**“Moral and Civil Law” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, 4, 14, 210.**

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, or it is not obedience; for 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. 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. {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.1}

If ever men shall be made moral, it must be by the Author and Source of all morality. 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. 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. *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*. {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.2}

God, then, being the sole promoter of morality, what body has he made the conservator of morality in the world, the church, or the civil power?—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 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 religion. It has not the credentials for it. The Spirit of God and the gospel of Christ are both essential to this teaching, and neither of these is committed to the state, but both to the church. {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.3}

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. This pertains to God alone. Morality or immorality have their springs in 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. {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.4}

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. {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.5}

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 Cesar the things which are Cesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.6}

But it may be asked, Does not the civil power enforce the observance of the commandments of God, which say, Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not bear false witness? Does not the civil power punish the violation of these commandments of God? The civil power does not enforce these, nor does it punish the violation of them, *as commandments of God*. The state does forbid murder and theft and perjury, and some states forbid adultery, but not as commandments of God. From time immemorial, governments that knew nothing about God have forbidden these things. If the civil power attempted to enforce these as the commandments of God, it would have to punish as a murderer the man who hates another; it would have to punish as a perjurer the man who raises a false report; it would have to punish as an adulterer the person who thinks impurely; it would have to punish as a thief the man who wishes to cheat his neighbor; because all these things are violations of the commandments of God. Therefore if the state is to enforce these things as the commandments of God, it will have to punish the thoughts and intents of the heart; but this is not within the province of any earthly power, and it is clear that any earthly power that should attempt it, would thereby simply put itself in the place of God, and usurp his prerogative.—*A. T. Jones*, *in Civil Government and Religion*. {BEST July 15, 1889, p. 210.7}