

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 30.-Of Church Censures.

I. The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a Government, in the hand of Church Officers, distinct from the Civil Magistrate¹.

Question 1.—*Has the Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, appointed therein a government in the hands of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate?*

Answer.—Yes. Isa. 9:6, 7; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Acts 20:17, 28; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Cor. 12:28; Matt. 28:18-20. Thus do the Erastians and others err, who maintain, that in the holy Scripture there is no particular form of church government set down, and appointed by Christ. They are confuted by the following reasons: 1.) Because the Lord Jesus Christ has delivered to the ministers of his church, as to his own delegates and ambassadors (and therefore according to his own laws) the whole power of governing the church, which he himself received from the Father, to be managed, and put in execution in his own name and authority, John 20:21; Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:2; Eph. 4:7, 8, 11. 2.) Because all the substantials of church government, under the New Testament, which either concern ministers, ordinances, censures, synods, councils, and their power, are proposed, and set down in Scripture, 1 Tim. 3; Acts 15; 1 Cor. 14:26, 40. 3.) Because the Lord Jesus Christ has looked to the good of his church no less under the New Testament, than under the Old. Therefore, since the church under the Old Testament, had a most perfect form of government prescribed to it; and since there is as great need and necessity of church order and discipline under the New Testament, as was under the Old, it must follow, that there is a pattern and form of church government no less set down and prescribed under the New Testament, than under the Old, Heb. 3:1-5; 13:8; 1 Cor. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:20; 1:20. 4.) The end of church government is spiritual, namely, the gaining of men's souls to Christ. But nothing that is merely of human authority can reach this end, Matt. 18:15-17. 5.) Because all the parts of church government, are particularly set down in Scripture. As first, those things which concern the key of doctrine, as public prayer, and giving of thanks, 1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:14-16; singing of psalms, Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16; public reading of the Word, preaching and expounding the same, Acts 6:4; 13:15, 17; 5:21; 1 Cor. 3:14; Matt. 18:19, 20; 2 Tim. 4:11; Heb. 6:1; Gal. 6:6. Secondly, parts likewise which concern the key of discipline; namely, the ordination of presbyters, with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23. Thirdly, the authoritative giving of judgment, and sentence concerning doctrine, and that according to the Word, Acts 15:15, 24, 28. Fourthly, admonition and public rebuking of those who have offended, Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:20. Fifthly, the excommunicating of those who are contumacious and ungodly, and who are convicted of manifest crimes and scandals, Matt. 18:17; Tit. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Cor. 5:2-5. Lastly, the receiving again into fellowship of the church, persons cast out by excommunication, having testified their repentance, 2 Cor. 2:6-9.

¹ Isa. 9:6, 7; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Acts 20:17, 28; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Cor. 12:28; Matt. 28:18-20.

Likewise, the same Erastians err, who make no distinction between the church power and the secular power. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because Christ has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the officers of his church, which are governors distinct from the civil magistrate, Matt. 16:18, 19; 18:19; John 20:21-23. 2.) Because church power and civil power differ specifically, Num. 18:7; Jer. 13:18. The church, and the common-wealth are polities formally, and essentially different, Matt. 22:21. They are not, as such, powers subordinate, at least in a right line, but co-ordinate, Acts 4:19, 20; 2 Chron. 26:18. The matter (*materia ex qua*) of the civil government is the secular sword, Rom. 13:4; but the matter of the church government, are the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 18:18. These keys are usually numbered as four: [1.] The *clavis δογματική*, the key of dogma, or doctrine, by which the church is given the power to determine matters of faith according to the rule of Scripture, John 20:20-23; 1 Cor. 4:1; 11:23; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; 2 Thess. 2:15. [2.] The *clavis διατακτική*, the key of order and decency, whereby the circumstances of worship and things not determined in Scripture are determined by ministers and ruling elders of the church, according to the general rules of the Word, in order to avoid scandal and promote edification, 1 Cor. 11:16, 34; 14:26, 40. [3.] The *clavis κριτική*, the key of judgment, which brings corrective discipline upon the scandalous and obstinate, Matt. 18:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:4, 5, 9-13. [4.] The *clavis έξονσιαστική*, the key of authority, which is the power of sending *via* ordination, Rom. 10:15; 1 Tim. 4:14; Heb. 5:4. The matter of the civil government (*materia in qua*) may be the senate, many people, the person of one king, etc. But the matter of the church government is not of this kind, Heb. 13:22; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 14:34, 35. The matter of the civil government (*materia circa quam*) are men and women, as members of the common-wealth, without, as well as within the church; but as Christians and members of the church, they are not such, 1 Cor. 5:13. The formal causes of both are distinct; the one inflicts punishments merely spiritual, the other inflicts punishments merely civil, *cf.* Matt. 10:28. Lastly, the end of this, is the corporal and external good of a society; but the end of that, is the spiritual good of the church and its edification, Matt. 18:15; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 10:8.