

# A STUDY OF GOVERNMENTS

## MR. BRYAN'S FORTY-FIFTH AND FINAL LETTER

One who travels in foreign lands is likely to learn but little of the governments of the lands through which he passes unless he makes a special effort to inform himself, for the lines of travel are laid through the communities where law and order are maintained and where the government is so stable that the casual observer has no occasion to investigate its inner workings. The mountains tower above him and he sees them; the chasms yawn before him, and he beholds them; and the various forms of agriculture leave a panoramic effect upon his memory. He frequently meets the merchant in his store, sees the laborer at his work quite often, and occasionally beholds a grandee in his carriage, but not being able to speak the language of the country he learns little about the forms of government and less about the political aspirations of the people; and yet, the science of government is one of the most important sciences, and the "royal art," as it has been called, stands first among the arts. Tolstoy has declared that the science which teaches us how to live is the most important of sciences, and surely the science of government comes next. While it is true that an individual can by misbehavior forfeit the blessings of good government, or by good behavior minimize the evils of bad government—while it is true that no government however good can save a man from himself if his tendencies be evil, and that no government however bad can entirely deprive him of the rewards of virtue, yet, governments may do much to encourage or to hinder the development of the people.

Governments may retard or advance the material growth of a country. For instance, our government is in part, at least, responsible for the unparalleled development of the United States because it has given the largest encouragement to the individual. The Japanese government has in like manner stimulated education by the establishment of a public school system and has developed a large number of public men by the organization of a parliamentary system. Turkey, on the other hand, has blighted some of the fairest portions of the earth by suppressing political independence, by ignoring education, and by leaving the industrious citizen at the mercy of the marauder. There has been little political life in Turkey because few of the people have had the education necessary to take a broad survey of the country and its needs, while great stretches of fertile country lie uncultivated because the government is so indifferent to the rights of the people that the tiller of the soil has no assurance that he will be allowed to harvest the crop which he plants. Those who have investigated the subject contend that the valley of the Jordan would be a fruitful region if protection were given to those who would cultivate it, but because the Bedouin has been allowed to come down from the hills and reap where he has not sown, the land is neglected.

In a trip around the globe one sees in actual working every form of government known to man. In Russia, an unlimited monarchy until recently, laid its oppressive hand upon more than a hundred millions of human beings. They held their lives, their liberty and their property at the will of the ruler. Any citizen in the Czar's vast domains could be taken from his home and exiled for life without he or his family knowing the cause of his punishment. The royal family and the officeholders held the people in contempt and denied even the natural rights of men. The people were taught to be thankful for any favors, however small, that the "Little Father" saw fit to bestow, and they were likewise taught that it was dangerous to complain when the most fundamental right was ignored. Now there is a Douma, and the Douma as an institution still lives. No one can predict through what trials and tribulations the country may yet pass, but constitutional government will yet be hers. As in the winter time we cannot foresee or foretell what days will be pleasant and what days stormy, but do know that in a few months we shall have summer, so without being able to determine through what tumults or riots or revolutions Russia must pass, we know that in a few years she will have a stable government in which her people will have a voice.

In Japan the government is somewhat mixed in its form. She has a parliament, but the executive branch of the government is not yet in the hands of the people. The tendency in Japan, as everywhere, is toward further limitation of the power of the sovereign and further enlargement

of the power of the people. The vital political question there now is whether the emperor shall select his advisors from among his personal friends or from the members of the party which dominates the parliament. There is, of course, no doubt of the ultimate triumph of the parliamentary party. Denmark witnessed a similar struggle which lasted for nearly a generation and terminated as such struggles always do, in the triumph of the parliament.

In China they have a mixture of monarchy and aristocracy. The monarch is unlimited in his power, but he is so hedged about by the aristocracy that he really has very little independence. Like some of the native princes who rule under Dutch regents, the Chinese ruler is the servant rather than the master of his officials. Living in the forbidden city and meeting personally but few of his people, he is quite dependent upon the mandarins. The aristocracy of China is not an aristocracy of birth or of wealth, but a civil service aristocracy. While positions are often bought—sometimes even sold at auction when the emperor needs money—yet, as a rule, the civil servants of China are selected by examination. These systems, while so antiquated that they have been recently very materially modified, were intended to be fair as between applicants. The course of study was not comprehensive, and the tests applied gave but little idea of one's fitness for office. These men, once in power, were the rulers in all local affairs, and the higher officials were influential in all matters of state, and yet, in spite of this system—or because of it, whichever the reader will have it—China slumbered while the nations around awakened. The fact that the appointees to the civil service had to go through certain routine examinations prescribed by those who had already passed through the same routine, and as it was not necessary that the appointees should be interested in anyone but themselves, they showed no concern about the people from whom they drew their salaries. It was a system calculated to develop the selfishness which seemed an inherent part of Chinese life and philosophy. Now that the school examinations have been substituted for the civil service examinations an improvement may be expected in the service, but even the modified system will not keep the servant in touch with those whom he serves.

In Europe the constitutional monarchy has undergone a constant development until in many countries the king is but a figurehead. In England the sovereign would not think of vetoing a bill passed by the legislative body, and the House of Lords seldom vetoes a bill passed by the House of Commons. The prime minister is a much more potent factor in government than the king himself. In Denmark the government is brought even nearer to the people by the substitution of one legislative body for two, that body being elected by the people under universal suffrage. The king of Norway is even less likely to attempt to obstruct the will of parliament than the king of England. Norway has reduced monarchy to a minimum and placed the government in the hands of the voters to do with it as they please.

In Switzerland the republican form of government has stood the test of experiment. In the absence of pomp and ceremony and official extravagance the government of Switzerland is not surpassed, if equalled, by the government of any similar population in the world. Three languages are spoken within her borders and used in parliamentary proceedings. The people are part Protestant, part Catholic and part Jew, and yet, with the initiative and the referendum in both the federal government and the cantons, the government rests so securely upon the popular will that the people live together in entire harmony and could resist a much larger population attacking from without.

The colonial system also comes under one's observation in a trip around the world. The Netherlands have large colonial possessions in the Malay archipelago, but they have been compelled to abandon the culture system—a form of slavery—and there are signs of a political development which will some day make it necessary for Holland to consult the wishes of the people more than she has in the past.

I have already spoken of both India and Egypt in other articles, and I only refer to the subject here in order to draw a contrast between colonialism as applied to Canada and colonialism

as it is seen in India. In Canada the people have as complete self-government as they have in England, the governor-general being as little likely to use the veto power as the king himself. In India, on the other hand, the natives are not consulted in regard to the general management of the country. Taxes are levied and collected, armies are raised, fed and directed without regard to the wishes of the native population. They have experienced all of the evils that can come from a colonial system administered by a trading company, and they have had a chance to learn that a colonial system, even when administered in such a way as to command the admiration of those who believe in colonialism, still falls far short of self-government. I have already said that we have treated the Filipinos better than England has treated the people of India, but that we have done so at an enormous expense to our country. It would be better for the Filipinos and better for us to recognize their right to self-government and independence.

After one has had a chance to see monarchies, limited and unlimited, aristocracies based upon birth and aristocracies based upon a merit system; after one has had a chance to compare these systems with the republican form of government, he is ready to declare that from every standpoint that government is best which rests upon the consent of the governed. Some have insisted that a monarchy is stronger because all of the power of the government can be concentrated quickly and made effective at once, but this advantage is small when compared with the advantages to be derived from a government which the people support with enthusiasm. The historian, Bancroft, rightly declares that a republic ought to be the strongest of all governments because, discarding the implements of terror, it dares to build its citadel in the hearts of men.

A republic which is not merely in theory but in fact a government of the people, by the people and for the people is the most enduring of governments. It is strong because it is loved and loved because it is good.

Aristocracies are defended by their advocates on the ground that the few are wiser than the many, but this is not true whether it is an aristocracy of birth or of learning, for as the whole is greater than any of its parts, so a democracy must be wiser than an aristocracy because it can draw upon the wisdom of all. The old saying, that everybody knows more than anybody, is founded upon reason and experience, but there is another reason why a democracy is better than an aristocracy, namely—that the interests of the whole people are safer in the hands of the people themselves than in the hands of any element which assumes to speak for the people. The faults of free government have been found to be, not in the people themselves, but in those who, selected to represent them, betray their trust. If the representatives of the people whom the people themselves select are sometimes unfaithful to their trust, what must be expected of those who assume to act without being selected by the people?

In aristocracies resting upon birth the very fact that the rulers regard themselves superior to the masses makes it difficult for them to view questions from the standpoint of the people at large. Whatever the form of the government, there will, as Jefferson declared, always be two parties, one tending toward democracy and the other tending toward aristocracy. Those who have faith in the people are constantly trying to make the government more and more responsive to the will of the people; those who distrust the people are constantly endeavoring to increase the distance between the citizen and his representative. In a republic there are some who emphasize the virtues of the people and others who emphasize the virtues of the representative. Some insist that the people should think for themselves and elect representatives to give expression to the public will; others insist that the representatives should be so superior to the masses as to be able to do the thinking for the people.

In the early history of this country Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton represented these two ideas. Jefferson not only believed that the people should think for themselves and should elect their representatives, but he believed in short terms and frequent elections in order that the citizens might more effectively control their

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