

**CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND  
RELIGION, OR  
CHRISTIANITY AND THE  
AMERICAN CONSTITUTION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649486878

Civil Government and Religion, or Christianity and the American Constitution by Alonzo T. Jones

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BY ALONZO T. JONES.

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AMERICAN SENTINEL,  
26 AND 28 COLLEGE PLACE, CHICAGO, ILL.; 1059 CANTRIO ST.,  
OAKLAND, CAL.; 43 BOND ST., NEW YORK.  
1889.

LS 2061.43

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## PREFACE.

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THIS little work is the outgrowth of several lectures upon the relationship between religion and the civil power, delivered in Minneapolis, Minn., in October, 1888. The interest manifested in the subject, with numerous requests for the publication of the main points of the arguments presented, have led to the issuing of this pamphlet. It is not intended to be exhaustive in its discussion of any point upon which it treats, but only suggestive in all. The subject is always interesting and important, and as there is now a persistent demand being made for religious legislation, especially in relation to Sunday-keeping, this subject has become worthy of more careful study than it has ever received in this country since the adoption of the national Constitution. The quotations and references presented, with connecting arguments, are designed simply to furnish the reader a ready reference, and directions to further study of the subject. It is hoped that the facts presented will awaken more interest in the study of the Constitution of the United States, and may lead to a better understanding of men's rights and liberties under it, than is commonly shown; and also to a closer study of the relation that should exist between civil government and religion, according to the words of Christ and the American Constitution.

A. T. J.

*Feb. 13, 1889.*

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# CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT IS DUE TO GOD, AND WHAT TO CÆSAR?

“ 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 Cæsar, 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, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.”

In these words Christ has established a clear distinction between Cæsar and God,—between that which is Cæsar'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 Cæsar's is to be rendered to Cæsar; that which is God's is to be rendered to God alone. With that which is God's, Cæsar can have nothing to do. To say that we are to render to Cæsar that which is God's, or that we are to render to God, by Cæsar, 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 *Cæsar* refers to civil government, it is apparent at once that the duties which we owe to Cæsar 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 Cæsar, 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 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.”

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 any one 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.”

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. Says the Scripture,—

“Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” Eccl. 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.” Matt. 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.” Matt. 5: 27, 28.