

Jews themselves that wherever the money of any one was received and circulated as the current coin of the realm there the inhabitants owned that person as their king. Our Lord reasons from this principle, and shews that as the Jews received Cæsar's money and had it circulated among them, they recognized Cæsar as their king, and must, therefore, render him obedience.

The reply was felt to be so satisfactory that our Lord's interrogators marvelled and held their peace. He had with consummate address, escaped the horns of the dilemma on which they tried to impale him. The partizans of Herod could say nothing against him, because he had recognised and enforced the claims of Cæsar: and the people could say nothing as he had maintained that the law of God was to be obeyed against all contrary laws. In short, as has been said, "his enemies were baffled, Cæsar satisfied, God glorified, and the people edified." Thus admirably did the words serve the purpose for which they were originally intended. But they do more. They lay down a rule of action to be followed by Christians in all ages. They furnish us with a platform from which we can vindicate our position as a Voluntary Church and assail church Establishments of religion as inconsistent with the word of God. There are three things that they most clearly teach:—

I. God and Cæsar have rights\* which must be recognised. Both have "things" which must be "rendered" to them. Cæsar's rights are known, obedience and tribute. It is every man's duty to *honour* both by word and by deed, the civil government under which he lives and by which he is protected. It is every man's duty to *obey those laws* that may be enacted by the civil government under which he lives, with certain limitations which will be specified immediately. And thirdly, it is every man's duty to *pay the tribute* that may be enacted from him for the support of civil government and the furtherance of its plans. The higher powers, whom we call the civil government, are entrusted with the public welfare, the protection of the subjects, and the maintenance of good order; and it is but right that all expenses necessarily incurred in the carrying out of these objects, should be defrayed by the subjects who reap the benefit. Hence it is lawful for princes to impose taxes, and it is the duty of the subjects to pay those taxes.

And God too has rights which must be recognised; these are known, obedience, worship, tribute. By tribute, in this case, we mean, contributions of money for religious purposes. Such contributions are a divine institution. Every Jew was enjoined to give so much of his worldly substance for the support of the temple service; and as the Church was then in its infancy, Jehovah specified the particular sum that each was required to give. When we say "*required*" we refer to moral obligation; for these ancient offerings were all free-will offerings. (*vide* Malachi, iii. 8.) The Jewish dispensation has indeed passed away; but the obligation lying on Christians to support Christ's Gospel is as strong as ever; and he who shuts his eyes to this most important duty, and thinks he may with impunity withhold his offering, or tribute, deceives himself, yea, is guilty of a sin—the sin of robbing God.

II. God does not interfere with Cæsar's rights, in other words, religion does not exempt us from the discharge of our civil duties. So far from this, we find our Saviour here inculcating obedience to the civil ruler as something to which he is entitled, and which cannot be withheld without committing sin. It would be easy to quote from other parts of the New Testament, passages to the same effect; passages in which injunctions are laid on Christians in this as in all other matters, to shew a worthy example to their fellow men, to be patterns

\* Of course, the rights of God are independent and supreme; those of Cæsar derived and subordinate. God is King of kings, and Lord of lords, the blessed and the only Potentate. How Cæsar acquired his rights, or whether he shall retain them, is not here the question. As the actual recognised ruler, it is clear, that on the principles of the Christian religion, as well as of a sound civil polity, he has certain rights, which, in their own sphere, are to be respected.—*Ed.*