

— Difficult to know what is right —

Up until recently people were not in so much confusion as to right and wrong conduct. They referred to authority and that was the last word. There was such authority as the Bible or parts of it, the authority of the church and the authority of the govt. But now every one of these authorities are called into question - often repudiated - sometimes shown to be absurd. There are 1000s of instances that are mooted + discussed - under debate - and very little seems finally settled. But for example murder. True we subscribe in a kind of general way to the command - Thou shalt not kill but we do kill - we have organized killing. In war we go out to kill each other, and we call it heroic, patriotic, and we make heroes of the greatest killers, and dub them great. Though in a general way society has frowned upon private murder - yet it has always assumed that it had the right to kill anybody that seriously menaced its peace + security or anybody who had taken another's life. What is right? Who knows? If it is wrong for the individual to kill another how can it be right for a group of individuals to organize as an army or state or vigilance committee + kill whom it will. But people seem somehow to have a kind of double standard about this as they do of most everything else. Just now we are in a quandary about many questions relating to Govt, economics, and how can we know what is right? We are wide apart in our opinions. Ought we to join the League of Nations? Some say yes + some say no. And the proponents + opponents are presumably = by merit. The question of relief + the debt is being discussed pro + con. Govt. regulation of business, Govt. in business - developing + distributing electricity - Govt. financing of home building - Some say it is all wrong and some say right. Our competitive armaments - enlarged army + navy - Every financial + economic program is a moral issue - and what is right + wrong is hard to determine. Should we take the profits out of war? Should the Govt. make all munitions of war? Should capital be conscripted to carry on a war and pay as we go?

How about tariffs? They are always a deal issue.
The southern states want a tariff on cotton & the northern states
on Mfg. goods - The middle west on grains & the far west on
lumber & mineral products - as copper & lead & zinc & tin and
other things they produce. What is right?

Our ^{proper} marital relations are in the air - Divorce for example
is strongly opposed & as strongly advocated - Should people
who are unhappily married live together as husband & wife
all their days? And if divorced should they marry another?
Our sex questions are not settled. A double standard
for sex behaviour was always abroad.

There is hardly anything settled. though I suppose there are some
things that are nearly universally ^{condemned} wrong - as racketeering - grafting
bribery - & so on - but again what is racketeering - Some say the
church is a racket - particularly is this true in Russia where it
is claimed the church preys upon the ignorance & superstition of the people.
Some say that the doctrine of immortality is a racket - By means of this
superstition the church gets vast sums of money from the gullible
who believe in it - If, of course the doctrine is a superstition with
no foundation in fact - it may be a racket - But if it is true
doctrine then the people need it. And for the comfort & peace & hope
in it, perhaps it should be preached anyway. as a ministrations
to people whose lives otherwise would be too tragic & sad to be endured -
What is a racket - generally any system that gets something for nothing.
or nothing much. Lotteries for example - pay so small a dividend
that they amount to almost a clean robbery - But suckers play them
make in & out leaving a good part of ^{their} wages in them.
Business is full of them, rackets - The custom of selling stock to the
public & using the earnings of a Co. for huge salaries was & is probably
the biggest racket of the world - It has made many millionaires.
Selling blue sky & water - has impoverished the many for the
advantage of the rich - There are political rackets called graft -
but in many areas of activity - what is right or wrong is
very indeterminate - Robin Hood used to justify his highwayman'ship
because he stole from the rich to give to the poor.

But there are certain criteria of right + wrong -
Though even here we are not in perfect agreement -
A test we may apply is "The greatest good to the greatest no
or to all concerned." What makes for well being - good
Yes but again we are in the same difficulty there is such
wide difference of opinion - we cannot in this way determine
always right + wrong conduct.

The Xian has a norm or measuring rod - for conduct
but it is not infallible - We set up Jesus as a standard
and say if we do as he would do - we shall be right - but even here
we must confess that we do not know what he would do - about
all things or on all occasions - Nor do we know for sure
that he would always be right. He might be wrong sometimes.
But a Xian disposition an attitude of kindness + love
would certainly be most helpful.

There is I believe nothing more helpful than what we call
Xian idealism, a Xian conscience in directing men in paths of
righteousness. But we must not ever expect uniformity.
If people do not agree with us - they may be just as sincere
just as good Xians - animated by just as high + holy emotions.

All of which is of course a lesson of tolerance.