by centuries of experience will come very near to what men should do to fellow men. If experience shows the error of any application of the law, then public opinion will soon adjust the flaw.

Such ethics would nourish individual merit. If one has a talent, society will make such an opportunity to develop and use that talent for the good, not only for the possessor but the whole people. Even the weakest of the race or the most ignorant, have the one supreme right of life and sustenance. No one has the right to declare, "If I was as ignorant as that man I would just as soon be poor. He is not worthy of a better condition." This is the applied golden rule. The new rule would say: True, the man is base and ignorant. He can do something however. He can serve some good. We will provide for him a place to merit his sustenance and we will see to it that he does not starve, unless he refuse to take advantage of the opportunity for life and food which from nature every man receives, as a heritage.

Throw away the would and let us have should. Let men do unto others as others should do unto us and the damnable selfishness of men will largely disappear. The old rule stimulates selfishness. The new one destroys it. The old rule breeds hypocrisy and dishonesty to one's own self. The new one throttles the hypocrite.

What possibilities lie in the word should, the mandate of duty. "Do unto others as they should do unto you."

C. ELTON BLANCHARD.

The Licensed Preacher.

BY "OLD MORTALITY."

My Little Ones—

This is a most beautiful day; all nature appears in its happiest and fairest mood. The little birds have chosen their mates and their sweet notes of satisfaction and gladness fill the fragrant air with sweet harmony.

But my heart is sad and heavy. Mrs. Roxy Jane Mortality has gone into the country to see her aunt, and my good and faithful Rupert has died (a better dog than he never wagged a tail or bayed the moon).

The papers inform me that infidelity and skepticism are on the increase in neighborhoods of all schoolhouses and colleges of learning. So sad is this news to me that in lieu of my customary sermon I shall only read a letter from a dear brother who has lost faith in prayer.

THE LETTER.

Rev. Old Mortality—

Dear Sir—I am sure your time and interest is greatly taken up by your own congregation, and perhaps you can ill afford to look after the interests of any one not of your peculiar sect. Yet I earnestly

hope you will in the kindness of your heart take time to read this short letter.

I am a poor man, have a wife and six little children—all of whom I dearly love. During the past few years it has been a hard battle for me to provide food, clothing, and books, and send the children to school. Now my family is in sad want of the necessaries of life, and I am unable to procure them. My wife and children are in great distress. There are several persons who owe me for labor and they will not pay me, though some of these have often been able to do so. Now according to years of experience with people who pray for this thing, and that thing, I have never known the Lord to ever have answered their supplications or paid the least attention to worldly matters. Notwithstanding this fact, my poor consumptive wife and I prayed every night during the past month, beseeching the Lord that he would kindly let some of our debtors pay us what they justly owe us so that our children might not die of starvation. But our prayers were never answered, and had it not been for a kind infidel neighbor who learned of my sad condition, I feel sure that I would not now be writing to you. My wife and I now do not believe that the Lord ever has or ever will answer prayer.

Now, sir, to the main object of this letter. In looking over my books, I find that my debtors owe me a large sum. If you can influence the Lord, who may in turn influence these debtors of mine to settle their accounts with me, I will give half of the amount to you. I will say that the majority of these debtors of mine are so-called Christians; they firmly believe in God, heaven, hell and the devil, and yet they will not pay their honest debts even when they are able to do so. And, sir, I respectfully ask you, if you and your brother preachers are not responsible for the present unhappy condition of my family? You teach your poor, ignorant and superstitious followers that God forgives all sin just for the asking; in consequence they believe what you say to them, and act accordingly: and good, honest, confiding men and women suffer by your false and cruel teachings.

Why, sir, it appears to me that if the Lord continually forgives the sins of evil-doers that he certainly winks at such sins, and is in a manner responsible for their continuance, and should be held responsible for all the sins of mankind.

You are wise enough to see this, and why do you and your brother preachers encourage the committal of crime by inculcating such an insane and unreasonable doctrine as you do?

According to this heathenish doc-