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CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Romans 13: 1.

This passage of scripture has been interpreted to carry several different, and often contradictory, meanings. Martin Luther understood it to mean that some men were ordained of God to be rulers. It was wrong for any man who was not of ordained class to question the acts or judgement of the ruling class. He did not say what one should do when two men of the ruling class differ. If the men who believed in the divine right of kings to rule had had their way there never would have been any such glorious democracy as the United States.

Paul says the "powers that be are ordained of God." The "powers that be" could be a monarch, a senate of nobles, or the elected representatives of a democracy. If the people who are governed are satisfied with the government, it is of God. If they are not satisfied they have the right to change it. No form of government is sacred, none is perfect. They are all the creation of men and can be changed to suit the needs of the people and the time. It is far better that this be done by orderly ballot than by violent revolution. It is often better to bear with a poor government for a time than to overthrow it by violence. For this reason a wise people are slow to take up arms against the state.

The government that Paul knew was a very imperfect one. But it was far better than anarchy and chaos; it was far better than lawlessness.

Every form of government ever proposed has met with strong opposition from some people. Our own, "conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," is no exception. John Wesley thought the Revolution was rebellion against God; many people in the colonies thought so too. Many people honestly thought the overthrow of royal power would end in anarchy and chaos. They saw no way for people to govern themselves. It would be unfair to say that all these objections were motivated by self interest. Many people honestly believed the masses were not capable of self government. Had the American people not been exceptionally intelligent these dire predictions might have come true. Many other people have tried it since and failed. Ours was close to failure several times; under the Articles of Confederation the whole plan of a united government was on the brink of failure.

Many people then thought that the states were the sovereign powers of government. Whatever plan of union was agreed upon, or to be agreed upon, would be only for the length of time that the states were satisfied with it. But the government of the states, either united or separate, was not fully accepted by the people till a constitution was framed as the supreme law of the land, and a permanent government of United States established. What would have been the fate of the several states going it alone, no one knows. Some of them doubtless would have returned to monarchial form of government. It is extremely doubtful that all would have remained truly democratic. It is highly possible that the people of the sovereign states would have grown weary with such a weak and unstable government and overthrown it.

Many people today profess a great fear of a strong National Government. Why is not the National Government as much "of the people, by the people and for the people" as the State Government is? States Rights advocates claim the National Government is dangerous because it is so far away. The history of our country does not agree with this theory. The State governments of this country have resorted to tyranny more often than the National Government has. Several states have enacted laws that violated the sacred rights of minority groups, and would have enforced them, had they not been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States. Had it not been for a strong national government many a man today would have had no voice in his own state government. Which government stopped human slavery? Which one made the Bill of Rights the law of the land.

If a government that is close to the people is safe, then our city governments would be the safest in the land. Some of these have been ruled by gangsters for years. Some have had to call upon a strong National Government to save them from anarchy. Many have notoriously corrupt courts and police powers. Many are graft ridden, crime ridden and bankrupt. States Rights advocates cannot deny these facts. But they say the country vote is more stable.

They cannot deny that many of our county governments are ruled by a machine as corrupt as any in the city. Many voters know less about their own county government than they do about the government in Washington. Some have been ruled by the same families for generations. Many offices in the rural counties should have been abolished years ago. But

every time a suggestion is made of abolishing a useless office the demagogues start shouting that the people are about to lose their sacred right to self government.

Some people are very much concerned if the National Government builds one battleship too many, or one less than we need, but let the local demagogues spend money like water to keep their political henchmen voting "right". Why are not our liberties threatened when some dictator seizes the reigns of of state government; has a rubber stamp legislature elected and courts appointed to do his bidding? Why are not our liberties threatened when some gangster rules a city for years? Why are we so brave in calling the President of the United States to the bar of justice and so timid in calling the Mayor, the Probate Judge or the Shriff to account?

Why do the voters watch Congress with a magnifying glass when many of them do not even know who represents them in the State Legislature? Why is the Supreme Court of the United States under such close inspection by the voters, when many of them never visit the circuit courts, the county courts and the city courts? We can abuse the President, the Congress, and the Supreme Court; they never hit back. Are we afraid to call the local dictator to account, because they do sometimes? We know that many of the political machines are kept in power by threats of reprisal against any who oppose them. The real enemies of our liberties are often the people next door. Unless the county and the city is called upon for an honest reckoning the state government will continue corrupt. Unless the states are made to answer to the people for their acts the national government will continue corrupt. It makes no difference which government a man represents, if his principles are corrupt,

he is dangerous.

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In the early days of our country the fear of a government that was at a distance from the voter was real and justified. But today our National Capital is closer to the voter than the county site was to the pioneers who founded this country. Our greatest danger today is in the meager knowledge we have of the men who represent us. It is more difficult to learn the real facts about a man in the next block than it is one in the National Capital, if the spot light of publicity is turned on ^{that} him. It is seldom ^{that} the local newspaper will tell the whole truth about a local candidate.