

The Golden Rule

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“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” **Matthew 7:12**

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment...” **Matthew 5:21-22**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.... If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. **Matthew 5:43-48**

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” **Matthew 7:21-23**

Martin Luther (1483-1546) Germany

In 1522 Martin Luther wrote regarding The Epistle of James: *“Therefore St. James’ epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it”*¹

The Book of James talks about putting your faith in action, it talks about favoritism being forbidden in church (not giving well-to-do church member’s special preference over poor ones), it talks about reining in your anger, it talks about taming your tongue. Read it today, it’s a short book.

“...for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” **James 1:20**

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”
James 1:22

“...the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” **James 3:17**

In 1525, during the Peasants’ Wars, Martin Luther called for the princes to massacre all rebels. The princes killed more than 100,000 peasants... Many peasants had mistakenly believed that Luther’s attack on the Church and the hierarchy meant that the reformers would support an attack on the social hierarchy as well, because of the close ties between the secular princes and the princes of the Church that Martin Luther condemned.

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In 1536 Martin Luther signed a paper that agreed that preachers who questioned basic Christian doctrines and continued to do so under penalty of death, ought to be executed by the state.

In 1543, three years before his death Martin Luther listed seven recommendations to deal with the Jews (though in his earlier ministry Martin Luther admitted the shameful way the Church had treated the Jews and urged kind treatment of them, yet later in life he was to write the complete opposite.):

“...to steal and rob - as they do with their moneylending - from a heathen, is a divine service...Now what are we going to do with these rejected, condemned Jewish people?

. . . . We must prayerfully and reverentially practice a merciful severity. . . . Let me give you my honest advice:

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our LORD and of Christendom.

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.

Fifth, I advise that safe conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like. Let them stay at home.

Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them, and put aside for safe keeping.

Seventh, I recommend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hand of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow.

... But if we are afraid that they might harm us or our wives, children, — servants, cattle, etc., if they had to serve and work for us ...then eject them forever from the country. For, as we have heard, God's anger with them is so intense that gentle mercy will only tend to make them worse and worse, while sharp mercy will reform them but little. Therefore, in any case, away with them!²

Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) was the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland, and founder of the Swiss Reformed Churches. Zwingli's Reformation movement was known for

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mercilessly persecuting Anabaptists and other followers of Christ who maintained a nonresistant stance.

Zwingli persecuted Anabaptists mercilessly with imprisonment, torture, banishment and death. The Anabaptist leader, Felix Manz, was drowned. Under Zwingli's influence, penalties of drowning, burning or beheading were decreed by the Council.

Thomas Cromwell (1485 – 1540) England

(an uncle to Oliver Cromwell) helped to construct a tightly-controlled police-state erecting a system built on fear, torture and death. Criticizing the king, his divorce, or failing to agree that Henry was head of the church, now became high treason - to be punished by disembowelment whilst still alive, hanging and quartering.

In the end, even failing to denounce anyone who criticized these things became treason.

Guilty verdicts were ensured by the introduction of the "Double Grand Jury" which made the jury trying a case liable to face trial themselves by a second jury if they came up with the "wrong" verdict. Acts of Attainder, allowing the execution of victims without any trial whatsoever, were also introduced.

All these things were needed to enforce the Reformation in England.

John Knox (1513- 1572) England and Scotland

Founder of the Presbyterian and Established Church of Scotland.

John Knox went to Geneva three times to study with Calvin claiming Calvin's Geneva was "*The most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles.*"

Back in Scotland he was involved in a plot to murder Cardinal Beaton at St Andrews. This murder occurred May 29th 1546. The assassination was approved and applauded by Knox, who describes the deed with a gleeful and mocking levity. He remained with Beaton's murderers in the castle of St. Andrews for several months.

In other writings he reiterated his views that every Christian man (i.e. Protestant) had a right to slaughter every idolater (i.e. Catholic), if he got an opportunity.

On March 9th, 1566 Queen Mary's Italian counselor, Rizzio, was brutally stabbed to death in a conspiracy by Protestant Lords. Knox stated that "*...the act was most just and worthy of all praise.*"

Historian Ian Cowan remarked of John Knox that his *intense efforts* "more than justify his position amidst the great Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century."

John Calvin (1509-1564) Swiss Cantons

In 1547 an outspoken Libertine (atheist) named **James Gruet** was sentenced to death for blasphemy and beheaded on July 26th. Gruet was alleged to have posted a note which implied

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that Calvin should leave the city. Gruet was arrested and a search failed to reveal anything except that Gruet had written on one of Calvin's tracts the words 'all rubbish.' The judges put him to the rack twice a day, morning and evening, for a whole month prior to his beheading.

In 1553 John Calvin was instrumental in having **Michael Servetus** sentenced to burning at the stake, for doctrinal heresies. Admittedly Servetus was on the run from the Catholic Church having been excommunicated and sentenced to death by them and he did have heretical ideas (it appears he's not the only one with heretical ideas).

One of Servetus' not so heretical ideas that Calvin vehemently opposed was Servetus' rejection of infant baptism.

In 1546, on 13 February, a few years before Servetus was burned at the stake, John Calvin wrote to his friend, Farel, "*If he comes here, if my authority is worth anything, I will never permit him to depart alive*".

Servetus visited Geneva on 13 August, 1553. The next day Calvin, who had seen him in church, had Servetus arrested. Calvin drew up forty articles of charges concerning the nature of God, infant baptism, and the attacks on his own teaching.

During Servetus' trial Calvin wrote on August 20th, "*I hope that the verdict will call for the death penalty.*"

For a little over two months, from the time Servetus was arrested until his execution, Servetus was kept "... in an atrocious dungeon with no light or heat, little food, and no sanitary facilities."

On October 26th, the Council ordered that he be burned alive on the following day.

Servetus took half an hour to die. Calvin noted: "*He showed the dumb stupidity of a beast . . . He went on bellowing . . . in the Spanish fashion: "Misericordias!"* [Note: Misericordias is Spanish for mercy and/or compassion.]

In 1554 Calvin justified the execution: "*Many people have accused me of such ferocious cruelty that (they allege) I would like to kill again the man I have destroyed. Not only am I indifferent to their comments, but I rejoice in the fact that they spit in my face.*"³

These examples just don't square with what is taught in the New Testament about the Golden Rule and how to deal with those whom we disagree with.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 1:19-20

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the

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*same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. **James 3:8-11***

*But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. **James 3:14-17***

*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. **James 4:17***

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. **James 1:19-20***

The question then is how should a heretic or any false teacher be dealt with Biblically? We can get some insight in Paul's letter to Titus about the qualifications for eldership in the church:

*“He [the elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach -- and that for the sake of dishonest gain” **Titus 1:9-11***

A false teacher should be “silenced,” not by having him tortured or killed, but by refuting him with sound doctrine and Scripture.

Calvin and other Reformers were not infallible and things they said and their deeds bear scrutiny. Jesus said you will recognize people by their fruit (**Matt 7:20**) and no good tree bears bad fruit (**Luke 6:23**).

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **Galatians 5:22-23***

Calvin's decisions to have people burned at the stake are understandably viewed by Reformed Theology as an attempt “to confirm his image as an intolerant authoritarian” and they rationalize his actions this way:

...Despite the fact that religious toleration did not become a popular conviction until at least two hundred years later, and that what was done in Geneva was done virtually everywhere else in Europe on a much grander scale...

Using that logic is like saying the Apostles should have converted people by the sword and crucifixion because that was the way things were done at the time. The “everybody else is doing it” argument never worked on my parents when I was growing up. The Bible tells us we are to be in the world, not of the world.

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“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him”

1 John 2:3-4

It is a curious thing, the early Christians *were persecuted for their faith* and the leaders of the reformers in the 1500’s *persecuted for their faith*.

We know from Christian and non-Christian writers and historians that the early Christians remained steadfast in their convictions and meekly met their ends. Compare that to the actions of John Calvin and John Knox day who had non-Christians and Christians alike disemboweled and burned at the stake for either not believing or over doctrinal issues.

One can’t excuse it by saying that “everyone” was doing it at the time because it just isn’t true (see *Radical vs. Magisterial Reformation*).

I certainly am not the judge for the likes of Calvin or Knox for torturing and killing people over doctrinal issues. It does make me wonder, however, when they gleefully bragged about their acts. No one is perfect, but we’re suppose to confess our sins. If it exists I’ve yet to read where they regretted their acts.

The Bible tells us we will know people by their fruits. My point in all this is merely that due to their actions the doctrine of the “Reformers” bears scrutiny, as much of it is in error. This is one of many reasons why I cannot cast my lot with the Predestination crowd.

Added note 24 Feb 2008

Calvinists often take offense at my pointing out all the people Calvin, Luther, Knox and others had killed or caused to be killed over doctrinal issues. They make their defense saying, “*Yeah, but just look at the Catholics and the Spanish Inquisition!*”

Even though I had always been taught that “*two wrongs don’t make a right*” I will look at *the Inquisition*. Where did the Catholic Church get its authority, or certainly at least the idea, to punish and even kill people who didn’t tow the line properly? The authority came from the man who basically set up the Roman Catholic Church and the man that Calvin seemed to revere as much as he revered the Scriptures, Augustine.

As Dave Hunt documents you can’t read five pages of Calvin’s *Institutes* without Augustine being quoted. Dave Hunt points out that pretty much all of Calvin’s ideas originated from Augustine, including the use of civil authorities and punishments to enforce church policy.⁴

Also as Dave Hunt points out it is curious that if people are predestined to believe or not that both the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Church under Augustine and Calvin found it necessary to enforce church attendance and mete out punishment (to include torture and death) to those who skipped church service or had a different view on doctrinal issues. That to me is a huge admission that individuals do indeed have free will!

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I can only imagine the tears Jesus has shed for the people tortured and killed in His name by people who should have know better. These people were not ignorant and had access to the Scriptures. God didn't make them do these things. As Solomon wrote, *"God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes"* **Ecclesiastes 7:29**.

I have never read where the reformers like John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Knox and others ever put these scriptures in practice:

"Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt... 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:17-18

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Matthew 5:43-47

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that... But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:27-36

For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:2

Love your neighbor as yourself... Matthew 19:19

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:36-40

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your

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mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these. **Mark 12:29-31**

"Well said, teacher," the man replied... To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. **Mark 12:32-33**

There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. **John 12:48**

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
John 13:34-35

"If you love me, you will obey what I command." **John 14:15**

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him...If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. **John 14:21-24**

The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. **Romans 13:9-10**

Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit? **1 Corinthians 4:18-21**

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7;13**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. **2 John 1:9-11**

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Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 3 John 1:11

have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? James 2:4

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. James 3:1

No, history and their own words and deeds tells us that John Calvin, Martin Luther and John Knox did not follow what Christ, and the Apostles, told us about dealing with our enemies. Rather they bragged and reveled in how they treated anyone who opposed them. They seemed to think it was their job to enforce what they thought was God's justice.

References:

1. Martin Luther, *Preface To The New Testament*, 1522
2. Martin Luther, *On the Jews and their Lies*, Part XI, 1543
3. John Calvin, *Against the Errors of Servetus*, 1554
4. Hunt, Dave. *What Love is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God-*, Chapter 4.

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