

BOOK III. condemn all things done in the Church and not commanded of God to be done, saw it was necessary for them (continuing in defence of this their opinion) to hold that needs there must be in Scripture set down a complete particular form of church polity, a form prescribing how all the affairs of the Church must be ordered, a form in no respect lawful to be altered by mortal men¹. For reformation of which oversight and error in them, there were that thought it a part of Christian love and charity to instruct them better², and to open unto them the difference between matters of perpetual necessity to all men's salvation, and matters of ecclesiastical polity: the one both fully and plainly taught in holy Scripture, the other not necessary to be in such sort there prescribed; the one not capable of any diminution or augmentation at all by men, the other apt to admit both. Hereupon the authors of the former opinion were presently seconded by other wittier and better learned³, who being loth that the form of church polity which they sought to bring in should be otherwise than in the highest degree accounted of, took⁴ first an exception against the difference between church polity and matters of necessity unto salvation⁵; secondly, against the restraint of Scripture, which they say receiveth injury at our hands, when we teach that it teacheth not as well matters of polity as of faith and salvation⁶. Thirdly, Constrained hereby we have been therefore both to maintain that distinction, as a thing not only true in itself, but by them likewise so acknowledged, though unaware⁷; Fourthly, and to make manifest that from Scripture we offer not to derogate the least thing that truth thereunto doth claim, inasmuch as by us it is willingly confest, that the Scripture of God is a storehouse abounding with inestimable

¹ [I. Admon. to the Parl. fol. 1. ap. Whig. Def. 76. "Seeing that nothing in this mortal life is more diligently to be sought for, and carefully to be looked unto, than the restitution of true religion, and reformation of God's Church: it shall be your parts (dearly beloved) in this present parliament assembled, as much as in you lieth to promote the same, and to employ your whole labour and study not only in abandoning all popish remnants both in ceremonies and

"regiment, but also in bringing in "and placing in God's Church those "things only, which the Lord himself in his word commandeth."]

² [Vide Whiggit's Answer to the Admonition, p. 20-29.]

³ [By this it should seem that Hooker did not consider Cartwright himself as one of the authors of the Admonition.]

⁴ [See above, ch. ii. 2.]

⁵ [T. C. 1 Reply, p. 14.]

⁶ [T. C. ibid.]

⁷ [In ch. iii.]

treasures of wisdom and knowledge in many kinds, over and above things in this one kind barely necessary; yea, even that matters of ecclesiastical polity are not therein omitted, but taught also, albeit not so taught as those other things before mentioned¹. For so perfectly are those things taught, that nothing can ever need to be added, nothing ever cease to be necessary; these on the contrary side, as being of a far other nature and quality, not so strictly nor everlastingly commanded in Scripture, but that unto the complete form of church polity much may be requisite which the Scripture teacheth not, and much which it hath taught become unnecessary, sometime because we need not use it, sometime also because we cannot. In which respect for mine own part, although I see that certain reformed churches, the Scottish especially and French, have not that which best agreeth with the sacred Scripture², I mean the government that is by Bishops, inasmuch as both those churches are fallen under a different kind of regiment; which to remedy it is for the one altogether too late, and too soon for the other during their present affliction and trouble³: this their defect and imperfection I had rather lament in such case than exagitate, considering that men oftentimes without any fault of their own may be driven to want that kind of polity or regiment which is best, and to content themselves with that, which either the irremediable error of former times, or the necessity of the present hath cast upon them.

¹ [In ch. iv.]

² [Saravia, De diversis Ministrorum Gradibus, Prol. ad Lect. "De hoc novo Ecclesiæ regendæ modo "idem censeo, quod alii de Episcoporum regime judicant; nempe "quod sit humanus et ferendus, ubi "alius melior obtineri non potest: "et contra ille qui improbat tanquam humanus mihi videatur esse "divinus; upote qui tam in Veteri "quam in Novo Testamento a Deo "sit institutus." Sutcliffe, False Semblant of counterfeit Discipline detected, p. 8. "We say, that so much as Christ hath appointed to be observed, as that there be pastors to teach, and a certain government, and such like discipline, is diligently to be kept. Where

"He hath left it free, there the governors of the Church, i. e. Christian princes and bishops, may set "orders and see the same executed: "and the orders appointed by Christ, "and canons and customs of the "Church, we call ecclesiastical discipline: and this we account to be "changeable so far forth as is not by "Christ commanded to be kept."]

³ [The first part of Hooker's work was licensed to the press, March 9, 1592-3. The affliction meant is therefore the civil war in France, not the secession from protestantism of Henry IV: which was not made known till after June that year. Davila, lib. xiii. p. 697, comp. p. 692. Venice, 1692.]

[17.] Fifthly, Now because that position first-mentioned, which holdeth it necessary that all things which the Church may lawfully do in her own regiment be commanded in holy Scripture, hath by the later defenders thereof been greatly qualified; who, though perceiving it to be over extreme, are notwithstanding loth to acknowledge any oversight therein, and therefore labour what they may to salve it by construction; we have for the more perspicuity delivered what was thereby meant at the first¹: sixthly, how injurious a thing it were unto all the churches of God for men to hold it in that meaning²: seventhly, and how imperfect their interpretations are who so much labour to help it, either by dividing commandments of Scripture into two kinds, and so defending that all things must be commanded, if not in special yet in general precepts³; eighthly, or by taking it as meant, that in case the Church do devise any new order, she ought therein to follow the direction of Scripture only, and not any starlight of man's reason⁴. Ninthly, both which evasions being cut off, we have in the next place declared after what sort the Church may lawfully frame to herself laws of polity, and in what reckoning such positive laws both are with God and should be with men⁵. Tenthly, furthermore, because to abridge the liberty of the Church in this behalf, it hath been made a thing very odious, that when God himself hath devised some certain laws and committed them to sacred Scripture, man by abrogation, addition, or any way, should presume to alter and change them; it was of necessity to be examined, whether the authority of God in making, or his care in committing those his laws unto Scripture, be sufficient arguments to prove that God doth in no case allow they should suffer any such kind of change⁶. Eleventhly, the last refuge for proof that divine laws of Christian church polity may not be altered by extinguishment of any old or addition of new in that kind, is partly a marvellous strange discourse, that Christ (unless he should shew himself not so faithful as Moses, or not so wise as Lycurgus and Solon⁷) must needs have set down in holy

¹ [In ch. v.] ² [In ch. vi.] "singulorum munera potestatem-
³ [In ch. vii.] ⁴ [In ch. viii.] "que descripsit, quæ judiciorum
⁵ [In ch. ix.] ⁶ [In ch. x.] "forique ratio habenda, quomodo
⁷ "Nisi reip. suæ statum omnem
"constituent, magistratus ordinari, "civium finitæ lites: non solum
"minus Ecclesiæ Christianæ pro-

Scripture some certain complete and unchangeable form of polity¹: and partly a coloured show of some evidence where change of that sort of laws may seem expressly forbidden, although in truth nothing less be done².

[18.] I might have added hereunto their more familiar and popular disputes, as, The Church is a city, yea the city of the great King; and the life of a city is polity: The Church is the house of the living God; and what house can there be without some order for the government of it? In the royal house of a prince there must be officers for government, such as not any servant in the house but the prince whose the house is shall judge convenient. So the house of God must have orders for the government of it, such as not any of the household but God himself hath appointed. It cannot stand with the love and wisdom of God to leave such order untaken as is necessary for the due government of his Church. The numbers, degrees, orders, and attire of Salomon's servants, did shew his wisdom; therefore he which is greater than Salomon hath not failed to leave in his house such orders for government thereof, as may serve to be a looking-glass for his providence, care, and wisdom, to be seen in³. That little spark of the light of nature which remaineth in us may serve us for the affairs of this life. "But as in all other matters concerning the kingdom of heaven, so principally in this which concerneth the very government of that kingdom, needful it is we should be taught of God. As long as men are persuaded of any order that it is only of men, they presume of their own understanding, and they think to devise another not only as good, but better than that which they

"vidit quam Moses olim Judaicæ,
"sed quam a Lycurgo, Solone, Nu-
"ma, civitatibus suis prospectum
"sit." Lib. de Ecclesiast. Discip.
[fol. 8, or p. 10 of T. C.'s translation.]
¹ [In ch. xi. 1-8.]
² [Ch. xi. 9.]
³ [Ecc. Disc. fol. 143. "Chris-
"tiane Ecclesiæ, tanquam domus
"Dei (ut a Paulo appellatur) oïko-
"nomiæ qui attentius et accuratius
"consideraverit, animadvertet pro-
"fecto incredibilem quandam illam
"in omnibus ejus partibus et di-
"vinam sapientiam, ac tanto quidem
"illa Salomonis in sacra historia
"magis admirabilem, quanto sapi-
"entior Salomone fuerit qui omnem
"hujus domus ordinem rationemque
"descripsit. Sive enim ministro-
"rum ordines, sive accubitus, sive
"varium pro cuiusque dignitate or-
"natum et habitum consideremus,
"quod ad Ecclesiæ non modo salu-
"tem conservandam, sed etiam dig-
"nitatem illustrandam ornandam-
"que aut prudenter excogitari, aut
"cum judicio atque ratione disponi
"collocarique potuerit: quid in hac
"οἰκονομία requiratur?"

BOOK III. "have received. By severity of punishment this presumption
Ch. xi. 19.
 "and curiosity may be restrained. But that cannot work
 "such cheerful obedience as is yielded where the conscience
 "hath respect to God as the author of laws and orders. This
 "was it which countenanced the laws of Moses, made con-
 "cerning outward polity for the administration of holy things.
 "The like some lawgivers of the heathens did pretend, but
 "falsely; yet wisely discerning the use of this persuasion.
 "For the better obedience¹ sake therefore it was expedient
 "that God should be author of the polity of his Church."

[19.] But to what issue doth all this come? A man would think that they which hold out with such discourses were of nothing more fully persuaded than of this, that the Scripture hath set down a complete form of church polity, universal, perpetual, altogether unchangeable. For so it would follow, if the premises were sound and strong to such effect as is pretended. Notwithstanding, they which have thus formally maintained argument in defence of the first oversight, are by the very evidence of truth themselves constrained to make this in effect their conclusion, that the Scripture of God hath many things concerning church polity; that of those many some are of greater weight, some of less; that what hath been urged as touching immutability of laws, it extendeth in truth no farther than only to laws wherein things of greater moment are prescribed. Now those things of greater moment, what are they? Forsooth,¹ "doctors, pastors, lay-elders, elderships "compounded of these three; synods, consisting of many "elderships; deacons, women-church-servants or widows; "free consent of the people unto actions of greatest moment, "after they be by churches or synods orderly resolved." All "this form" of polity (if yet we may term that a form of building, when men have laid a few rafters together, and those not all of the soundest neither) but howsoever, all this form they conclude is prescribed in such sort, that to add to it any thing as of like importance (for so I think they mean) or to abrogate of it any thing at all, is unlawful. In which resolution if they will firmly and constantly persist, I see not but that concerning the points which hitherto have been disputed of, they must agree that they have molested the Church

¹ The Defence of Godly Ministers against D. Bridges, p. 133.

with needless opposition, and henceforward as we said before BOOK III.
Ch. xi. 20.
 betake themselves wholly unto the trial of particulars, whether every of those things which they esteem as principal, be either so esteemed of, or at all established for perpetuity in holy Scripture; and whether any particular thing in our Church polity be received other than the Scripture alloweth of, either in greater things or in smaller.

[20.] The matters wherein Church polity is conversant are the public religious duties of the Church, as the administration of the word and sacraments, prayers, spiritual censures, and the like. To these the Church standeth always bound. Laws of polity, are laws which appoint in what manner these duties shall be performed.

In performance whereof because all that are of the Church cannot jointly and equally work, the first thing in polity required is a difference of persons in the Church, without which difference those functions cannot in orderly sort be executed. Hereupon we hold that God's clergy are a state, which hath been and will be, as long as there is a Church upon earth, necessary by the plain word of God himself; a state whereunto the rest of God's people must be subject as touching things that appertain to their souls' health. For where polity is, it cannot but appoint some to be leaders of others, and some to be led by others. "If the blind lead the "blind, they both perish¹." It is with the clergy, if their persons be respected, even as it is with other men; their quality many times far beneath that which the dignity of their place requireth. Howbeit according to the order of polity, they being the "lights of the world²," others (though better and wiser) must that way be subject unto them.

Again, forasmuch as where the clergy are any great multitude, order doth necessarily require that by degrees they be distinguished; we hold there have ever been and ever ought to be in such case at leastwise two sorts of ecclesiastical persons, the one subordinate unto the other; as to the Apostles in the beginning, and to the Bishops always since, we find plainly both in Scripture and in all ecclesiastical records, other ministers of the word and sacraments have been.

Moreover, it cannot enter into any man's conceit to think

¹ Luke vi. 39.

² Matt. v. 14.

BOOK III. it lawful, that every man which listeth should take upon him
Ch. xi. 21.
 charge in the Church ; and therefore a solemn admittance is
 of such necessity, that without it there can be no church-
 polity.

A number of particularities there are, which make for the more convenient being of these principal and perpetual parts in ecclesiastical polity, but yet are not of such constant use and necessity in God's Church. Of this kind are, times and places appointed for the exercise of religion ; specialties belonging to the public solemnity of the word, the sacraments, and prayer ; the enlargement or abridgment of functions ministerial depending upon those two principal before-mentioned ; to conclude, even whatsoever doth by way of formality and circumstance concern any public action of the Church. Now although that which the Scripture hath of things in the former kind be for ever permanent : yet in the later both much of that which the Scripture teacheth is not always needful ; and much the Church of God shall always need which the Scripture teacheth not.

So as the form of polity by them set down for perpetuity is three ways faulty : faulty in omitting some things which in Scripture are of that nature, as namely the difference that ought to be of Pastors when they grow to any great multitude : faulty in requiring Doctors, Deacons, Widows, and such like, as things of perpetual necessity by the law of God, which in truth are nothing less : faulty also in urging some things by Scripture immutable, as their Lay-elders, which the Scripture neither maketh immutable nor at all teacheth, for any thing either we can as yet find or they have hitherto been able to prove. But hereof more in the books that follow.

[21.] As for those marvellous discourses whereby they adventure to argue that God must needs have done the thing which they imagine was to be done ; I must confess I have often wondered at their exceeding boldness herein. When the question is whether God have delivered in Scripture (as they affirm he hath) a complete, particular, immutable form of church polity, why take they that other both presumptuous and superfluous labour to prove he should have done it ; there being no way in this case to prove the deed of God, saving only by producing that evidence wherein

he hath done it ? But if there be no such thing apparent BOOK III.
Ch. xi. 21.
 upon record, they do as if one should demand a legacy by force and virtue of some written testament, wherein there being no such thing specified, he pleadeth that there it must needs be, and bringeth arguments from the love or goodwill which always the testator bore him ; imagining, that these or the like proofs will convict a testament to have that in it which other men can no where by reading find. In matters which concern the actions of God, the most dutiful way on our part is to search what God hath done, and with meekness to admire that, rather than to dispute what he in congruity of reason ought to do. The ways which he hath whereby to do all things for the greatest good of his Church are more in number than we can search, other in nature than that we should presume to determine which of many should be the fittest for him to choose, till such time as we see he hath chosen of many some one ; which one we then may boldly conclude to be the fittest, because he hath taken it before the rest. When we do otherwise, surely we exceed our bounds ; who and where we are we forget ; and therefore needful it is that our pride in such cases be controlled, and our disputes beaten back with those demands of the blessed Apostle, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or "who was his counsellor¹ ?"

¹ Rom. xi. 33, 34.