

THE CATHOLIC HOUR



TO CAESAR AND TO GOD

BY

THE MOST REVEREND
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TO CAESAR AND TO GOD

There are several things which good people rightly find hard to understand. One is: How can those who claim to be religious, hate others who are trying to be religious? Another is: How can men whose profession and calling is to religion, become defenders of Godless Communism, visit Moscow, associate themselves with Communist Fronts and even preach Communism from pulpits built from the pockets of those who believe in God. It is a scandal indeed, but Our Blessed Lord warned us against believing that those who mouth religion necessarily have religion in their heart. As He said: "The kingdom of heaven will not give entrance to every man who calls me Master, Master; only to the man that does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7: 21). It is the practice and not the verbiage that makes a man Christian.

Our Lord suffered from such bigotry and wicked alliances. In His days there were two groups constantly at one another's throats. But they decided to forget their lesser hates, because they found a greater hate — Christ, the Divine Son of the Living God. They buried their hatchets alright, but they buried them in Him. These two groups were the Herodians and the Pharisees.

The Herodians were not a sect nor religious school, but a political party. Outwardly they were

friends of Caesar and of the Roman Authority which had conquered Israel some decades before. As a few people in Albania, or Estonia or China might be found who are favorable to the Soviets and the Communists, so they were friends of pagan Rome and Caesar because they favored Herod as the vassal of Caesar.

Perhaps in our language it would be best to describe them as a kind of fellow travelers. As some disloyal Americans join the Communists either because they hate God and morality and want to give their hatred collective strength, or else because their ill-gotten wealth worries their consciences, so the Herodians sympathized with the imperialism of Caesar. It is important to remember that the Herodians had no genuine affection for religion—no man does who is disloyal to his country.

There was another party which the Herodians despised, namely, the Pharisees, and they in turn reciprocated the hatred of the Herodians. They were not only anti-Caesar, but they believed themselves more religious than the rest of men, because they fulfilled the legalistic code even to the smallest detail. They described themselves as puritans, keeping the law free from pagan infiltration, but being more concerned about its externals than its spirit, Our Blessed Lord said that they kept clean

the outside of the cup while leaving pollution on the inside.

Perhaps the best way to understand the Pharisees would be to compare them to religious people in society, who are very much concerned with externals and social service, who go to Church, Christmas and Easter, but who are not concerned with the Divinity of Christ or redemption from sin.

Both of these groups were enemies, because the Herodians sided with Caesar, and were willing to pay tribute to the conqueror, while the Pharisees despised Caesar and paid tribute under protest. Furthermore the Herodians did not believe in religion, while the Pharisees professed its externals, but did not accept the Divinity of Christ.

One day after Our Lord had cured a man on the Sabbath, the Gospel tells us that these two bitter enemies entered into an alliance: "The Pharisees began plotting with those of Herod's party to make away with Him." Our Lord not only unites friends; He also unites His enemies. Anything less than the Divine leaves men with their petty divisions and quarrels. You will always find the Divine where you find the hatred of the world most united and concentrated.

That the Pharisees should have tolerated even such a contemporary alliance with the Herodians, shows the virulence of the hatred against Our Blessed Lord. "And so, watching for their opportunity, they (the

Pharisees) sent agents of their own, who pretended to be men of honest purpose, to fasten on His words; then they would hand Him over to the supreme authority of the governor." (Luke 20: 20). They "watched" Him, but not to learn the way of salvation, but rather to accuse Him and to deliver Him up to die.

The Herodians could not have come before Our Blessed Lord without arousing some suspicion of their base motives, nor could the Pharisees, always astute, come to Him in person. They sent some of their young scholars, as though in their guileless simplicity, they were merely seeking information. They gave Our Blessed Lord the impression that a dispute had arisen among them and the Herodians, as indeed would have been very natural, and they desired to settle it by referring it to Him as the great scholar. They began by praising Him, thinking foolishly that He might be won over by a little flattery.

They said: "Master, we know that thou art direct in thy talk and thy teaching; thou makest no distinction between man and man, but teachest the way of God in all sincerity." We do not know whether they really meant what they said, but they certainly did tell the truth. Then came the question, and a real trick question it was: "Is it right that we should pay tribute to Caesar, or not?" Remember that the Roman conquerors occupied their land, filled their superior courts, retained for them-

selves the right to put anyone to death. The question therefore was like asking whether or not they should pay any tribute to the invaders. This tax which we Pharisees so much detest, but the legality of which these Herodians support, ought we or ought we not pay? Which of us is right — we the Pharisees who loathe and resent it, or the Herodians who justify it?

They expected Our Blessed Lord to answer either "Herodians" or "Pharisees." If He answered "No, it is not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar" then the Herodians would have delivered Him over to the Roman authorities, who in turn would order His death for conspiring to revolution. If He said "Yes, it is lawful," then He would displease the Pharisees who would go before the people and say that He was not a Messiah, nor the Saviour, for no Messiah or Saviour would ever consent that the people should put their necks under the yoke of an invader. If He refused to pay the tax, He was a rebel; if He agreed to pay it, He was an enemy of the people. To say "No" would make Him a traitor to Caesar; to say "Yes" would make Him anti-national, anti-patriotic.

In either case it would seem that He is caught in a trap. In our language, the fellow-travelers would condemn Him for being an enemy of Stalin; the demi-religious will condemn Him for being an enemy of His country.

To this trick question so mal-

iciously proposed, Our Divine Lord gave a perfect simple reply. Seeing their malice, He said to them; "Hypocrites, why do you thus put me to the test?" Despite the fact that they began with a compliment, Our Blessed Lord heard the hiss of the serpent. Though they boasted that He was fearless and impartial, He blinds them with the flash of the one indignant word "Hypocrites." He then said to them: "Show me the coinage in which the tribute is paid." Our Lord had none. So they produced a silver piece and put it into His hand. On one side was stamped the features of the Emperor, Tiberius Caesar, with those evil lips seen in every image of him; and on the other side of the coin was stamped his title *Pontifex Maximus*.

A great hush came over the crowd at that moment as they saw the coin lying there in the Hand of Our Blessed Lord. He was the true *Pontifex Maximus*, the real Bridge Builder between Heaven and earth; here He was the King of the hearts of men holding in his hand a silver coin. Very soon He Whose hands held Caesar's image would one day have those very Hands pierced by the nails under the orders of the very man whose portrait He looked upon. Our Lord pointing to the coin asked them: "Whose likeness, whose name does it bear inscribed on it?" They answered: "Caesar's." Then came His answer: "Why then, give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Our Lord not only answered their question, but the question of all men for all times, by affirming that His Kingdom is not of this world; that He is concerned with the eternal destiny, and politics is concerned with temporal prosperity; that what is God's and what is Caesar's no more contradict one another than the soul and the body in man. Our Lord is saying that the claims of civil authority and Divinity do not conflict. Human government has its rights, and God has His rights. The outer man is subject to the government, and the inner man is subject to God. To those who were so sensitive and tender-conscienced about Caesar's rights, Our Lord tells them to be even more cautious still about the rights of God. God must have His due as well as the State; He must have it more for He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lord's and by him all earthly kings and presidents, dictators and premiers hold their authority. As regards Caesar, He passed beyond all politics and parties by answering their question "Is it right to give" by correcting them, saying, "give back," that is, "Pay to him as his due, what you have acknowledged." By producing therefore the coin, they were openly declaring that Caesar was their sovereign, at least for the time being. They themselves had settled the question whether it was lawful to pay the tax. If they are trafficking with Caesar's money they are in debt for the privileges created for

them in the government under which they live.

Our Lord, in saying "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's," was here asserting what Paul himself would say later on in his letter to the Romans, and he spoke of the very Caesar who would put him to death. "He is God's minister still to inflict punishment, on the wrong-doer. Thou must needs then, be submissive, not only for fear of punishment but in conscience. It is for this same reason that you pay taxes; magistrates are in God's service, and must give all their time to it. Pay every man, then, his due; taxes, if it be taxes, customs, if it be customs; respect and honour, if it be respect and honour. Do not let anybody have a claim upon you, except the claim which binds us to love one another." (Romans 13; 4-9).

Our Blessed Lord would not leave them with that lesson only. He added the deeper and weightier words: "And to God the things that are God's." To Caesar you owe the coinage which you have admitted is his. Our Blessed Lord after speaking of the first image of Caesar's, now spoke of a second image. The coin is from the mint of the Emperor, you are from the mint of God. The use of the coin is determined by its likeness, so too your use is determined by your likeness. Since you choose Caesar's coin, you are Caesar's subject. Give him his due. But also bear in yourself the image and likeness of God, as that coin

bears the image and likeness of Caesar. Every faculty in you, your intellect, and your will, your soul, bears the stamp of the Divine. Render to God therefore your supreme and unceasing tribute. On your brow rests the stamp of Him Whose coinage and currency you are, but you are like lost pieces of silver from the Father's treasury. Search for that image in the mire of your lives, wash it with your tears, and burnish it back to brightness with your penance, and you will find on it the image of him Who made you, and the superscription of His immortal Kingdom. You who are careful about politics, be equally careful about paying your taxes to God. Do not become nationalistic, that you become bigoted and irreligious and forget your duty to God.

And the gospel tells us they went away and left Him in peace: "They were full of admiration at his answer." The Herodians could not go to Caesar and say that He had rebelled against Caesar's authority; the Pharisees could not go to the people and say that He had betrayed their interests. To fellow travelers and to those who claim to be religious, Our Lord's words teach us peacefully to obey earthly powers while keeping inviolate our loyalty to God. But when people are base, there is no end to the lies that they will tell, for within three days, the Pharisees were stirring up the people charging that Our Blessed Lord had forbidden to give tribute to Caesar! That He is unpatriotic,

a traitor! A betrayer of His people! Disloyal to Government! O Christ! Will these lies never cease?

Our Blessed Lord in saying to us: "Give back what is Caesar's" means: Pay your taxes; support public schools; when the government seeks enlistment of your life's blood to subdue the tyrannies of the world, give that blood; when it summons you to public service, obey, for the authority of the government is from God. "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's." If you use American money, then be loyal, true Americans! Love it as one of the great earthly blessings of God Himself. And let no man challenge your patriotism. But on the other hand, while you are rendering a Caesar his due, while you are supporting public schools and paying taxes for those schools and for armies, do not forget either to "Give to God what is God's." Give unto God the little children; "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Build them schools, at your own expense, if you have to, in order to help them in God's name; fill them with consecrated teachers who will open the school day with prayer and close the day with prayer; instruct them in My Commandments. Teach them purity, obedience to parents, prayer, and regard for authority. Teach them as I have said: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Give back to your Heavenly Father the material blessings you have

received by feeding the hungry in the Missions and building chapels that the Memorial of My death may be re-enacted unto the consumation of the world. Give back to God the reflection of that image and likeness of your soul that is stamped there by grace! Give it back even when men persecute you, hate you, revile you for My name's sake, saying every manner of evil against you, that you are the enemy of Caesar because you worship Me.

If some of our citizens, Jews, Protestants and Catholics are trying to render to God the things that are God's and are taking it so seriously that at their own expense they build schools where the name of God will be taught, let there be no modern Herodian or Pharisee or a combination of both, arise to say they are disloyal to their country, or traitors, or subversive of American ideals! In the name of God, in the name of America, may we be honest and wise enough to see that he who prays is he who serves his country best. Because my knees bend to my God, my elbow does not refuse to unbend to salute my flag! It is because we love God and try to serve Him we are good Americans! God and Caesar are distinct, and we for one want to keep them distinct in their authority; we want no merging of Caesar unto God, of which there is little danger, and no merging of God unto Caesar, of which there is much danger.

In the name of God, in the

name of America, let us be one! With the anti-God enemy at our gates, it behooves us to unite. The best way to be good Americans is to love and serve God. Let the spokes of a wheel represent Americans; the hub stands for God. The closer the spokes get to the hub, the closer they get to one another. The closer we get to God, the more united we are with one another! Destroy the hub and the spokes fall apart.

And if there is any country in the world which ought to understand these words of Our Lord, it is our own glorious country. Take in your hand a dime. What do you see? On the one side: "The United States of America," and the motto *E pluribus unum*. "Though we are many we are one." Then turn the dime over and you will see why we are one; for there is the word "Liberty" and under it, the name of Him Who gave us liberty, and to Whom we look to preserve our country: "In God we trust."

We can almost hear Our Lord speaking to us saying: "Give back to America, what is America's, and give to God what is God's." And the vast majority of all of us are trying to do it, Jew, Protestant and Catholic! And if I have done anything in this broadcast to make one single person more charitable to a Jew, Protestant, or Catholic who is trying to serve God according to his conscience and the measure of his grace, then I have succeeded in making one better American!

God Love You!

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

1930—Twenty-second Year—1952

The nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated on March 2, 1930, by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations. Radio facilities are contributed by NBC and the stations associated with it; the program is arranged and produced by NCCM.

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year on over 143 stations, the largest number of stations to carry the Catholic Hour in its entire history. There are now only 23 NBC stations not carrying the Catholic Hour. The Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive broadcasts in the world. An average of 100,000 audience letters a year, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

A complimentary copy of each talk is sent gratis to listeners. The cost of printing prevents a wider free distribution. Additional copies may be obtained at 10c per copy. Reduced rates for copies in bulk are available.

Listeners may obtain one talk per week for a year at a cost of \$5.00.

Each series of talks in booklet form is also available at the end of the series.

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