

the is incumbent on all, ministers and people; for "we are all embarked in one bottom, and must sink or swim together."

To examine, and to approve or disapprove the measures of rulers, as we believe them to be either justifiable or unjustifiable, are *rights* and *duties*, clear as the shining sun.

In the holy scriptures we find written, "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." Hence it plainly appears that civil government is a divine institution. But none of us can be so ignorant as to suppose that this, or any other passage of scripture, requires us to approve the measures of rulers, whether they are right or wrong. There is a plain distinction between *government*, and the *administrators* of government, though the terms are often used promiscuously. We are bound to be subject to *government*, and to rulers so far as they *rightly administer* it, for government is both an institution of God and an ordinance of man. But we are not bound to approve the measures of rulers if they wrongly administer government. If their commands are absolutely unlawful, we are bound to obey God rather, than man; for His is the highest of all powers.* If the absurd tyrannical doctrine, that people ought to approve of and comply with the measures of rulers, whether right or wrong; if such irrational and unscriptural doctrine had prevailed, this would not have become an independent nation. "Cases may occur, when it is the duty of private persons to point out the improper conduct of their rulers. Their country's good requires it, and their country's good should be their motive for doing it. But in performing this duty, which they owe to society, they should address the understandings, rather than the passions and prejudices, of their fellow citizens, or fellow subjects: they should reason, not rail: they should aim to give useful information, not to vilify the persons of their rulers. If their rulers be the patrons of principles, that are pernicious to society, or adopt measures of a dangerous tendency, their errors may be pointed out, and demonstrated, in decent and respectful language, without violating

* When Daniel knew, that the writing of the king, interdicting the worship of the true God, was signed, he notwithstanding "prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." When the king's command required the three pious friends of Daniel to worship an idol, they said, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods," &c. Dan. 3 & 6 ch. In a case where the commands of men were contrary to those of God, "Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5. 29.