

Consider Jesus – in Obedience to Human Law

**Thoughts for Daily Duty, Service,
and Suffering**

By [Octavius Winslow](#)

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"Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess." –Hebrews 3:1

"Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." –Matt. 22:21

The obedience of Jesus, whether natural or moral--whether yielded to a divine or a human law--was, like all that He did, worthy of Himself. In no instance did He exhibit anything approaching resistance to constituted authority. Rebellion against Satan and sin was the only insubordination that marked our Lord's life on earth. On no occasion did either His doctrine or His practice come into direct and hostile antagonism with the State. The example before us is striking and conclusive of this. We read that the "Pharisees took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk." They came to Him and inquired, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why are you tempting me, you hypocrites?" Had He pronounced it unlawful, caught in their snare, they would instantly have denounced Him to Herod as teaching treason against Caesar, and thus have evoked the rage of the people and the hostility of the government. But mark the wisdom and equity with which He defeated the design and exposed the craft and wickedness of His enemies, and in so doing, enunciated and enforced the moral precept which we are now to consider--"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." The consideration of the duty we owe, as Christians and citizens, to human law, may not be out of place, since there exists a strong and growing tendency to override all human law, and to ignore all civil authority, than which there is not a more direct violation of God's word or a more palpable violation of the spirit of Christianity.

Jesus recognized the existence of the civil power as an institution of God himself: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." (Rom. 13:1, 2). Such must be our starting-point in all our relations to civil government. Recognizing the human ordinance to be of

divine appointment, the question of reverence to authority and of obedience to law will not reasonably admit of a moment's hesitation.

Jesus rendered unhesitating and implicit submission to both CIVIL and ECCLESIASTICAL law. We have seen it in reference to the State; another example is before us of His reverence for the Temple. When "tribute money" was demanded--or the didachma, or half-shekel levied for the religious purposes of the temple--He acknowledged its lawfulness, and, lest He should give offence by refusing to obey, He at once wrought a miracle, and paid the money (Matt. 17:24-27). Thus complete was our Lord's obedience to God and man. Upon no civil or religious law would He trample, since He had declared, "It becomes us to fulfill ALL righteousness." If a law presses upon conscience, or contravenes religious liberty, the remedy is obvious--not disobedience, but repeal; not tumultuous assemblies and inflammatory harangues, but constitutional petition. The Legislature and the Throne are accessible to the lowest and most oppressed subject of the land.

Jesus taught us that subjection to the civil magistrate was not incompatible with reverence to, and the fear of, God. How skillfully He combines them both: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." As disciples of Jesus, as children of God, as Christian citizens, let us so walk as to stand complete in all the divine will. First, and above all, let us obey God. Then will follow, in the Family relation, obedience to parents; in the State, obedience to magistrates; and in the Church of Christ, "obedience to those who have the rule over us" (Heb. 13:17).

"Let Caesar's due be ever paid
To Caesar and his throne;
But consciences and souls were made
To be the Lord's alone."

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