

GOD AND CAESAR

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth; neither carest Thou for any man, for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." p. 1, Para. 1, [CAESAR].

In these words Christ has established a clear distinction between Caesar and God -- between that which is Caesar's and that which is God's; that is, between the civil and the religious power, and between what we owe to the civil power and what we owe to the religious power. That which is Caesar's is to be rendered to Caesar; that which is God's is to be rendered to God alone. With that which is God's, Caesar can have nothing to do. To say that we are to render to Caesar that which is God's, or that we are to render to God, by Caesar, that which is God's, is to pervert the words of Christ, and make them meaningless. Such an interpretation would be but to entangle Him in His talk -- the very thing that the Pharisees sought to do. p. 1, Para. 2, [CAESAR].

As the word Caesar refers to civil government, it is apparent at once that the duties which we owe to Caesar are civil duties, while duties we owe to God are wholly moral or religious duties. Webster's definition of religion is, "The recognition of God as an object of worship, love, and obedience." Another definition, equally good, is as follows: "Man's personal relation of faith and obedience to God." p. 1, Para. 3, [CAESAR].

It is evident, therefore, that religion and religious duties pertain solely to God; and that which is God's is to be rendered to Him and not to Caesar, it follows inevitably that according to the words of Christ, civil government can never of right have anything to do with religion -- with a

man's personal relation of faith and obedience to God. p. 1, Para. 4, [CAESAR].

Another definition which may help in making the distinction appear, is that of morality, as follows: "Morality: The relation of conformity or non-conformity to the true moral standard or rule. . . . The conformity of an act to the divine law." p. 1, Para. 5, [CAESAR].

As morality, therefore, is the conformity of an act to the divine law, it is plain that morality also pertains solely to God, and with that, civil Government can have nothing to do. This may appear at first sight to be an extreme position, if not a false one; but it is not. It is the correct position, as we think anyone can see who will give the subject a little careful thought. The first part of the definition already given, says that morality is "the relation of conformity or non-conformity to the true moral standard or rule," and the latter part of the definition shows that this true moral standard is the divine law. Again: Moral law is defined as "The will of God, as the supreme moral ruler, concerning the character and conduct of all responsible beings; the rule of action as obligatory on the conscience or moral nature." "The moral law is summarily contained in the decalogue, written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, and delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai." p. 1, Para. 6, [CAESAR].

These definitions are evidently according to Scripture. The Scriptures show that the ten commandments are the law of God; that they express the will of God; that they pertain to the conscience, and take cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and that obedience to these commandments is the duty that man owes to God. p. 1, Para. 7, [CAESAR].

Says the Scripture, "Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13. And the Saviour says, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [vain fellow, margin], shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Matthew 5:21-22. The apostle John, referring to the same thing, says, "Whosoever hateth

his brother is a murderer." 1 John 3:15. Again, the Saviour says, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:27-28 p. 2, Para. 1, [CAESAR].

Other illustrations might be given, but these are sufficient to show that obedience to the moral law is morality; that it pertains to the thoughts and the intents of the heart, and therefore, in the very nature of the case, lies beyond the reach or control of the civil power. To hate, is murder; to covet, is idolatry; to think impurely of a woman, is adultery -- these are all equally immoral, and violations of the moral law, but no civil government seeks to punish for them. A man may hate his neighbor all his life; he may covet everything on earth; he may think impurely of every woman that he sees -- he may keep it up all his days; but so long as these things are confined to his thought, the civil power cannot touch him. It would be difficult to conceive of a more immoral person than such a man would be; yet the State cannot punish him. It does not attempt to punish him. This demonstrates again that with morality or immorality the State can have nothing to do. p. 2, Para. 2, [CAESAR].

But let us carry this further. Only let that man's hatred lead him, either by word or sign, to attempt an injury to his neighbor, and the State will punish him; only let his covetousness lead him to lay hands on what is not his own, in an attempt to steal, and the State will punish him; only let his impure thought lead him to attempt violence to any woman, and the State will punish him. Yet bear in mind that even then the State does not punish him for his immorality, but for his incivility. The immorality lies in the heart, and can be measured by God only. The State punishes no man because he is immoral. If it did, it would have to punish as a murderer the man who hates another, because according to the true standard of morality, hatred is murder. Therefore it is clear that in fact the State punishes no man because he is immoral, but because he is uncivil. It cannot punish immorality; it must punish incivility. p. 2, Para. 3, [CAESAR].

This distinction is shown in the very term by which is designated State or national government; it is called civil government. No person ever thinks of calling it moral

government. The government of God is the only moral government. God is the only moral governor. The law of God is the only moral law. To God alone pertains the punishment of immorality, which is the transgression of the moral law. Governments of men are civil governments, not moral. Governors of men are civil governors, not moral. The laws of the States and nations are civil laws, not moral. To the authorities of civil government pertains the punishment of incivility, that is, the transgression of civil law. It is not theirs to punish immorality. That pertains solely to the Author of the moral law and of the moral sense, who is the sole judge of man's moral relation. All this must be manifest to everyone who will think fairly upon the subject, and it is confirmed by the definition of the word civil, which is as follows: "Civil: Pertaining to a city or State, or to a citizen in his relations to his fellow citizens, or to the State." p. 2, Para. 4, [CAESAR].

By all these things it is made clear that we owe to Caesar (civil government) only that which is civil, and that we owe to God that which is moral or religious. Other definitions show the same thing. For instance, sin as defined by Webster, is "any violation of God's will"; and as defined by the Scriptures, "is the transgression of the law." That the law here referred to is the moral law -- the ten commandments -- is shown by Romans 7:7: "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." p. 3, Para. 1, [CAESAR].

Thus the Scriptures show that sin is a transgression of the law which says, "Thou shalt not covet," and that is the moral law. p. 3, Para. 2, [CAESAR].

But crime is an offense against the laws of the State. The definition is as follows: "Crime is strictly a violation of law either human or divine; but in present usage the term is commonly applied to actions contrary to the laws of the State." p. 3, Para. 3, [CAESAR].

Thus civil statutes define crime, and deal with crime, but not with sin; while the divine statutes define sin, and deal with sin, but not with crime. p. 3, Para. 4, [CAESAR].

As God is the only moral governor, as His is the only moral government, as His law is the only moral law, and as

it pertains to Him alone to punish immorality, so likewise the promotion of morality pertains to Him alone. Morality is conformity to the law of God; it is obedience to God. But obedience to God must spring from the heart in sincerity and truth. This it must do, or it is not obedience; for, as we have proved by the Word of God, the law of God takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." By transgression, all men have made themselves immoral. "Therefore by the deeds of the law [by obedience] there shall no flesh be justified [accounted righteous, or made moral] in His sight." Romans 3:20. As all men have, by transgression of the law of God, made themselves immoral, therefore no man can, by obedience to the law, become moral; because it is that very law which declares him to be immoral. p. 3, Para. 5, [CAESAR].

The demands, therefore, of the moral law, must be satisfied, before he can ever be accepted as moral by either the law or its Author. But the demands of the moral law can never be satisfied by an immoral person, and this is just what every person has made himself by transgression. Therefore it is certain that men can never become moral by the moral law. p. 3, Para. 6, [CAESAR].

From this it is equally certain that if ever men shall be made moral, it must be by the Author and Source of all morality. And this is just the provision which God has made. For, "now the righteousness [the morality] of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness [the morality] of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned [made themselves immoral], and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:21-23. It is by the morality of Christ alone that men can be made moral. And this morality of Christ is the morality of God, which is imputed to us for Christ's sake; and we receive it by faith in Him who is both the Author and Finisher of faith. Then by the Spirit of God the moral law is written anew in the heart and in the mind, sanctifying the soul unto obedience -- unto morality. Thus, and thus alone, can men ever attain to morality; and that morality is the morality of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ; and there is no other in this world. p. 4, Para. 1, [CAESAR].

Therefore, as morality springs from God, and is planted in

the heart by the Spirit of God, through faith in the Son of God, it is demonstrated by proofs of Holy Writ itself, that to God alone pertains the promotion of morality. p. 4, Para. 2, [CAESAR].

God, then, being the sole promoter of morality, through what instrumentality does He work to promote morality in the world? What body has He made the conservator of morality in the world: the church, or the civil power; which? -- The church, and the church alone. It is "the church of the living God." It is "the pillar and ground of the truth" It was to the church that He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"; "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is by the church, through the preaching of Jesus Christ, that the gospel is "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." There is no obedience but the obedience of faith; there is no morality but the morality of faith. Therefore it is proved that to the church, and not to the State, is committed the conservation of morality in the world. This at once settles the question as to whether the State shall teach morality, or religion. The State cannot teach morality or religion. It has not the credentials for it. The Spirit of God and the gospel of Christ are both essential to the teaching of morality, and neither of these is committed to the State, but both to the church. p. 4, Para. 3, [CAESAR].

But though this work be committed to the church, even then there is not committed to the church the prerogative either to reward morality or to punish immorality. She beseeches, she entreats, she persuades men to be reconciled to God; she trains them in the principles and the practice of morality. It is hers by moral suasion or spiritual censures to preserve the purity and discipline of her membership. But hers it is not either to reward morality or to punish immorality. This pertains to God alone, because whether it be morality or immorality, it springs from the secret counsels of the heart; and as God alone knows the heart, He alone can measure either the merit or the guilt involved in any question of morals. p. 4, Para. 4, [CAESAR].

By this it is demonstrated that to no man, to no assembly or organization of men, does there belong any right whatever to punish immorality. Whoever attempts it, usurps the prerogative of God. The Inquisition is the inevitable logic of any claim of any assembly of men to punish

immorality, because to punish immorality, it is necessary in some way to get at the thoughts and intents of the heart. The papacy, asserting the right to compel men to be moral, and to punish them for immorality, had the cruel courage to carry the evil principle to its logical consequence. In carrying out the principle, it was found to be essential to get at the secrets of men's hearts; and it was found that the diligent application of torture would wring from men, in many cases, a full confession of the most secret counsels of their hearts. Hence the Inquisition was established as the means best adapted to secure the desired end. So long as men grant the proposition that it is within the province of civil government to enforce morality, it is to very little purpose that they condemn the Inquisition; for that tribunal is only the logical result of the proposition. p. 4, Para. 5, [CAESAR].

By all these evidences is established the plain, common-sense principle that to civil government pertains only that which the term itself implies -- that which is civil. The purpose of civil government is civil, and not moral. Its function is to preserve order in society, and to cause all its subjects to rest in assured safety, by guarding them against all incivility. Morality belongs to God; civility, to the State. Morality must be rendered to God; civility, to the State. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (1) p. 5, Para. 1, [CAESAR].

(1) There is an accommodated sense in which the word morality is used, in which it is made to refer only to men's relations to their fellow men; and with reference to this view of morality, it is sometimes said that the civil power is to enforce morality upon a civil basis. But morality on a civil basis is only civility, and the enforcement of morality upon a civil basis is the enforcement of civility, and nothing else. Without the Inquisition it is impossible for civil government ever to carry its jurisdiction beyond civil things, or to enforce anything but civility.] p. 5, Para. 2, [CAESAR].

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