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**"The Logic of Religious Legislation" *Australian Sentinel & Herald of
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IF the principle be admitted that the state has the right to legislate in regard to religion, and to enforce religious observances, then no blame can ever be attached to the Roman empire for putting the Christians to death. Nor can it be admitted that such dealings with the Christians was persecution.

The enforcement of right laws can never be persecution, however severely the law may deal with the offender. To hang a murderer is not persecution. To hunt him down, even with blood-hounds, to bring him to justice, is not persecution. We repeat therefore, that the enforcement of right laws never can be persecution.

If, therefore, religion or religious observances be a proper subject of legislation by civil government, then there never has been and there never can be any such thing as religious persecution. Because civil governments are ruled by majorities, the religion of the majority must of necessity be the adopted religion; and if civil legislation in civil things be right, the majority may legislate in regard to their own religion. Such laws made in such a case must be right laws, and the enforcement of them therefore can never be persecution.

A. T. JONES.

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"What Is Due to God, and What to Cesar?" *Australian Sentinel & Herald of Liberty* 1, 3 , pp. 87-89.

"Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matt. 22:21.

IN these words Christ has established a clear distinction between Cesar and God,—between that which is Cesar'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 Cesar's is to be rendered to Cesar; that which is God's is to be rendered to God alone. With that which is God's, Cesar can have nothing to do. To say that we are to render to Cesar 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.

As the word *Cesar* refers to civil government, it is apparent at once that the duties which we owe to Cesar are civil duties while the duties which 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."

It is evident, therefore, that religion and religious duties pertain solely to God; and as that which is God's is to be rendered to him and not to Cesar, 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.

Another definition which may help in making the distinction between that which pertains to God and that which pertains to our fellow-men, 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."

As morality, therefore, is the conformity of an act to the divine law, it is plain that in this, its true sense, morality also pertains solely to God, and so is outside the legitimate sphere of civil authority. 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 nonconformity 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."

These definitions are 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.

Obedience to the moral law is morality; it pertains to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and therefore, in the very nature of the case, lies beyond the reach or control

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of the civil power. To hate is murder; to covet is idolatry; to think impurely of a woman is adultery;—are all equally immoral, and violations of the moral law, but no civil government seeks to punish for them. A man may hate his neighbour all his life; he may covet everything on earth; he may think impurely of every woman 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.

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.

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 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 every one 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."

By all these things it is made clear that we owe to Cesar (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 Rom. 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."

Thus the Scriptures show that sin is the transgression of the law which says, "Thou shalt not covet," and that is the moral law.

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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."

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.

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 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." Rom. 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. 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.

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." Rom. 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*. 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*.