

By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

The conclusion of the whole matter is simply this, that civil government, in its essential principles, is of Divine appointment, while its outward form is left to be determined by the circumstances of the people and the exigencies of the times. The first is of God, the second is of men; and thus is reconciled the apparently opposite declarations of the word of God, which define civil government to be, according to St. Paul, an "ordinance of God," and according to St. Peter, an "ordinance of man."

2. *Its Nature.*—On this point a few words will suffice. In its nature civil government partakes of the character of a compact or agreement, expressed or understood, between the governor and the governed. It matters not whether the chief magistrate rules by elective suffrage, or by hereditary right, in either case he is bound to rule according to law, that is according to the constitution of the country which he governs. Neither does it matter whether that constitution is contained in a single written document, as in the United States; in a number of separate laws, as in England; or in a combination of written laws and established customs; in either case the civil ruler is bound to govern in accordance with that constitution. His elevation to the seat of authority does not give him the right to disregard or set aside the laws of the country. He is "ordained of God" not to *make* laws but to *administer* them. On the other hand the subject is bound by this compact to obey and honor the chief Magistrate, and to render prompt obedience to the laws of the state.

3. *Its Design.*—Manifestly, government was never designed by the Creator merely to elevate a few men to power, and to make the weak subject to the strong. It was not designed for the benefit of the few but of the many. Its main object is to secure the "greatest possible good to the greatest possible number." Hence its first design is to unite men together for their mutual benefit. Where there is no law nor government there is anarchy, confusion, and every evil