

*antinomian*, expunging one of the commandments of the decalogue, and making a hypocritical will-worship to take the place of holy obedience. She is an idolatrous church. As to the *Spirit*, she is a Pelagian, or, at the very best, a semi-Pelagian.

(c), *Ordinances*. The most of her ordinances are of her own invention; but even of those which God has ordained, she has changed utterly their *nature* and their *use*, so that they are no longer the ordinances of God. Baptism, the Lord's supper, ordination, are changed materially and formally. As to the use, her notion of the efficacy of the sacraments denies the agency of the Spirit, and makes them *causes* or *laws* of grace instead of *means*. So that no sinner believing the creed of Rome and obeying the laws of Rome, can possibly be saved. She is, therefore, no church of Christ.

#### THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHURCH POWER.

1. The church may be considered either as to its essence or being, or as to its power and order, when it is organized. As to its essence or being, its constituent parts are its *matter* and *form*.

2. By the *matter* of the church is meant the persons of which the church consists, with their qualifications; by the *form*, the relation among these persons, as organized into one body.

3. The *matter* of the church has been fully considered in the preceding lectures, together with some of the other questions connected with the form; and, first, as to church power—*potestas*.

4. The nature of church power must be considered before the consideration of the several modes in which it is exercised, because everything connected with these modes, offices, officers, courts, &c., is found in the grant of power to the church itself, and the institution of a polity and rule therein by Jesus Christ, her only Head and King.

5. This power comes from Christ alone. The government of the church is upon his shoulders, to order it (his kingdom), and to establish it with judgment and justice forever. All power is given to him, in heaven and earth, by the Father, and he is the head of the church, which is his body, and head over all things else for the sake of his body. (See *Westminster Assembly's Form of Government*, Preface; and our *Form of Government*, Chap. II, Sec. 1, Art. 1; Isaiah ix. 6, 7; Matthew xxviii. 18-20; Eph. i. 20-23, compared with Eph. iv. 8-11, and Psalm lxviii. 18.)

6. This power, therefore, in the church is only "ministerial and declarative," that is, the power of a minister or a servant to declare and execute the law of the Master, Christ, as revealed in his word, the statute-book of his kingdom, the Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments. No officer or court of the church has any legislative power. "Christ alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to the word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship." (*Confession of Faith*, Chap. XX. Sec. 2.) Slavery to Christ alone is the true and only freedom of the human soul.

7. This statement is opposed to the theories of, 1st, Papists ; 2nd, Erastians ; 3rd, Latitudinarians.

8. The papists, by their claim of infallibility for the church as the *interpreter* of the Scriptures, as well as by the claim to *make* scripture (apocrypha and tradition), make the power of the church *magisterial* instead of *ministerial* and *legislative* instead of *declarative*. Hence the brutal disregard, in that church, of the liberty of Christ's people. Antichrist has usurped the prophetic and regal as well as the priestly offices of the church's head. Hence the name *Antichrist*, in the *place of*, and therefore *against*, Christ.

9. The Erastians deliver the church into the hands of the civil magistrate, some of them admitting one of

the keys to belong to the church (the key of *doctrine*) ; others, more consistently, denying to the church the power of both keys, and so destroying the autonomy of the church altogether. This is to be considered more fully hereafter. (*Con. of Faith*, Chap. XXIII.)

10. The Latitudinarians (I use the word for want of a better) hold a *discretionary* power in the church, limited only by the prohibitions of the word ; whatever is not prohibited, or contradicted by what is commanded, is lawful, is a matter of Christian liberty, and the church has power to order or not according to her views of expediency. This theory is held, or rather practically carried out, in various degrees. Some, as Archbishop Whately (*Kingdom of Christ*), contend that ecclesiastical power is ordained of God in the sense in which the civil is ordained. (Rom. xiii. 1, 2.) The "powers that be" are said to be "ordained of God," because God has so constituted man that he cannot live except in society, and society cannot be maintained except by an organization, more or less complete, and a government of some sort. Now, men of different races and different histories require different forms of government. The government must be organic product, the outgrowth, the fruit of the people's history ; and as, consequently, it is mere political quackery to prescribe the same civil constitution for all nations alike ; so, in the society of the church, there must be a government, and the government must be determined by the character and circumstances of the people ; and as no form of ecclesiastical polity is forbidden in the New Testament, the church is free to adopt any that suits her.

Others (see Hodge's *Church Polity*, pages 121 ff.), afraid to go so far, contend that general principles are laid down in Scripture, but details are left to the discretion and wisdom of the church. This is obviously a very unsatisfactory rule. What are "general principles"? General principles may be either

“regulative” or “constitutive.” Regulative principles define only ends to be aimed at, or conditions to be observed ; constitutive determine the concrete form in which those ends are to be realized. Regulative express the *spirit*, constitutive, the *form* of a government. It is a regulative principle, for example, that all governments should be administered for the good of the governed ; it is a constitutive principle that the government should be lodged in the hands of such and such officers, and dispensed by such and such courts. Regulative principles define nothing as to the mode of their own exemplification ; constitutive principles determine the elements of an actual polity. (*Thornwell's Works*, IV., page 252.)

Now, if Dr. Hodge's general principles are regulative only, then he is as much of a latitudinarian as Whately. If they are constitutive, he is as much a “strict-constructionist” as Dr. Thornwell. He uses an illustration which in one part would seem to indicate that his general principles are constitutive ; but in the other, regulative. “There are fixed laws,” he says, “assigned by God, according to which all healthful development and action of the external church are determined. But, as within the limits of the laws which control the development of the human body there is endless diversity among different races, adapting them to different climes and modes of living, so also in the church. It is not tied down to one particular mode of organization and action at all times, and under all circumstances.” Now, the two parts of his illustration do not hold together. The *organization* of the human body is the *same* in all races, climes and ages. Differences of complexion, stature, conformation, *et cetera*, there doubtless are ; but the *organization* is the same. And this is the kind of unity and uniformity we claim for the church as a divine institute. Hodge elsewhere seems to acknowledge something like constitutive principles revealed in Scripture. He makes the three dis-

tinctive features of Presbyterianism to be : 1st, The parity of the ministry ; 2nd, The right of the people to take part in the government ; 3rd, The unity of the church. I do not acknowledge these to be distinctive principles of Presbyterianism ; but they look something like constitutive principles. We shall see hereafter that the second of these principles is no principle of Presbyterianism at all, much less a distinctive one.

In regard to this latitudinarian theory, I observe :

1st. That it differs little in effect from the Papal and Erastian. It makes man, and not God, to determine the whole matter.

2nd. It is contrary to the Protestant doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice. See *C. of F.*, Ch. I, Sec. 6; "the whole counsel of God," &c. It implies that in regard to a large sphere of human duty, and that too, concerning so high a matter as the government of the kingdom of Christ, men are left to walk in the light of their own eyes.

3rd. It is contrary to the liberty of the people of God. Dr. Hodge and others speak of strict Presbyterians as if they were bringing the church under the yoke of bondage by insisting upon a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything. We answer, that the liberty of the believer does not consist in doing what he pleases, but in being the slave of Christ. "Be ye not the slaves of *men*" is the apostle's command. And the assumption of this wide discretion by the church has been the great cause of the tyranny which has been exercised by church rulers over the poor sheep of Christ. Liberty, in the mouths of those who have the power in their hands, means doing what they please, serving their own lust of dominion, and lording it over the weak and defenceless. Witness the Pharisees, Papists, Anglicans, and the free democracies. Liberty is a mere word to juggle with, except in the sphere of the Spirit and in union with Christ. Where the largest discretionary

power has been claimed and exercised in the nominal church of God, there have the people groaned under the hardest bondage ; for it is the discretionary power of the rulers to impose burdens upon the people. First prelacy, then popery, with the aid of the "Catholic doctrine," grew out of the notion that the constitution of the church in the apostolic age did not suit the church in its more advanced stage, and that a form corresponding with the organization of the empire would suit the people better, and not being condemned by the Word, it might be lawfully established. Hence, as there were prefects, ex-archs, *et cet.*, in the civil, so there ought to be patriarchs, metropolitans, etc., in the ecclesiastical organization. And as the civil pyramid was capped with an emperor, so the ecclesiastical with a pope. But what became of the liberties of the people? So also in England—contest between Puritans and Anglicans. The liberty of the monarch, or the parliament, or the church, to convert the *adiaphora* into laws, was only the liberty to destroy the liberty of those whom God hath made free. The "judicious Hooker" laid the egg which was hatched by the imperious Laud. Another instance, sadder than all to us, is the history of the Old School Presbyterian Church of the North, which set up its deliverances on "doctrine, loyalty, and freedom," as terms of communion in the church. The word of God, and that word *only*, is the safe-guard of freedom.

4th. It is founded upon a false analogy between a natural, social and civil, or political development, and a supernatural, social, and ecclesiastical development. In the sphere of man's natural life, it is undoubtedly true, as has been already suggested, that the form of civil polity must be determined by the character, circumstances, or, in a word, by the history of a people ; must be the *fruit* of the past, and not an arbitrary theory or utopian constitution, founded upon abstract notions of what is best. And, consequently, since the

life of every people is its own, and different from that of every other people, the government must be different. A striking proof of this is to be found in the present condition of this country, where two sections of a country have had such different developments that one must be held, by main force, as a conquered province, *because* it adhered to the constitution of the country, and the other has forsaken and subverted the constitution. But the case is very different with the church, for the simple reason that her life is not natural, but supernatural ; she does not *grow* into a free commonwealth, but is *free-born*, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. She is composed of all kindreds and tongues, and peoples and nations. All the members, whether subjects of a monarchy, or citizens of a republic, are spiritually and ecclesiastically free : “For where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Hence, in the early church, the subjects of a Nero or Caligula, or Domitian were at the same time, members of a free commonwealth. In the state the soul makes for itself a body, an external organism, through which it may act; in the church the soul, as in the old creation, has a body made for it by God, its creator. The polity of the church, therefore, like the body of man, ought to be everywhere the same organism essentially. It confirms this view, that the church changed its external organization only after she had become corrupt and had lost her internal and spiritual freedom. After she had become worldly in spirit, she became subject to like changes with the world, and this liability to change became the more marked when she became identified with the world through her union with the state under Constantine and his successors. In the middle ages the nominal church had become almost natural and earthly in her life, and, of course, lost her freedom altogether. For a great portion of her history her true life has been maintained in small bodies of witnesses, whom she

disowned and persecuted. And so in the Northern States of this country, she identified herself with the civil power and exhibited more of the spirit of the harlot upon the scarlet-colored beast, than of the spirit of the spouse of Christ.

5th. It is contrary to the plain teachings of God's word and of our constitution, in regard to the nature of church power. According to those standards, all church power is "ministerial and declarative." The officers of the church are, collectively, a ministry, and each officer is a minister or servant. Christ himself condescended to be a minister, and in that memorable rebuke which he administered to the ambition of his disciples, he informs them that the power which they are to exercise in the church is unlike that of civil rulers, even of those civil rulers whose administration has entitled them to the denomination of "benefactors"; for it is a power of *service*, of obedience to him for the sake of his church, and not a power of lordship or dominion. The only honor in the church is the honor of hard work for the church. The power of a preacher is the power of a minister or servant to declare his Master's will, both in reference to the *credenda* and *agenda* in preaching. The power of a ruling elder is the power to do the like in ruling, and especially to apply that will in the actual exercise of discipline. A presbytery, whether congregational, provincial or general, is a body of servants or ministers to declare the law and find the facts and render a verdict, such as is authorized by the word of Christ, who has established the court, created the judges, and defined their functions. A deacon, as his very name signifies, is a servant to do his master's will in regard to the collection, custody and distribution of the revenues of his kingdom.

6th. Lastly, it is contrary to the nature of the believer's *life*, which is a life of faith and of obedience, implying a divine testimony and a divine command. If



the church officers, then, have power to make institutions and create officers which God has not ordained, then the people have the right to refuse obedience, and there is a dead lock in the machinery. There is no power to enforce obedience, for all church power is moral and spiritual, and no man can be required to promise or render obedience except in the Lord.

11. All church power then is simply “ministerial or declarative.” The Bible is a positive charter—a definite constitution—and what is not granted is, for that reason, held to be forbidden. A constitution, from the nature of the case, can only prescribe what *must be*. If it should attempt explicitly, to forbid everything which human ingenuity, malice, or audacity, might invent, the world could scarcely contain the things that should be written. The whole function of the church, therefore, is confined to interpretation and obedience of the *word*. All additions to the word, if not *explicitly* prohibited, are at least prohibited *implicitly* in the general command that *nothing be added*.

12. The ministerial and declarative power of the church has been distributed in the books into several classes. For instance, in the Second Book of Discipline of the Kirk of Scotland, Andrew Melville says: “The whole policy of the Kirk consisteth in three things, viz.: in *doctrine, discipline* and *distribution*,” where the alliteration is used for a mnemonic purpose. “Discipline” is used in the wise sense of government and “distribution” for everything pertaining to the office of deacon. Others (see *Turretin*, L. 18, Q. 29, ¶ 5), divide church power into *dogmatic* and *judicial*, or *disciplinary*, corresponding with the symbol of the “keys”—the key of knowledge and the key of discipline or government; or where the figure is that of a pastor or shepherd instead of a steward—the *staff* “Beauty,” and the staff “Bands.” Zech. xi. 7. There is a distribution of this power better still (see *Turretin ut supra*) into *dogmatic, diatactic* and *diacritic*. The

first relating to doctrine, the second to polity and administration, the third to the judicial exercise of discipline. Another distribution of the *potestas ecclesiastica* is into *potestas ordinis* and *potestas regiminis* or *jurisdictionis*. (Note the sense in which these terms are used by papal writers, p. 49 *supra*. See Second Book of Discipline, chapter I.; also Gillespie's Assertion of the Government of the Kirk of Scotland, in *Presbyterian Armory*, Vol. I, p. 12; of Gillespie's Treatise, Chap. II.) This distinction signalizes the mode in which power is exercised, whether by church officers *severally*, or church officers *jointly*; the *potestas ordinis* being a *several* power; the *potestas regiminis*, a *joint* power. Teaching may be either. The preacher exercises the power of order when he preaches the gospel; a church court exercises the power of government when it composes or issues a creed, or when it testifies for the doctrine or precepts of Christ, and against errors and immoralities. It is teaching, and that jointly, the word of Christ, either in regard to what we are to believe concerning God or what God requires of us. The *dogmatic* power, therefore, may be either jointly or severally exercised. The *didactic* and the *diacritic* must be exercised *jointly*, and, therefore, belong to the *potestas regiminis* or *jurisdictionis*. The Westminster standards are composed and arranged according to this division. The Confession of Faith and the Catechisms belong to the *potestas dogmatica*; the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Order mainly to the *potestas diatactica*; the Canons of Discipline mainly to the *potestas diacritica*.

13. Proof that this power belongs to the church. 1st. From the gift of the keys. Matthew xvi. 19, 20; xviii. 19; John xx. 22, 23. 2d. From the nature of society. This power constitutes the bands and joints by which it is at once able to live and to act. 3d. From the existence of offices in the church; but office implies power. 4th. From the titles given to these

offices in 1 Tim. v. 17, I Thess. v. 12, Heb. xiii. 17, Acts xx. 28, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2; Titus i. 7; 1 Cor. xii. 28. 5th, From passages of Scripture in which the exercise of this power is mentioned, such as 2 Cor. x. 8, also as 1 Cor. ix. 4, 5, 6; 2 Cor. xiii. 10, where "power" corresponds with *potestas*. Also 1 Cor. v. 3, 4, 5. 6th, From the fact that a distinction was made, even in the Old Testament, between the civil and the ecclesiastical power; but of this more hereafter.

14. As to the *diatactic* power of the church some-thing must be said more particularly, for it is here that the greatest controversies have arisen. How far does this arranging, ordering power of the church extend?

According to the view we have taken of church power, as "ministerial and declarative," this question amounts to the same as the question, "How far, and in what sense, has the church discretionary power over details of order, worship, etc.?" We have seen that there is no legislative power in the church, properly so called, but only a *judicial* and administrative power. The law is in the Bible and nowhere else, and Christ is the only lawgiver. But all the details of the application of the law are not given, and could not have been given without swelling the book to dimensions utterly incompatible with its ready use as a rule. Voluminous as human law is, it cannot enter into minutiae, *e.g.*, Congress by law establishes the Department of War, or of State, in the executive administration of the government; but it leaves the making of "regulations" in circumstantial matters, or matters of detail, to the head of the department or of a particular bureau; and this officer, therefore, does not exercise *legislative* power in making such "regulations," but a *diatactic* power, the power of arranging and ordering under the law. So in the church, the *doctrine* of the church and its *government* and *worship* are laid down in Scripture, and the declaration of this doctrine belongs to the *potestas dogmatica*. But there are "cir-

cumstances in the worship of God and the government of the church common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed." See C. of F., Chap. I. Sec. 6, and 1 Cor. xi. 13, 14; xiv. 26-40. The acts of church courts in reference to these "circumstances," are executive, or administrative, or diatactic "*regulations*," "Circumstances," in the sense of our Confession, are those concomitants of an action, without which it can either not be done at all, or cannot be done with decency and decorum. Public worship, for example, requires public assemblies, and in public assemblies people must agree upon a time and a place for the meeting, and must appear in some costume and assume some posture. Whether they shall shock common sentiment in their attire, or conform to common practice; whether they shall stand, or sit, or lie, or whether each shall be at liberty to determine his own attitude—these are circumstances. They are necessary concomitants of the actions, and the church is at liberty to regulate them. Parliamentary assemblies cannot transact their business with decorum, efficiency and dispatch without moderators, rules of order, committees, etc.; and the parliamentary assembly, and, therefore, the church, may appoint moderators, committees, etc. All the details in reference to the distribution of courts, the definition of a quorum, the times of their meeting, the manner in which they shall be opened, details which occupy so large a space in our Book of Order, are "circumstances" which the church, in the exercise of her diatactic power, has a perfect right to arrange. We must carefully distinguish between those circumstances which attend "human actions" as such, *i.e.*, without which the actions could not be, and those circumstances which, though not essential, are added as appendages. These last do not fall within the jurisdiction of the church.

She has no right to appoint them. They are circumstances in the sense that they do not belong to the substance of the act. They are *not* circumstances in the sense that they so surround it (*circumstant*) that they cannot be separated from it. (See *Turretin*, L. 18, Q. 31, specially ¶ 3, p. 242-'3, of Vol. III. Carter's ed., 1847.)

A liturgy is a circumstance of this kind, as also bowing at the name of Jesus, the sign of the cross in baptism, instrumental music and clerical robes, *et cet.* (See Owen's *Discourse on Liturgies* and *Thornwell's Works*, IV. p. 247.) With this view agrees Calvin. (See *Instit.* B. 4, ch. 10, pp. 28-31.) The notion of Calvin and our Confession is briefly this : In public worship, indeed in all commanded external actions, there are two elements, a fixed and a variable. The fixed element, involving the essence or the thing, is beyond the discretion of the church. The variable, involving only the "circumstances" of the action, its separable accidents, may be changed, modified or altered, according to the exigencies of the case. The rules of social intercourse and of grave assemblies in different countries vary. The church accommodates her arrangements so as not to revolt the public sense of propriety. Where people recline at the meals she would administer the Lord's supper to communicants in a reclining attitude; where they sit she would change the mode. (*Thornwell's Works*, IV. pp. 246-7. See also Cunningham's *Reformers and Theologians of the Reformation*, p. 31, "Of the views," &c., to the bottom of p. 32. Also his essay on *Church Power*, ch. 9, of his *Church Principles*, p. 235 and ff. Also Gillespie's *Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies*, pt. 3, ch. 7, in *Presbyterian Armory*, Vol. I.

Laws bind the conscience *per se* or *simpliciter*. Regulations bind it *secundum quid*, *i.e.*, indirectly and mediately in case of scandal and contempt. In the first, we regard the authority of God alone; in the second, we regard the good of our neighbors. In the

first, the *auctoritas mandantis*; in the second, the *mandati causa* (the avoiding of offence.) See *Turretin*, L. 18, Q. 31, Vol. III., p. 255, *Carter's ed.*

### XIII

#### THE POWER ECCLESIASTICAL CONTRASTED WITH THE POWER CIVIL. RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE STATE.

We may obtain a still clearer view of the nature and extent of church power (the topic of the last lecture), by comparing it with the civil power, and considering the relations of the two organizations to which these powers belong. In addition to this reason for a careful consideration of this topic, the history of this country furnishes a very weighty one. The providence of God has, in the loudest tones, recalled the attention of the church to its own nature, as constituted and defined by himself, to the nature and functions of the state (which is also his ordinance) and to the relations between the two.

1. The fundamental relations implied in the distinction between the power civil and the power ecclesiastical have been recognized, more or less clearly, from the beginning of the history of our race. These relations are that of man to man in a state of society, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that of man to God, the Creator, the Moral Governor, the Judge and Sovereign Proprietor of man. They have been designated by different names, and have been the objects of divers kinds of legislation, according to the diversities of age and country; but whether known by this name or that; whether, in practice, partially separated or totally confounded, the relations themselves have been, and could not but be, apprehended. The relation of man to God would be developed in the operations of conscience arraiging the offender before an invisible tribunal, and pointing him to a coming retribution;