Citizens across the country are fed up with the politicians in Washington telling us how to live our lives?and then sticking us with the bill. But what can we do? Actually, we can just say ?no.” As New York Times bestselling author Thomas E. Woods, Jr., explains, ?nullification” allows states to reject unconstitutional federal laws. For many tea partiers nationwide, nullification is rapidly becoming the only way to stop an over-reaching government drunk on power. From privacy to national healthcare, Woods shows how this growing and popular movement is sweeping across America and empowering states to take action against Obama’s socialist policies and big-government agenda.

My Personal Review:
Full disclosure: I am a personal friend of Tom Woods. Even so, I like some of his books more than others, but _Nullification_ is definitely one of his gems. Until I read this book, I had no idea that the concept of nullification was NOT invented in, say, 1858 by the legislatures of southern states.

On the contrary, Woods shows that this was an idea championed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, and flowed seamlessly from the compact theory of the Union. Nullification was not an ad hoc principle dreamed up in a particular battle over states rights, but instead was an integral part of Jeffersons philosophy of a federation in which the central government only received enumerated (and strictly limited) powers from the states who constituted the Union.

This book is a great read for anyone who loves colonial and early US history. Woods sketches a vision of early America that we didnt learn in grade school. For example, the handbill announcing the Anti-Slave-Catchers Mass Convention (p. 82) is amazing--outraged citizens in Wisconsin didnt want to hand over an escaped slave as the feds dictated
(under the Fugitive Slave Act). This episode is but one example that Woods provides, to prove that very often states rights were used to *protect* liberty. Is that really so hard to understand--that sometimes the *federal* government is the bad guy?

A surprise in this book is Chapter 4, What Is (or Are) the United States, Anyway? Here Woods makes a compelling argument for the compact theory of the Union, which is the view that the federal government was created by the individual States when they ratified the Constitution. (A nationalist view holds that the people of the United States collectively formed the central government, and that therefore the individual state governments are subordinate to it.)

Much of Woods evidence I had read before, but a new one was his focus on the Declaration of Independence itself, which says:

...That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do (qtd p. 97).

Woods points out that if the individual States, upon their declaration of independence, retained the rights to *start wars and contract alliances*, then surely they were sovereign political entities, in the way that France and Great Britain were separate States. It is then an easy matter to show that at no point, whether with the Articles of Confederation or the Constitution (which after all was ratified NOT by the American public but by the individual states), did these initially sovereign states cede all of their powers to the U.S. government.

All in all, an excellent book that provides a new look at American history, but also draws lessons that are very relevant in todays political battles.

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