

[5.] They which do therefore plead the authority of the law-maker as an argument, wherefore it should not be lawful to change that which he hath instituted, and will have this the cause why all the ordinances of our Saviour are immutable; they which urge the wisdom of God as a proof, that whatsoever laws he hath made they ought to stand, unless himself from heaven proclaim them disannulled, because it is not in man to correct the ordinance of God; may know, if it please them to take notice thereof, that we are far from presuming to think that men can better any thing which God hath done, even as we are from thinking that men should presume to undo some things of men, which God doth know they cannot better. God never ordained any thing that could be bettered. Yet many things he hath that have been changed, and that for the better. That which succeedeth as better now when change is requisite, had been worse when that which now is changed was instituted. Otherwise God had not then left this to choose that, neither would now reject that to choose this, were it not for some new-grown occasion making that which hath been better worse. In this case therefore men do not presume to change God's ordinance, but they yield thereunto requiring itself to be changed.

[6.] Against this it is objected, that to abrogate or innovate the Gospel of Christ if men or angels should attempt, it were most heinous and cursed sacrilege. And the Gospel (as they say) containeth not only doctrine instructing men how they should believe, but also precepts concerning the regiment of the Church. Discipline therefore is "a part of the Gospel¹;" and God being the author of the whole Gospel, as well of discipline as of doctrine, it cannot be but that both of them "have a common cause." So that as we are to believe for ever the articles of evangelical doctrine, so the precepts of discipline we are in like sort bound for ever to observe.

[7.] Touching points of doctrine, as for example, the Unity

¹ "We offer to shew the discipline to be a part of the Gospel, and therefore to have a common cause; so that in the repulse of the discipline the Gospel receives a check." And again, "I speak of the discipline as of a part of the Gospel, and therefore neither under

"nor above the Gospel, but the Gospel." T. C. lib. ii. p. 1, 4. [These latter words are in p. 5, but in p. 4 are the following: "The discipline being, as it is propounded, and offered to be proved, a part of the Gospel, must needs arm the Lord against the refuser."]

of God, the Trinity of Persons, salvation by Christ, the resurrection of the body, life everlasting, the judgment to come, and such like, they have been since the first hour that there was a Church in the world, and till the last they must be believed. But as for matters of regiment, they are for the most part of another nature. To make new articles of faith and doctrine no man thinketh it lawful; new laws of government what commonwealth or church is there which maketh not either at one time or another? "The rule of faith¹," saith Tertullian, "is but one, and that alone immoveable and impossible to be framed or cast anew." The law of outward order and polity not so². There is no reason in the world wherefore we should esteem it as necessary always to do, as always to believe, the same things; seeing every man knoweth that the matter of faith is constant, the matter contrariwise of action daily changeable, especially the matter of action belonging unto church polity. Neither can I find that men of soundest judgment have any otherwise taught, than that articles of belief, and things which all men must of necessity do to the end they may be saved, are either expressly set down in Scripture, or else plainly thereby to be gathered. But touching things which belong to discipline and outward polity, the Church hath authority to make canons, laws, and decrees, even as we read that in the Apostles' times it did³. Which kind of laws (forasmuch as they are not in themselves necessary to salvation) may after they are made be also changed as the difference of times or places shall require. Yea, it is not denied I am sure by themselves, that certain things in discipline are of that nature, as they may be varied by times, places, persons, and other the like circumstances. Whereupon I demand, are those changeable points of discipline commanded in the word of God or no? If they be not commanded and yet may be

¹ Tert. de Veland. Virg. c. i.

² Mart. [i. e. Peter Martyr] in Sam. xiv. ["Positum sit, licere Ecclesiæ scribere sibi aut canones, aut leges, aut decreta, aut sanctiones, aut quocunque ea velis nomine appellari. Est enim Ecclesia cœtus, et regi debet verbo Dei, præsertim quod attinet ad

"salutem ipsius, et cultum Dei. Sed sunt alia, quæ tantum pertinent ad externam disciplinam. . . Istarum legum finis esse debet ædificatio et *εὐραξία*. Quoniam autem necessariæ non sunt, pro temporum et locorum ratione mutari possunt."] ³ Acts xv.

received in the Church, how can their former position stand, condemning all things in the Church which in the word are not commanded? If they be commanded and yet may suffer change, how can this latter stand, affirming all things immutable which are commanded of God? Their distinction touching matters of substance and of circumstance, though true, will not serve. For be they great things or be they small, if God have commanded them in the Gospel, and his commanding them in the Gospel do make them unchangeable, there is no reason we should more change the one than we may the other. If the authority of the maker do prove unchangeableness in the laws which God hath made, then must all laws which he hath made be necessarily for ever permanent, though they be but of circumstance only and not of substance. I therefore conclude, that neither God's being author of laws for government of his Church, nor his committing them unto Scripture, is any reason sufficient wherefore all churches should for ever be bound to keep them without change.

[8.] But of one thing we are here to give them warning by the way. For whereas in this discourse we have oftentimes profest that many parts of discipline or church polity are delivered in Scripture, they may perhaps imagine that we are driven to confess their discipline to be delivered in Scripture, and that having no other means to avoid it, we are fain to argue for the changeableness of laws ordained even by God himself, as if otherwise theirs of necessity should take place, and that under which we live be abandoned. There is no remedy therefore but to abate this error in them, and directly to let them know, that if they fall into any such conceit, they do but a little flatter their own cause. As for us, we think in no respect so highly of it. Our persuasion is, that no age ever had knowledge of it but only ours; that they which defend it devised it; that neither Christ nor his Apostles at any time taught it, but the contrary. If therefore we did seek to maintain that which most advantageth our own cause, the very best way for us and the strongest against them were to hold even as they do, that in Scripture there must needs be found some particular form of church polity which God hath instituted, and which for that very

cause belongeth to all churches, to all times¹. But with any such partial eye to respect ourselves, and by cunning to make those things seem the truest which are the fittest to serve our purpose, is a thing which we neither like nor mean to follow. Wherefore that which we take to be generally true concerning the mutability of laws, the same we have plainly delivered, as being persuaded of nothing more than we are of this, that whether it be in matter of speculation or of practice, no untruth² can possibly avail the patron and defender long, and that things most truly are likewise most behovefully spoken.

XI. This we hold and grant for truth, that those very laws which of their own nature are changeable, be notwithstanding incapable of change, if he which gave them, being of authority so to do, forbid absolutely to change them; neither may they admit alteration against the will of such a law-maker. Albeit therefore we do not find any cause why of right there should be necessarily an immutable form set down in holy Scripture; nevertheless if indeed there have been at any time a church polity so set down, the change whereof the sacred Scripture doth forbid, surely for men to alter those laws which God for perpetuity hath established were presumption most intolerable.

[2.] To prove therefore that the will of Christ was to establish laws so permanent and immutable that in any sort to alter them cannot but highly offend God, thus they reason. First³, if Moses, being but a servant in the house of God,

¹ "Disciplina est Christianæ Ecclesiæ Politia, a Deo ejus recte administrandæ causa constituta, ac propterea ex ejus verbo petenda, et ob eandem causam omnium ecclesiarum communis et omnium temporum." Lib. de Eccles. Discip. in Anal. [See also p. 9, Cartwright's Translation.]

² Ἐοικασιν οὖν οἱ ἀληθεῖς τῶν λόγων οὐ μόνον πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναι χρησιμώτατοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸν βίον. Συνοδοὶ γὰρ ὄντες ἔργοις πιστεύονται. Arist. Ethic. lib. x. cap. i.

³ Heb. iii. 6. "Either that commendation of the son before the servant is a false testimony, or the son ordained a permanent government in the Church. If perma-

nent, then not to be changed. "What then do they, that [not only] hold it may be changed at the magistrate's pleasure, but advise the magistrate by his positive laws to proclaim, that it is his will, that if there shall be a church within his dominions, he will maim and deform the same?" M. M. [Martin Marprelate, "Ha' ye any work for a Cooper?"] p. 16. "He that was as faithful as Moses, left as clear instruction for the government of the Church: But Christ was as faithful as Moses: Ergo." Demonst. of Discip. cap. i. [p. 3. See also Theses Martinianæ, 5th Thesis. "If Christ did not ordain a church

did therein establish laws of government for perpetuity, laws which they that were of the household might not alter; shall we admit into our thoughts, that the Son of God hath in providing for this his household declared himself less faithful than Moses? Moses delivering unto the Jews such laws as were durable, if those be changeable which Christ hath delivered unto us, we are not able to avoid it, but (that which to think were heinous impiety) we of necessity must confess even the Son of God himself to have been less faithful than Moses. Which argument shall need no touchstone to try it by but some other of the like making. Moses erected in the wilderness a tabernacle which was moveable from place to place; Salomon a sumptuous and stately temple which was not moveable: therefore Salomon was faithfuller than Moses, which no man endued with reason will think. And yet by this reason it doth plainly follow.

He that will see how faithful the one or the other was, must compare the things which they both did unto the charge which God gave each of them. The Apostle in making comparison between our Saviour and Moses attributeth faithfulness unto both, and maketh this difference between them; Moses *in*, but Christ *over* the house of God; Moses in that house which was *his by charge and commission*, though to govern it, yet to govern it *as a servant*; but Christ over this house as being *his own entire possession*.

[3.] Our Lord and Saviour doth make protestation, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me¹." Faithful therefore he was, and concealed not any part of his Father's will. But did any part of that will require the immutability of laws concerning church polity? They answer, Yea. For else God should less favour us than the Jews². God would not have their church guided by any laws but his

"government which at the pleasure of man cannot be changed, then he is inferior unto Moses: for the government placed by him might no man alter, and thereto might no man add any thing. Heb. iii. 2, 3." Eccl. Disc. fol. 7. "Ne illud aliqua parte prophetici muneris spoliemus, aut servum, quantumvis fidelem, unigenito Filio, et tanquam Eliezerum

"Isaaco in paterna domo præferamus." Counterpoison, p. 9. Penry's Appellation to the High Court of Parliament, p. 18.]

¹ John xvii. 8.

² "Either God hath left a pre-script form of government now, or else he is less careful under the New Testament than under the Old." Demonst. of Disc. cap. i. [T. C. i. 62. ap. Whitg. Def. 304.]

own. And seeing this did so continue even till Christ, now to ease God of that care, or rather to deprive the Church of his patronage, what reason have we? Surely none to derogate any thing from the ancient love which God hath borne to his Church. An heathen philosopher¹ there is, who considering how many things beasts have which men have not, how naked in comparison of them, how impotent, and how much less able we are to shift for ourselves a long time after we enter into this world, repiningly concluded hereupon, that nature being a careful mother for them, is towards us a hard-hearted stepdame. No, we may not measure the affection of our gracious God towards his by such differences. For even herein shineth his wisdom, that though the ways of his providence be many, yet the end which he bringeth all at the length unto is one and the selfsame.

[4.] But if such kind of reasoning were good, might we not even as directly conclude the very same concerning laws of secular regiment? Their own words are these: "In the ancient church of the Jews, God did command and Moses commit unto writing all things pertinent as well to the civil as to the ecclesiastical state²." God gave them laws of civil regiment, and would not permit their commonweal to be governed by any other laws than his own. Doth God less regard our temporal estate in this world, or provide for it

¹ [Philemon. Fragm. Incert. xliii. ed. Cler.=p. 841. Meineke, 1847.

πολύ γ' ἐστὶ πάντων ζῶων ἀθλιώτατον
ἄνθρωπος, εἴ τις ἐξετάξοι κατὰ τρόπον.
τὸν γὰρ βίον περιέργον εἰς τὰ πάντ' ἔχων,
ἀπορεῖ τὰ πλείεστα διὰ τέλους, ποιεῖ τ' αἰεὶ.
καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις πᾶσιν ἡ γῆ θηρίοις
ἐκούσα παρέχει τὴν καθ' ἡμέραν τροφήν,
αὐτὴ πορίζουσ', οὐ λαβοῦσα· πᾶν μὲν ὅλως
ὥσπερ τὸ κατὰ χρέος κεφάλαιον ἐκτίει
τὸ σπέρμα, τοὺς τόκους ἀνευρίσκουσ' αἰεὶ
πρόφασιν τιν' αὐχμὸν, ἢ πάγην, ἢ ἀποστερῇ (πάχυν ἀποστερεῖ).] K.*

² Ecclesiast. Disc. lib. i. [fol. 5. "statum [pertinent] . . . diligenter In vetere Ecclesia Judæorum omnia "descripta sunt, et a Deo præcepta, "quæ ad regendum non modo "a Mose literis commendata."] "civilem sed etiam ecclesiasticum

[* Hooker more probably refers to Pliny, Nat. Hist. vii. 1: "Principium jure tribuetur homini, cujus causa videtur cuncta alia genuisse natura, magna sæva mercede contra tanta sua munera: non sit ut satis æstimare, parens melior homini, an tristior noverca fuerit. Ante omnia, unum animantium cunctorum, alienis velat opibus: cæteris varie tegumenta tribuit, testas, cortices, coria, spinas. . . . Hominem tantum nudum (Lucret. v. 224) et in nuda humo natali die abjicit ab vagitus statim et ploratum." 1886.

BOOK III. worse than for theirs? To us notwithstanding he hath not as
Ch. xi. 5, 6. to them delivered any particular form of temporal regiment, unless perhaps we think, as some do, that the grafting of the Gentiles¹ and their incorporating into Israel² doth import that we ought to be subject unto the rites and laws of their whole polity. We see then how weak such disputes are, and how smally they make to this purpose.

[5.] That Christ did not mean to set down particular positive laws for all things in such sort as Moses did, the very different manner of delivering the laws of Moses and the laws of Christ doth plainly shew. Moses had commandment to gather the ordinances of God together distinctly, and orderly to set them down according unto their several kinds, for each public duty and office the laws that belong thereto, as appeareth in the books themselves, written of purpose for that end. Contrariwise the laws of Christ we find rather mentioned by occasion in the writings of the Apostles, than any solemn thing directly written to comprehend them in legal sort.

[6.] Again, the positive laws which Moses gave, they were given for the greatest part with restraint to the land of Jewry: "Behold," saith Moses, "I have taught you ordinances and laws, as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do even so within the land whither ye go to possess it"³. Which laws and ordinances positive he plainly distinguisheth afterward from the laws of the Two Tables which were moral⁴. "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only a voice. Then he declared unto you his covenant which he commanded you to do, the Ten Commandments, and wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me that same time, that I should teach you ordinances and laws which ye should observe in the land whither ye go to possess it." The same difference is again set down in the next chapter following. For rehearsal being made of the Ten Commandments, it followeth immediately⁵, "These words the Lord spake unto all your multitude in the mount out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the darkness, with a great voice, and added no

¹ Rom. xi. 17.² Ephes. ii. 12-16.³ Deut. iv. 5.⁴ Deut. iv. 12-14.⁵ Deut. v. 22.

"more; and wrote them upon two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." But concerning other laws, the people give their consent to receive them at the hands of Moses¹: "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God saith, and declare thou unto us all that the Lord our God saith unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." The people's alacrity herein God highly commendeth with most effectual and hearty speech²: "I have heard the voice of the words of this people; they have spoken well. O that there were such an heart in them to fear me, and to keep all my commandments always, that it might go well with them and with their children for ever! Go, say unto them, 'Return you to your tents;' but stand thou here with me, and I will tell thee all the commandments and the ordinances and the laws which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I have given them to possess." From this later kind the former are plainly distinguished in many things. They were not both at one time delivered, neither both after one sort, nor to one end. The former uttered by the voice of God himself in the hearing of six hundred thousand men; the former written with the finger of God; the former termed by the name of a Covenant; the former given to be kept without either mention of time how long, or of place where. On the other side, the later given after, and neither written by God himself, nor given unto the whole multitude immediately from God, but unto Moses, and from him to them both by word and writing; the later termed Ceremonies, Judgments, Ordinances, but no where Covenants; finally, the observation of the later restrained unto the land where God would establish them to inhabit.

The laws positive are not framed without regard had to the place and persons for which they are made. If therefore Almighty God in framing their laws had an eye unto the nature of that people, and to the country where they were to dwell; if these peculiar and proper considerations were respected in the making of their laws, and must be also regarded in the positive laws of all other nations besides: then seeing that nations are not all alike, surely the giving of one kind of positive laws unto one only people, without any liberty to

¹ Deut. v. 27.² Deut. v. 28-31.

BOOK III. alter them, is but a slender proof, that therefore one kind
Ch. xi. 7, 8. should in like sort be given to serve everlastingly for all.

[7.] But that which most of all maketh for the clearing of this point is, that the Jews¹, who had laws so particularly determining and so fully instructing them in all affairs what to do, were notwithstanding continually inured with causes exorbitant, and such as their laws had not provided for. And in this point much more is granted us than we ask, namely, that for one thing which we have left to the order of the Church, they had twenty which were undecided by the express word of God; and that as their ceremonies and sacraments were multiplied above ours, even so grew the number of those cases which were not determined by any express word. So that if we may devise one law, they by this reason might devise twenty; and if their devising so many were not forbidden, shall their example prove us forbidden to devise as much as one law for the ordering of the Church? We might not devise no not one, if their example did prove that our Saviour had utterly forbidden all alteration of his laws; inasmuch as there can be no law devised, but needs it must either take away from his, or add thereunto more or less, and so make some kind of alteration. But of this so large a grant we are content not to take advantage. Men are oftentimes in a sudden passion more liberal than they would be if they had leisure to take advice. And therefore so bountiful words of course and frank speeches we are contented to let pass, without turning them unto advantage with too much rigour.

[8.] It may be they had rather be listened unto, when they commend the kings of Israel "which attempted nothing in "the government of the Church without the express word of "God²;" and when they urge³ that God left nothing in his word "undescribed," whether it concerned the worship of God or outward polity, nothing unset down, and therefore

¹ "Whereas you say, that they (the Jews) had nothing but what was determined by the law, and we have many things undetermined and left to the order of the Church; I will offer, for one that you shall bring that we have left to the order of the Church, to shew you that they had twenty which were undecided by the express

"word of God." T. C. lib. i. p. 35. [22.]

² T. C. in the table to his second book.

³ "If he will needs separate the worship of God from the external polity, yet as the Lord set forth the one, so he left nothing undescribed in the other." T. C. lib. ii. p. 446.

charged them strictly to keep themselves unto that, without any alteration. Howbeit, seeing it cannot be denied, but that many things there did belong unto the course of their public affairs, wherein they had no express word at all to shew precisely what they should do; the difference between their condition and ours in these cases will bring some light unto the truth of this present controversy. Before the fact of the son of Shelomith, there was no law which did appoint any certain punishment for blasphemers¹. That wretched creature being therefore apprehended in that impiety, was held in ward, till the mind of the Lord were known concerning his case. The like practice is also mentioned upon occasion of a breach of the Sabbath² day. They find a poor silly creature gathering sticks in the wilderness, they bring him unto Moses and Aaron and all the congregation, they lay him in hold, because it was not declared what should be done with him, till God had said unto Moses, "This man shall die the death³." The law required to keep the Sabbath; but for the breach of the Sabbath what punishment should be inflicted it did not appoint. Such occasions as these are rare. And for such things as do fall scarce once in many ages of men, it did suffice to take such order as was requisite when they fell. But if the case were such as being not already determined by law were notwithstanding likely oftentimes to come in question, it gave occasion of adding laws that were not before. Thus it fell out in the case of those men polluted⁴, and of the daughters of Zelophehad⁵, whose causes Moses having brought before the Lord, received laws to serve for the like in time to come. The Jews to this end had the Oracle of God, they had the Prophets: and by such means God himself instructed them from heaven what to do, in all things that did greatly concern their state and were not already set down in the Law. Shall we then hereupon argue even against our own experience and knowledge? Shall we seek to persuade men that of necessity it is with us as it was with them; that because God is ours in all respects as much as theirs, therefore either no such way of direction hath been at any time, or if it have been, it doth still continue in the Church; or if the same

¹ Levit. xxiv. 12. ² ["Sabbath," A. B.] ³ Numb. xv. 33-35.
⁴ Numb. ix. ⁵ Numb. xxvii.