

PART II.—POWER OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOURCE OF CHURCH POWER, OR THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST.

WE have already had occasion to advert to the fact, that Christianity is not merely a personal religion, but in its very nature a social one; and that on the basis of the doctrines which He taught, our Lord laid the foundations of a spiritual society, which He gave warrant and instructions to His immediate followers fully to settle and complete. There is implied in the very idea of such a society, call it by the name of a Church, or kingdom of Christ, or what you will,—something in the shape of a power of order, or government, or authority, or law, as connected with it. Admit the existence of a community of a separate and peculiar kind, owing its origin to Christ on this earth, and you also admit the existence of some kind of power or authority, as from the very nature of the case connected with the community. It may be a power limited to its own members, and restricted to the single object for which the society exists; but some sort of power, or order, or jurisdiction, must exist in every regularly constituted society, of whatever kind, from the very nature of it.¹

There seem to be at least two things implied in the simplest notion of an organized and regular society, which is in any degree independent and self-acting. First, it must have its office-bearers. Whatever may be the character and objects of the association, secular or sacred, and whatever be the manner in which its officers

¹ [Quemadmodum enim nulla urbs, nullusve pagus, sine magistratu et politia stare potest: sic Ecclesia Dei sua quadam spirituali politia indiget: quæ tamen a civili prorsus distincta est, eamque adeo nihil impedit aut imminuit, ut potius multum juvet ac promoveat. Ista igitur jurisdictionis potestas nihil aliud erit in summa, quam ordo comparatus ad spiritualis politie conservationem.—CALVIN, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xi. 1.]

are appointed, whether by rotation, or succession, or election of the members, it is essential to every society of a regular and orderly kind, to have office-bearers to represent the mind of the community, to conduct its business, and to act on its behalf. It may be a society of a private kind, instituted for the advancement of science or art, or the transaction of ordinary affairs; or it may be a society of a public kind, like the state, instituted for the promotion or protection of the civil rights and interests of the commonwealth; but whatever it be, this, from the very nature of the case, seems to be essential to it, that the members at large should have organs who represent them, and are invested with something of their power and rights, and act on behalf of the whole. In other words, every society, be it what it may, must have its office-bearers. Second, it must have its laws, to bind both members and office-bearers, to regulate their conduct in reference to each other and to foreign parties, and to determine the course and order of their transactions as a society. For internal regulation and external action it is necessary, unless the society is to fall into utter confusion and disorder, fatal to its very existence as a community, that the doings both of its members and office-bearers should proceed upon some settled principles or fixed rules. This necessity is equally unavoidable, whether the society be a private or a public one, and whatever be the manner in which its laws are enacted, or the authority by which they are imposed. Come from what quarter they may, whether from internal or external sources, some regulations or fixed principles of action are necessary for every community, if it would exist or act at all.

These two things, then, are essential to every society, whatever be its nature or objects—namely, office-bearers of some kind, and laws of some kind; in other words, a general power for government, and order, and action in the society of some sort, and coming from some quarter or another.¹ And such a power we actually find to belong to the Church of Christ, in common with every other orderly society; and it is, in fact, equally as in the case of other societies, essential to its wellbeing, and even necessary to its existence. Without some such power the Christian Church must cease to exist as a society at all. Without determining anything at present about its nature, its extent, its limits, and its objects, we may safely lay it down as a principle not to be disputed, that

* ¹ Whately, *Kingdom of Christ*, 4th ed. pp. 92-95.

a power of order and action must belong to the Church of Christ, if it can be called in any sense of the term a society or community of Christians. It is regarding this power, existing in connection with the Christian society, that we are now, under the second general division of our subject, to proceed to inquire. That society must have its laws and office-bearers, like every other society. It must have something, in one form or other, that rightly bears the name of Church power. To this, considered generally, we are now to direct our attention. And in entering upon the examination of the grand subject of the power of the Church, the question that first meets us is, as to the source from which this power is derived. To this question, then, we now address ourselves.

There are examples, familiar to our minds, and exhibited to view every day, of two kinds of societies, each possessing within itself a power of government and action, but that power derived from different and opposite sources. In the first place, we have the familiar example of societies of a private and voluntary kind, associated together and instituted for the promotion of some object or interest not of a public nature in the large sense of the term, such as societies voluntarily established for advancing literature or science, or for transacting the secular and ordinary business of life. There is a certain power of self-government and self-action belonging to and exhibited by such societies. From what source is that power derived? The answer is obvious. The power of authority and action that they possess is derived from the voluntary consent and appointment of the members surrendering their own power, and committing it, under certain conditions or limitations, to a few selected from their number. There are office-bearers and laws in such private and voluntary societies, as there must be in all societies; but the office-bearers are appointed directly or indirectly by the consent of the members at large, and the laws are enacted and imposed by the society itself. The office-bearers act by a power delegated from the other members; and the laws are binding in consequence of an authority emanating from the whole body of the association. The society has its power within itself, self-regulated and self-acting; and the office-bearers act, and the laws are enforced, in virtue of an authority that emanates, more immediately or more remotely, from the society itself. Such is the nature of every private and voluntary association of

an independent kind. *In the second place*, we have the hardly less familiar examples, not of private, but of public societies instituted by and acting for the state, such as a bench of magistrates, or a court of justice, or an assembly of parliament or legislature. There is a certain power of action and authority exhibited by and belonging to such societies likewise. But in this case it is a power accruing to them, not from themselves, but from the state. Here, too, there are office-bearers and laws, as in the case of every other society. But the office-bearers are elected by the commonwealth, or appointed by the civil power; and the laws of their office and action are the regulations enacted and imposed by the state. Magistrates hold office and execute laws in virtue of the authority of the supreme magistrate. Judges preside in judgment, and interpret laws, in consequence of the same authority. And senators rule and frame laws, because of the authority given to them by the constitution of the state. Such is the nature of every public or state society. Its power of authority and action emanates from the state. These are the two kinds of societies with which we are most familiar, and which the experience of every day makes us acquainted with. They are examples of two different and widely separate sources from which the power of government and action, necessary to every society of whatever name or kind, may be derived. In the case of private and voluntary societies, that power emanates directly or indirectly from within itself. In the case of public societies not of a voluntary kind, that power emanates from the state from without.

Besides these two sources, from which the power of government and action essential to every organized society may be derived, is there, I ask, any other that can be named as giving the warrant for such power? Is there any other source, besides that of the consent and delegation of its members, and besides that of the commission and authority of the state, from which the power of government and action in a society may be derived? The Christian society has a power of government and action connected with it; but it disowns as the origin of its power both the one and the other of these sources. It draws its authority from a different and higher fountain than either. It claims a loftier origin for its jurisdiction.

I. The power of the Church is derived from a higher source than the consent or delegation of its members; it is of positive

institution and Divine warrant, and not from the same origin as that of a voluntary and private society.

In one sense, doubtless, the power of authority and action belonging to the Church is derived from the consent and permission of its members; for it is by their own voluntary act and choice that they become and continue members of the Church, and so place themselves under the administration of that power. In this respect, and it is an important one, Church power exists by the permission or consent of the members; and the Church has all the rights and standing of a merely private and voluntary association. But in addition to this, the power of the Church is directly from God, being exercised and enforced, not only or chiefly because of the permission or consent of its members, but because it is a positive Divine institution, apart altogether from that consent. The direct Divine appointment of Church power, as an ordinance of God in the Christian society, is cumulative and not privative of the existence of that power by the permission or approbation of its members. There is a positive institution by God in addition to the voluntary submission to it of man.

Now here we run counter to the fundamental tenet of the Quakers, who deny the authority of all the positive institutions of Christianity, and among the rest, of the power of order and government in the Christian Church, and who make that power, in so far as they are forced by the necessities of union and association among the members of the Church to acknowledge it, to consist in nothing more than that of any private and voluntary society. And we no less run counter to the views of the Latitudinarians, who, without adopting the Quaker theory, and denying all positive appointments in the Church, deny the special appointment of Church government as a Divine institution, holding that we have no warrant for it in the Word of God, and that it is a matter of mere human arrangement. Such doctrines are clearly and undeniably opposed to the abundant and varied evidence to be found in Scripture, that Church power is a positive Divine institution, having the direct warrant and commission of Christ. That it is so, the briefest reference to the statements of Scripture on the subject will suffice to show. First, We have the general fact of the Divine establishment of the Christian Church warranted in Scripture,—a society not instituted by the voluntary

association of its members, but by the express command of Christ. Second, we find the account of the appointment by our Lord of office-bearers for that society, and of these office-bearers, under the guidance of inspiration, after His removal, providing for a succession of them in the Church, by appointing and setting them apart in every particular congregation. Third, we have the enactment of laws for the Church, in the application of the Word of God, by inspired authority, to office-bearers and members, for the regulation of their conduct. Fourth, we have names given in Scripture to the office-bearers of the Christian society, and precepts and promises addressed to them, expressive in the most unequivocal terms of the office of authority and rule in the Church to which they had been divinely appointed, and not merely of an office of teaching and advising. Fifth, we have the corresponding duties of submission to office-bearers, and respect for their authority distinctly inculcated, as the duties of the members of the Church towards "those set over them in the Lord." And sixth, we have undeniable examples in Scripture of the exercise of a power, not of advice merely, or even of authority, wielded by the permission or appointment of the members, but of rule and authority by warrant and positive institution of God; the power, in short, of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven."¹

On grounds such as these, which do not require to be illustrated in detail, because they must be familiar to every reader of Scripture, we are warranted to say, that there is a real power of authority and action belonging to the Christian Church, derived from a higher source than the consent or delegation of its members; and that, in addition to the rights it may have as a merely voluntary society, it has a power ordained by God for government among its members, and for the attainment of its ends as a Church of Christ. (So clear and abundant is the evidence that the Christian Church is something more and higher than a voluntary association of Christians, and that the power of the Church is not merely the surrender, under certain limitations, of the rights of all the members into the hands of a few for the good of the society, but is rather the positive institution of Christ, having its origin and warrant directly from Him.) In other words, the source of Church power is not in the members, but in Christ.

¹ [Jus. Div. Reg. Eccles. Part i. chap. i.]

II The power of the Church is not derived from the commission and warrant of the state.

The Church of Christ, I have said, is not to be regarded simply as a Christian *Union*,—wielding any power that it does exercise at the will, and in consequence of the permission, of its members; neither is it to be regarded as a public or civil *Union*, administering no more than the power and commission of the state. It is of God, both in its origin and in its prerogatives,—His ordinance for administering His power among men. And because the power of the Church is from God, it cannot be from man viewed either as a member of the Church, or as a magistrate of the state. I have already indicated the grounds that we have in Scripture for believing that the power of the Church is not a power existing by the consent of its members, or in virtue of delegation from them, or at their discretion, as in the case of any private and voluntary society; but, on the contrary, that such power is an express and positive Divine appointment, having its source in Christ. And on exactly the same grounds in Scripture it may be demonstrated, that Church power is not derived from the delegation and commission of the state; and that the Church does not owe its authority to that civil warrant which, in the case of public or political societies, clothes their office-bearers with something of the state's prerogatives. The Divine origin and institution of Church authority exclude the possibility of a civil origin and institution of it. There may doubtless be the sanction and warrant of the state connected with the power of the Christian Church; and in every case in which the state knows its duty, it will seek to enter into alliance with the Church, and lend to its claims of power a civil recognition and warrant. But this warrant of the state to the power of the Church is cumulative, and not privative of its sanction by God. It is the warrant of the state added to the warrant of Divine institution. It is the recognition of the civil magistrate subjoined to the previous appointment of Christ. That recognition does not imply that the origin of Church power is from the state, but the very reverse: it amounts, in fact, to an acknowledgment that the source from which it emanates is Divine. And if, in addition to the statements of Scripture in regard to the express institution by our Lord of a power of authority and action in His Church, anything further were needed as evidence that it is not from the civil

magistrate, it would be found in the broad and clear line of distinction which is drawn in the word of God between the nature of the power vested in and exercised by the Church, and the nature of that other power vested in and exercised by the state. The deep and indelible distinction between "the things of God" and "the things of Cæsar" comes in to aid—if that were necessary—the evidence from the Divine institution of Church power; and both combine to demonstrate that the right of authority and action belonging to the Christian Church is not derived from the commission and warrant of the state, but is directly from Christ.¹

III. The statements now made in regard to the origin and source of Church power necessarily involve the general proposition, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.

This form of expression is warranted by the explicit language of Scripture; and still more, the meaning of the expression is sanctioned by the whole tenor of Scripture declarations. The Church, as a society, owes its origin to Christ: it derives from Him its government and office-bearers; it receives from Him its laws and constitution; it draws from Him its spiritual influence and grace; it accepts at His hand its ordinances and institutions; it acts in His name, and is guided in its proceedings by His authority. In the expression that the Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, and in the fact that He is the only source of Church power, there is much more implied than that He is the founder of the Christian society. He is both its founder and its administrator,—being the ever present source of life and influence, of ordinance and blessing, of law and authority, of word and doctrine within the community. Through His Spirit, and His word, and His ordinances, alike of government and grace, Christ both originates and administers His Church upon earth. Is it the spiritual life of the Christian Church that is inquired of in regard to its source and supply? Christ is the Head of the Church as the source of life, breathing that spiritual breath into the body at the first, and holding it in being ever since. Is it the doctrine of the Church that is inquired after in regard to its origin and obligation? Christ is the Head of doctrine to His Church, having been Himself the unerring Teacher of wisdom and truth

¹ *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part i. chap. ix. *Vindication of the Presbyterial Government and Ministry by the Ministers and Elders of the Province of London*, 1650, pp. 6-10.]

since the beginning, and still continuing to instruct His people savingly in all Divine knowledge by His word and Spirit. Is it the ordinances of the Church that you inquire about, in respect to their authority, and the blessing contained in them? Christ is the Head of the Church as to ordinances, having appointed them by His authority at first, and made them the channel of spiritual blessings to His people ever since. Is it the Divine grace connected with word and ordinance that you inquire after? Christ is the Head of His Church as to grace, immediately imparting it as He wills through His appointed ordinances, or by means of His Spirit, and thereby making the Church a living and gracious power in the souls of its true members. Is it the authority of the Church in its transactions and decisions that is inquired about; and is it asked whence has it this authority that it claims? Christ is the Head of His Church as to authority and government, speaking through its voice, and binding through its decisions, and making these His own, in so far as they are framed according to His mind and word. In all that regards its life and doctrine, and ordinances, and grace, and authority; in short, in all that belongs to the Church as a peculiar society on earth, we recognise its *Jus Divinum*—the presence and the power of its Divine Head. All is derived from Him; and all emanates from Him as its source. Within the province of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Teacher, Lawgiver, and Judge. If doctrine is taught, it is taught because He has revealed it; if ordinances are administered, they are administered in His name, and because they are His; if government is established and exercised, it is through His appointment and authority; if saving grace is dispensed, it is dispensed through the virtue and power of His Spirit; if a blessing is communicated, it is because He blesses. In the language of the Confession of Faith, "there is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."¹

IV. The grand doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head of His Church, is to be differently understood according to the different senses in which the term Church is to be understood.

¹ Conf. c. xxv. 6. [Gillespie, *Brotherly Examination*, pp. 11-13. *Male Audis*, p. 30. *Presbyt. Armoury*, vol. i. *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. ii. chap. v. *Jus Div. Reg. Eccles.* Part i. chap. v. *Vind. of Presbyt. Gov. and Min.* pp. 4, 5.]

It will be remembered that, at an early stage in our discussions, we had occasion to advert to the various significations in which the word Church was used in Scripture, and the different aspects under which the Christian society which goes by that name might be regarded. Now it is of some importance, in order distinctly to understand the doctrine of Christ's Headship over the Church, to look at it from the standpoint of the different characters in which the one and undivided Church of Christ may be regarded. Whether you speak of it as visible or invisible, as local or representative, in all its aspects and characters it is true that Christ is the Head of the Church; but it is true under somewhat different senses; and it may be well, for the sake of greater distinctness, that we should mark the difference. There is, *first* of all, the invisible Church, constituted and made up of the whole body of the elect throughout the world, chosen by the grace and renewed by the Spirit of God. Christ is the Head of the Church invisible; and, according to the spiritual character in which the members of it are to be considered, He is more peculiarly and appropriately to be regarded as the source of invisible and inward grace to them, although not, of course, to the exclusion of other benefits. There is, *secondly*, the visible Church, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the faith of Christ, and are joined to Him in a Church state, and who enjoy the provision of outward ordinance, and government, and order, which belongs to the visible society, without regard necessarily to their inward and spiritual relation to Christ. Christ is the Head of this visible Church, but in a somewhat different sense from that in which He is the Head of the Church invisible,—more peculiarly and appropriately as the Author and Administrator of that outward provision of word and ordinance, of government and discipline, which characterizes it; and as the Source of its laws and office-bearers, and of the external benefits and immunities which are enjoyed by its members. There is, *thirdly*, the Church local, consisting of the visible congregation of professing Christians assembled into a church for the worship of God and the enjoyment of ordinances in any given place,—itself a true Church, and a section or branch of the Church catholic or universal. Christ is the Head of the Church local as well as of the Church universal, although under a somewhat different aspect. He is the Head of every particular congregation, more peculiarly in the sense that

Christ's headship
is a way
of correspondence
to a way
of church
and in
scripture

He is the Author of its privileges, both outward and spiritual, as a worshipping assembly,—giving to it pastors according to His mind, and the administration of ordinances in accordance with His Word, and making these a means of life and grace as well as external blessing to its members. There is, *fourthly*, the Church representative, made up of the delegated office-bearers or representatives of one or more congregations, and themselves associated together in a Church-court or Assembly, and acting for as well as representing the whole. Christ is the Head of the Church representative, as well as of the Church in every other character in which it is mentioned or regarded in Scripture; but He is so in a sense appropriate to itself. He is the Head of the Church representative more especially as regards the office which it is meant to sustain towards the members, as made up of the rulers and administrators of the affairs of the Christian society,—appointing the laws by which their conduct in the transaction of business is to be regulated,—giving them gifts and authority to rule,—authorizing and sanctioning their judicial decisions in His name,—and, as the Lawgiver in His Church, lending the stamp of His authority to their enactments, and ratifying them as His own. In whatsoever character, in fine, the Church is to be regarded, the Lord Jesus Christ is appropriately and specially its Head, varying the administration of His power, and authority, and grace, according to its various aspects of capacity or need. There are varieties of administration, but there is the same Head.¹

Does the individual believer stand in need of the blessing peculiar to his case? It is enough: "The Head of every man is Christ." Does the Church representative stand in need of gifts for government and administration suitable to its character, as the acting and executive body in the Christian society? It is enough: "The Lord is its Judge; the Lord is its Lawgiver; the Lord is its King, He will bring salvation." Does the Church local or congregational stand in need of the blessing appropriate more especially to it, as a worshipping assembly of believers? It is enough: Christ is "the Minister of the Sanctuary," and "the Chief Bishop of Souls," and the great "Master of Assemblies." Does the Church visible stand in need of the gifts of the ministry, ordinances, and oracles of God—the outward provision of govern-

¹ [Gillespie, *Notes of Proceedings of Westminster Assembly*, pp. 109, 110. *Presbyterian Armoury*, vol. ii.]

ment and order necessary to its wellbeing as a visible society? It is enough: "When He ascended up on high, He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Does the Church invisible wait to be refreshed with invisible communications of grace when it is weary? It is enough: "Christ is the Head of the body, the Church, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." If there be any virtue or any blessing in the power given to the Christian Church, it is all summed up in these words of the Confession: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."¹

There is a distinction, sufficiently familiar to us all, which may help us to a more thorough understanding of the great doctrine we are now discussing. I mean the distinction between the *founder* of a society and the *administrator* of a society. A man may be the founder of a society in the sense of giving to it its origin and existence, impressing upon it its original character and constitution, arranging its office-bearers, and framing its laws; so that the society shall stand related to him as its author. And yet the founder may not be the administrator of the society. He may leave the society, once summoned into existence by his efforts, to act for itself in future; or he may hand over the entire power and administration of its affairs to another, who shall preside over it in his stead, and become its real ruler. Now, in asserting that Christ is the Head of the Christian society, we mean not that He is the founder of it only, or the administrator of it only, but that He is both at one time. Christ is the Founder of the Christian Church, in the sense that He gave it its origin at first, that He impressed upon it its character and arrangement,—that He laid down the framework of its government and order,—that He appointed to it its laws and office-bearers and ordinances,—that He invested it, in short, with the peculiar form and the peculiar constitution that distinguish it as a society; and He did all this in a far higher sense than any in which these acts can be attributed to the founder of any human society. But more than this. Having at first impressed a certain constitution and character upon the spiritual society, He did not thenceforward aban-

¹ Conf. xxv. 6. [Lectures on the Headship of Christ, Edinr. 1840, Lec. ii. vi.]

don it to proceed according to the law or nature thus imparted to it. He gave to the Church at first a form of order and government, but did not after that cease His connection with it, and leave it alone to exercise and wield that power in its own strength and according to the regulations He had prescribed. He did not deposit with the Church, or in the ordinances of the Church, or with its office-bearers, a store of grace, which should be dispensed in future apart from Himself. He is not only the Founder of the Christian Church; He is also the Ruler and Administrator of it, in such a way that He keeps in His own hand all the power and authority and grace that belong to the society, and is ever present directly and with His own hand to exercise that power, to administer that authority, and to dispense that grace. He is the Head of the Church *in this sense*, that the Church is not only indebted to Him for its existence at first, but for its life and wellbeing ever since; *in this sense*, that it is not the Church that governs and dispenses ordinances and spiritual graces in His name, and by reason of His original gift and endowment to her, but Christ who, personally present, governs and administers ordinances and blessing through the Church. The Church has no store of life apart from Christ being in it; the ordinances of the Church have no deposit of grace apart from Christ present with them; the office-bearers of the Church have no gift of power, or authority, or action, apart from Christ ruling and acting by them. It is most important to remember that it is in this high and very peculiar sense that we are to understand the expression, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.

Such, then, is the source of the power of the Church,—using the word power in its most comprehensive sense, to denote not merely a power to act in the way of authority and rule, but also, in addition to this, a power to act in every way in which it is competent for the Church as a Church to act; a power, namely, to act in the way of (spiritual jurisdiction) in the way of administering word, and ordinance, and discipline, in the way of dispensing grace to its members.¹ The source of all this power

¹ ["Ecclesiastica potestas est jus sacrum ministeriale a Christo Capite Ecclesie concessum, et ordinario modo applicatum, externe se et sua gubernandi ad mutua[m] aedificationem et salutem. . . . Subjectum adequatum est Ecclesia externa, visibilis, et instituta, qua[m] talis, in collectione sua[m] considerata. Objectum, quod idem et terminus, est cura ac gubernatio personarum et rerum suarum, seu res, personae, actiones ecclesiasticae et sacrae. Efficiens institu-

Word instead Rule

belonging to the Christian society is in the Lord Jesus Christ, as its ever present and ever living Head. This cardinal doctrine lies at the foundation of every other that concerns the Church of Christ, and ought to be guarded from those that would deny or derogate from it, with the utmost jealousy and care. It is so very explicitly and broadly laid down in Scripture, that few are found to controvert it in so many words, or expressly to deny that the Head of the Christian Church is Christ Himself. But without denying it in express terms, there are many systems of religious belief, and many societies bearing the name of Churches, that are found to trench upon this doctrine understood in its fullness and integrity, and practically to interfere with the rights and prerogatives that belong to Christ's Crown. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of some of those systems that detract from or deny the prerogatives of our Lord, as Head of the Church and the source of all Church power.

1st. The rights belonging to the Headship of Christ over His Church are interfered with or detracted from by the system of Erastianism, which ascribes to the civil magistrate a power within the Christian Church, and a proper jurisdiction in spiritual things.

If, to borrow the well-known and striking language of Andrew Melville, "there be two kings and two kingdoms" within the bounds of every Christian country,¹ then for the civil ruler to pass beyond the line that divides them, to trespass within the dominion of Christ, to assume jurisdiction there, and to interfere between Him and His subjects, is plainly to touch very nearly

tionis est Christus Mediator, quâ talis, ut Rex spiritualis et Caput Ecclesiæ."
—VOETIUS, *Politica Ecclesiastica*, tom. i. lib. i. tract. ii. cap. i. 2.]

¹ "Sir, we will always humbly reverence your Majesty in public; but since we have this occasion to be with your Majesty in private, and since you are brought in extreme danger both of your life and crown, and along with you the country and the Church of God are like to go to wreck, for not telling you the truth and giving you faithful counsel, we must discharge our duty, or else be traitors both to Christ and you. Therefore, Sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again must I tell you, there be two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is King James, the head of this commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member."—M'CRIE, *Life of Andrew Melville*, vol. i. 2d ed. p. 391. ["Nam illa jurisdictio in animo interiori sedem habet; hæc autem externos mores duntaxat componit. Alterum vocare nobis liceat regnum spirituale: alterum regnum politicum. . . . Sunt enim in homine veluti mundi duo, quibus et varii reges et variae leges præesse possunt."—CALVIN, *Inst.* lib. iii. cap. xix. 15.]

the honour of Christ's Crown. The civil magistrate denies or detracts from the right of Christ as Head of His Church, when he interferes with those matters in the Church in which Christ claims to act Himself, or usurps that authority which Christ claims to exercise Himself. For example, the doctrine professed and published by the Christian Church is binding upon the conscience of its members, and claims to be believed, not only because it is true in itself, but also because it is the truth revealed and imposed by its Divine Head; and the civil magistrate may interfere with the prerogatives of Christ as Head, when he presumes to dictate to the Church another doctrine than Christ has dictated, or to impose upon the conscience a creed which, although true in itself, is nevertheless imposed as an article of belief by his authority. Again, the ordinances and positive institutions of the Church demand the obedience and observance of its members, not merely because of their own virtue as conducive to the wellbeing of the Christian society, but because they are Christ's, and are prescribed by Him; and the civil magistrate may encroach upon the privileges of His Headship, when he assumes a power to dictate in regard to the rites and worship and order of the Church, imposing on the conscience, instead of Divine institutions, the ordinances and commandments of men. Once more, the government and jurisdiction of the Church are authoritative, only in so far as through them the Church enforces the laws of Christ, and He speaks through its decisions; and the civil magistrate may encroach upon His authority, when he assumes a jurisdiction in spiritual matters which belongs to Christ, and in controversies of faith and matters of government reviews or reverses decisions which are spoken or ratified by Christ's command. In such ways as these, the civil magistrate may usurp to himself an authority within the Church of Christ, which is inconsistent with the authority which properly belongs to its Head alone.¹

This usurpation by the civil magistrate of proper jurisdiction within the Christian Church, is not less an encroachment upon the kingly rights of its Divine Head, that it may be perpetrated by a *Christian* magistrate. One great argument of Erastians,

¹ [Lectures on the Headship of Christ, Edin. 1840. Hugh Miller, *Headship of Christ*, Edin. 1861, pp. 2-64, 500-517. Cunningham, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 272-285. Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i; lib. i. tract. ii. cap. ii. 9. Hauber, Art. "Kirchenverfassung" in *Herzog's Real-Encyclopædie*, pp. 686-8.]

and a common apology for allowing some sort of power to the civil magistrate in spiritual things, is drawn from the consideration that in countries professedly Christian the chief ruler must have a power about the Christian Church, not proper or competent in countries and with rulers not professedly Christian, but rather opposed to Christianity. Now this apology is an extremely hazardous one, and derives no countenance either from the Word of God or from the standards of our Church. The right of the civil magistrate in connection with religion is not derived from the personal character of the magistrate, but from the nature of his office; and the extent and limits of that right cannot be determined by the accident of his Christianity or the reverse. The duty of the civil magistrate to aim at the glory of God and the advancement of the cause of religion, is founded on the office of magistracy as a Divine ordinance, and not on the faith or infidelity of the person who fills the office; and with this competency of the state to take some steps in behalf of the Church, and with the limits of this competency, the Christian profession of the state has, strictly speaking, nothing to do. In Scripture it is certain that "the powers that be" are spoken of as "ministers of God for good" to the Church as well as to the community; and that without reference to the fact of their being professedly Christian or not. Nay, they are so spoken of, when "the powers that be" were not Christian, but the persecutors of Christianity.¹ And it is no less certain that, in the Confession of Faith, the right and duty of the civil magistrate to aim at the interests and advancement of the Church, are not restricted to the single case in which the magistrate and the state are Christian.² There can be no doubt, indeed, that when both the people and the civil magistrate adopt a profession of Christianity, there will be many things which he can and will do on behalf of the Christian Church, not within his power in other and opposite circumstances. But it is important to remark that the duty of the magistrate *circa sacra* is a duty connected with the office, and not with the man; and that it is neither cancelled nor diminished by the circumstance that he has failed in the still more essential duty of embracing Christianity for himself. Nor, on the other hand, is the duty or the right of the civil magistrate in connection with the Christian Church created or increased by the fact that both himself per-

¹ Rom. xiii. 1-7.

² Conf. c. xxiii.

sonally, and the state that he represents, are professedly Christian. His opportunities and his means for promoting the interests of religion in general, and of the Christian Church in particular, may indeed be incalculably augmented, and his willingness or desire to do so may for the first time be called forth, *when* he himself, as well as the nation over which he rules, come under the influence of Christianity. But his obligation, as in the sight of God to seek to advance His cause, was not at that moment created; and his right to interfere on behalf of the Church was not even then enlarged or extended. As a Christian magistrate, he has not other or higher rights from his office than what he possessed when not Christian; nor does his faith personally give him a larger or stronger title to interfere in regard to the Church of Christ. The apology or argument so often resorted to by Erastians, both in former and more recent times, to justify the ascription of authority to the civil magistrate in spiritual things, that the state is a Christian state, is no real or valid justification of it. Because the state is professedly Christian, and the magistrate a Christian magistrate, we are not warranted to ascribe to him an authority which can belong only to Christ. The Christianity of the state does not in the least tend to abolish or even lessen the essential distinction, which in all circumstances must subsist, between the state and the Church; nor does the religious profession of the magistrate tend in the smallest measure to give him the place or the commission of an office-bearer within the Christian Church. The assumption by the state of proper jurisdiction within the Church of Christ, whether in the case of a Christian nation or a nation not Christian, must ever be equally an encroachment upon the rights of its Divine Head.¹

²d. The doctrine of the Headship of Christ is denied or detracted from by the Popish system, which ascribes to the Bishop of Rome authority within the Church inconsistent with the sovereignty of Christ as its Head.

It is not on the ground of the claim made by the Pope to be regarded as universal bishop within the Christian Church, that this charge rests. If such an office as that of universal bishop

¹ [Gillespie, *Brotherly Examination*, pp. 10-13. *Nihil Respondes*, pp. 6-10. *Male Audis*, pp. 16-18, 21, 27 f. *Presbyterian Armoury*, vol. i. CXI. Propositions, Prop. 44, 49, 68, 80, 95-100. *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, B. ii. chap. vi. vii.]

had ever existed or been sanctioned by the Word of God, it might have been consistent with the Headship of Christ. But the prerogatives which are attributed to the office, and the powers which according to the system of Popery are vested in it, are such as to be wholly inconsistent with the Headship of Christ, and to constitute a daring usurpation of that Headship by a creature. I have had occasion before now, in the course of our discussions, to remark that, according to the system of Romanists, the very office and powers which Christ when on earth held as Mediator, have been transferred by Him since His departure to the visible Church; that He has devolved upon the Church His own incommunicable rights and prerogatives to exercise in His room on behalf of men; and that the Church, filled with His Divine fulness, discharging His functions towards the world, and standing in His stead, is in its office and character the living embodiment of the office and character of its absent Head.¹ In other words, the Church now, and in reference to men, is as much the Prophet, Priest, and King, as was Christ Himself when He was upon earth. There is a difference indeed on this point between the opinions of that party in the Church of Rome who, strictly speaking, may be called Papists, and that other party who may more correctly be termed Roman Catholics. The former, or the Papists, hold that all these powers and prerogatives are vested in the Pope personally; while the latter, or the Roman Catholics, hold that they are vested not in the Pope individually, but in the Pope in conjunction with a General Council, as representing the Church at large.² The difference, however, in regard to our present argument is immaterial. The ascription to the Pope individually, or to the Pope "cum Concilio," of such offices and powers as once confessedly were Christ's, is an impious assumption of His place, and a daring encroachment on His sovereignty. The Lord Jesus Christ still exercises in His own proper person, and by His own real presence amid His Church, the whole of those offices which He once as Mediator assumed. He has neither abdicated His functions, nor been dethroned from His place as Mediator; and this day He is in the midst of the Church as much the unerring Prophet, and the efficacious Priest, and the Supreme King personally, as when He once discharged those offices on earth. To assert otherwise were to assert that He had

¹ Vide *supra*, pp. 85-87.

² [Cunningham, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 211 ff.]

ceased to be the Head of His Church altogether, and was no longer to be accounted the Mediator. And to this impious doctrine the pretensions of the Church of Rome actually amount. It matters not whether, according to one party, the offices of Christ be transferred from Him to the Pope and the Church conjointly, or whether, according to another party, they be transferred from Him to the Pope alone. To pretend that Christ has devolved His incommunicable office on a creature,—to assert that the Lord Jesus has abdicated His functions in favour of a man,—to assume that the Head of the Church has divested Himself of His powers, and entrusted them to a mortal,—this is, in the most express and undisguised terms, to deny the prerogatives and rights of His Headship, and to take possession of them in the name of Antichrist. And such, in their full extent, are the claims and doctrines put forth on behalf of Rome. That Church, according to the tenets of its adherents, is the unerring Prophet, to declare infallibly the will of God, and interpret the doctrine of His word, and to judge between truth and falsehood. That Church is the effectual Priest, to make the sacrifice day by day that is necessary for the remission of sin, and to present the prevailing intercession for the sinner. That Church is the supreme and sovereign King over the consciences and the obedience of men, giving or withholding the gift of grace according to its pleasure, creating and dispensing with laws at its will, and seated upon the throne of universal supremacy. Who can deny that this is to assume the very office of Christ upon earth, to refuse to Him His blood-bought crown, and to dethrone Him to whom alone the Headship of His Church belongs, that a usurper may become the Head in His place.¹

¹ ["From our letters of Sept. 16, 1864, and Nov. 8, 1865," says the present Pope, writing to the Romanist bishops in England, "it is clearly and openly manifest that no one can belong to the true Church of Christ unless he firmly adhere by free subjection of mind and heart, and open confession of the lips, to the Chair of Peter and the Roman Pontiff, who has been divinely constituted by Christ our Lord Himself as successor of Peter, Head of His whole Church, the centre of unity, and Pastor with supreme power of feeding both lambs and sheep. God grant it, Venerable Brothers, that these unhappy wanderers" (the English High Church Unionists, etc.) "may abjure their errors, and see the light of Catholic Truth, and hasten to the only fold of Christ."—Manning, *England and Christendom*, London 1867, pp. lxxvii. 143-145, 185-209. Bellarmine, *Opera*, tom. i. *Præf. de Summo Pontifice*, etc., tom. ii. lib. iii. cap. xiv., etc. Buckley, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, London 1851, pp. 52, 53, etc., 278-280.]

3d. The rights of the Headship of Christ, if not denied, are detracted from by the semi-Romanist doctrine, that Christ has given to the Church a deposit of power and grace, which the Church has authority to use and administer by itself.

This is a doctrine common to all classes of High Churchmen, and may be regarded as a sort of half-way house between Popery on the one hand and Protestantism on the other. It is the doctrine of Popery taken in its true extent, that Christ has devolved all His offices and powers on men, and that the Church has warrant and endowment for the exercise and discharge of them all. It is the doctrine of Protestantism taken in its true extent, on the other hand, that Christ has devolved none of His offices on men, and that the Church in no measure is warranted or endowed to exercise any of them; for this reason, that these offices are personal and incommunicable, and that Christ in person, and by His actual presence in the Church, still singly and completely discharges them Himself. But there is a doctrine intermediate between Popery and Protestantism, held by High Churchmen of all parties, that Christ has in *some* degree, although not wholly or altogether, devolved upon men His peculiar offices; and that, to some extent at least, the Church has been commissioned and qualified to exercise them. (They hold that Christ has bestowed upon the Christian Church a certain measure of power and grace, as a gift to be enjoyed apart from Himself,—a deposit, as it were, in the Church's hands, to be used and dispensed at its own discretion, and independently of Christ.) Now such a doctrine as this, although not so avowedly as the Popish dogma, yet not less really, derogates from the rights of Christ as Head. It denies that all power connected with the Church is kept in the hands of its Divine Head; and that in its actings and proceedings, its office-bearers are not so much acting themselves, as that Christ is acting by them. It denies that all grace belonging to the Church, and enjoyed by its members, is communicated to the members by Christ Himself directly and personally; and that the blessing they receive is not the gift in any proper sense of the Church itself, but only of Christ blessing them through it. Such a doctrine of a deposit of blessing and power in the Church, to be used and dispensed by itself, virtually excludes Christ, to that extent, from His office of acting and blessing through the Church. In whatever form or with whatever modification it may be held, it is

derogatory to the office and exclusive claims of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of His Church.

First, there is one party of semi-Romanists, or High Churchmen, who hold that there is a deposit of *grace* in the Church, which Christ has given and authorized His servants to dispense. In this form of the doctrine it is believed and maintained by the advocates of Sacramental grace and priestly virtue, those who declare that in the ordinances themselves, or in the ministers who dispense them, there resides a gracious influence apart from the communion of the soul in such ordinances with Christ. Such a principle as this is universal among Tractarians in the present day, and indeed is common to High Churchmen in every age. With regard to the Sacraments of the Church, they believe that Christ has deposited in them a certain grace apart from the relation of the soul to Christ when enjoying them, and that He has limited to the outward institutions of His Church, and the sensible signs in the Sacraments, a spiritual and efficacious influence, separate from the blessing of Christ conveyed through them as channels. With regard to the offices of the Church, in like manner, they hold that grace is tied to the office itself, apart from Christ by His own presence and in His own person giving the blessing, not to the office, but through it. Hence the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration and Sacramental Grace; hence the doctrine of a real priestly virtue in the office of the ministry; a blessing, in short, deposited in the sign, or the form, or the institution, separate from the communion of the soul with Christ through the channel of such ordinances. In this system, Christ is displaced from the position He occupies as the ever present Head of the Church, and so, in virtue of His presence, not giving to the Church a certain store or deposit of grace to be used apart from Himself, but rather following out day by day His mediatorial work on its behalf, and *as the present Head*, by His own personal act, and from His own hands, dispensing every blessing enjoyed through ordinances. The doctrine of High Churchmen on this subject avowedly substitutes the sinner's union to the Church, or communion in the ordinances of the Church, for the sinner's union to Christ, and leads the soul to seek in fellowship with outward institutions for that grace which can be found by it only in fellowship with Christ. The deposit of grace is not in the Church, but in the Divine Head of the Church; and to the

extent that the Church professes to have a treasury of blessing of its own, and to dispense the blessing itself, to that extent it is trenching upon the prerogatives of Christ as the Head.¹

Second, there are many semi-Romanists or High Churchmen who hold that there is a deposit of *knowledge* in the Church; and that Christ has authorized His servants to dispense it for the benefit of its members. Such virtually is the doctrine of those who, in addition to the teaching of Christ by His Word and Spirit, maintain that the Church is the authorized teacher, if not to supplement the instructions of Christ, at least to interpret them. This doctrine may be held under various forms and modifications. It may verge towards the Romish doctrine of the equal authority of ecclesiastical tradition with that of the inspired Word of God, and of the paramount necessity of an infallible Church to interpret infallibly the Scriptures. Or, without claiming infallibility, it may assign to the Church the office of exclusively, or at least authoritatively, interpreting the Word of God for its members, and of imposing its teaching on their consciences. In whatever form the doctrine is held, which assigns to the Church a deposit of knowledge apart from the ever present and ever active teaching of Christ Himself, it undoubtedly trenches on His office of Head.

It is no doubt true, that one of the great duties the Church has to discharge in the world, is the duty of a teacher, but not of a teacher separated at any moment or in any way from the teaching of Christ. It is the duty of the Church to declare the doctrine and preach the Gospel of Christ; but her teaching is only in so far and no further saving and authoritative as it is Christ teaching through her. In no other way can the Church be said to teach at all. Anything beyond this, or anything besides this, is to assume an office not belonging to her,—the office, in fact, of the great Teacher Himself. Christ has never ceased in any sense, or at any time, to be the Prophet of His Church; but the work of instruction He keeps in His own hands. He has given neither to the Church, nor to the office of the ministry in the Church, a deposit of wisdom and knowledge apart from Himself. In all the teaching of the Church or of its ministers which is not unauthorized and presumptuous, it is Christ Himself that teaches by His Word and Spirit. And for the Church to claim to itself

¹ [Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, Lond. 1838, vol. i. p. 54 f. Goode, *On the Eucharist*, Lond. 1856, vol. i. chap. ii.]

an authority or power to teach, apart from Christ present and speaking in it, is to that extent to derogate from His office as Head.¹

Third, there are many semi-Romanists and High Churchmen who hold that there is a deposit of *authority* committed to the Church; and that its office-bearers have the right to administer it. Such virtually is the principle involved in the tenets of those who maintain that the Church has a right in any respect to add its own laws to Christ's, or to go beyond, in matters of government, or worship, or discipline, or jurisdiction, the exact limits of what He has enacted. The Church can have authority only in so far as it speaks with the voice of its Head; and its decisions can be valid and its enactments binding, only in so far as they are given and enacted by Him. As King, and Ruler, and Judge, Christ is still in the midst of His Church. The power and jurisdiction which it claims must, in every case of its exercise by the office-bearers of the Church, come directly and immediately from Him. It were a mistake here, as elsewhere, to think that Christ, having settled the constitution and laws of His Church, and appointed its rulers, ceased any longer to interfere; and that, having given to them a supply or deposit of authority at first, He left them to rule and act for themselves under His name. His own authority in the Christian Church, Christ still keeps in His own hands; and out of the fulness of power in Himself, He personally rules in every act of authority or jurisdiction validly and lawfully done by His servants on earth. Their authority as rulers in the Christian society is not theirs, but His; and their decisions or laws enacted in spiritual or ecclesiastical matters are only to that extent, and no further, valid and binding, that they embody His decisions and enactments. For men to attempt, then, to decree what Christ has not decreed,—to enact laws of their own, in addition to His,—to add to His appointments in the Church,—to dictate rites and ceremonies and obligations which He has not recognised,—this is to assume a power not theirs, and to trespass on the office of the Head.²

Such are some of the ways in which the great doctrine of the

¹ [Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, vol. ii. pp. 10, 23, 46, 96 f., 110–133. Goode, *Rule of Faith*, Lond. 1842, vol. i. chap. ii. iii. vii., vol. ii. chap. xi.]

² [Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, vol. ii. pp. 64–75. Wordsworth, *Theoph. Angl.* 8th ed. pp. 350–362.]

Headship of Christ may be denied or derogated from. That doctrine may be practically denied or set aside by the state, when it takes to itself in any way or to any extent the office of Christ within the Church, and exercises jurisdiction in spiritual things. That doctrine is not less practically denied or set aside by the Church, when it takes to itself the office of Christ, and claims for its office-bearers or its ordinances a power that is incommunicable, and personally His own. The state and the Church on these occasions may both be acting in the name of Christ, when they thus usurp His prerogatives, and put themselves in His place. It may be a professedly Christian state, that in His name enters within a province and trespasses into an office that belong only to the Church's Head. Or it may be a professedly Christian Church acting in His name, which forgets that its own place is ministerial and Christ's supreme, and assumes to itself an office confined to its exalted Head. The sin of Erastianism, or at least the principle of evil involved in the sin, is not confined to civil magistrates *not* Christian, or confined to civil magistrates at all. It may be perpetrated by the Christian magistrate who brings the sword of Cæsar within the precincts of the sanctuary of God, even when he comes to worship there. It may be perpetrated by the Church itself, without Cæsar's sword, when within the sanctuary it takes the seat of Christ, and thrusts itself into His office. Whether it be a civil or ecclesiastical usurpation of His power, it is Erastianism in principle, and equally trenches upon the great doctrine of Christ's Headship over His Church.

CHAPTER II.

THE RULE OR LAW OF CHURCH POWER.

It has been already remarked, that there are *two things* that belong to the Church of Christ, as they must, from the very nature of the case, belong to every organized society, whatever be its nature or objects,—namely, *office-bearers* of some kind, and *laws* of some kind. The first, or office-bearers, are necessary to represent the society, and act on its behalf; and the second, or laws, are necessary, in order that they may act upon some fixed principles, and according to some settled order or system. At this stage in the progress of our investigations, it might perhaps have been natural for us to have taken up, in the first instance, the subject of the office-bearers of the Christian society, before entering upon the question of the rule by which their proceedings are ordered and defined. But it would be impossible to discuss the former topic, without considering the whole subject of the form and constitution and government of the Christian Church,—a discussion that demands, and must receive, a separate and more lengthened treatment. I have preferred, therefore, to postpone the subject of the office-bearers of the Church for the present, and to set it apart, along with the general question of the government and framework of the Church, for a subsequent and separate department of our inquiries. In the meantime, and in connection with the general head of Church power, it is proper to consider whether there is any rule by which that power is to be exercised and administered; and if so, what is the law binding upon the parties who have commission from Christ to act on behalf of Himself in His Church. The question of who those parties are, will be taken up at a subsequent period, and under a head of its own. But at present, our object is to ascertain if *any* fixed rule, and if so, *what* rule has been laid down for the purpose

hauptet. Ebenowenig verwandt ist die schottische Kirchenfreiheit den freigemeindlichen Tendenzen; jeue allein auf Christus, sein Gesetz in der Bibel, auf den geschichtlichen Offenbarungsgrund gestellt, diese dem Geiste sich anvertrauend, 'der auf sich selber stehe:' hier die religiöse Gesellschaft das Produkt freiwilliger Association, beliebigen Arrangements der Individuen, dort so streng wie die Lehre selbst von Christus abgeleitet: bei den Einen Zusammenhalten in ernster Glaubens- und Sittenzucht, bei den Anderen zerflatternde Willkür.

"Was männliche Consequenz ist und leistet," Hauber concludes, "kann man an dieser freien schottischen Kirche lernen, einem hochragenden Gebäude auf beengtem Raum wie mit Zauberhänden, oder vielmehr von derselben Logik welche Calvin's Institutionen baute, aufgerichtet."—*Herzog's Real-Encyclopädie*, Art. Kirchenverfassung.]

CHAPTER III.

THE NATURE OF CHURCH POWER.

THERE are two kinds of power or authority of a public kind, and no more than two, known in this world; and there are two great organs by which they are respectively expressed or represented. There is that kind of authority, on the one hand, the proper and immediate province of which is the persons and properties, the temporal rights and privileges of men; and the great organ for expressing or representing this authority is the state, an ordinance appointed by God for dealing with such matters. There is another kind of authority that deals not with the outer, but with the inward man, and the proper sphere of which is the understanding and the conscience; and the great organ for expressing and representing this second authority is the Church of Christ, an express ordinance of God set apart and appropriated to such matters. In both cases it is an authority derived and subordinate, and wielded at second hand. The state is no more than the organ or instrument for expressing or exercising the righteous and inalienable authority of God, as supreme over the persons and possessions of all His creatures,—His delegate on earth for ruling over the secular affairs and outward condition of men, mainly for their temporal good. The Church, again, is no more than the organ or instrument for expressing or exercising the righteous authority of Christ as Lord of the conscience,—His steward on earth for administering His rights of dominion over the moral and intellectual nature of men, more especially for their spiritual good.) In both cases the authority is of God. The obligation or duty owed, in either instance, is owed to Him. God has a supreme and inalienable right to rule over the outward estate of man, to dispose of his property, of his life, of his person, of his temporal possessions and privileges as He pleases. And He delegates a part of this rightful authority of His to the state,

to be used and administered according to certain fixed principles for the good of the community; and makes the civil magistrate His organ, as vested with some portion of His right to deal with the outward order and temporal estate of men. On no other principle than as being the steward of God's right to rule over the persons and properties of His creatures, can you explain the mysterious and awful power proper to every civil government, and necessary for its ends, which warrants it to deal absolutely and without appeal with the temporal rights, and possessions, and life of man.¹ Parallel to this, Christ has a supreme and absolute right to rule over the moral and intellectual nature of man, to bind the conscience, to impose laws upon the understanding and the belief, to dictate what shall be received as truth and what rejected as falsehood. And He delegates a part of this authority to the Church, to be held and exercised under certain restrictions for the spiritual good of its members; and makes the Church His organ to express, and His minister to wield, something of this authority over the conscience and the heart. Upon no other principle, except as the representative of Him who is Lord of the conscience, and as ministerially administering His lordship, can you explain the singular and mysterious power claimed by the

¹ ["Quod dii nuncupantur quicumque magistratum gerunt, ne in eâ appellatione leve inesse momentum quis putet: eâ enim significatur mandatum a Deo habere, Divinâ auctoritate præditos esse, ac omnino Dei personam sustinere, cujus vices quodammodo agunt. . . . Eodem pertinet quod Sapientia Dei per os Salomonis affirmat, Suum esse opus quod reges regnant et consilarii decernunt justa, quod principes principatum gerunt, et munifici omnes iudices terræ. Perinde enim istud valet acsi dictum esset non humanâ perversitate fieri ut penes reges et præfectos alios sit in terris rerum omnium arbitrium, sed Divinâ providentia et sanctâ ordinatione, cui sic visus est res hominum moderari, quandoquidem illis adest ac etiam præst in ferendis legibus et judiciorum æquitate exercendâ. . . . Quare nulli jam dubium esse debet quin civilis potestas vocatio sit non modo coram Deo sancta et legitima, sed sacerrima etiam et in totâ mortalium vitâ longe omnium honestissima. . . . Quæ cogitatio magistratus ipsos assidue exercere debet, quando ingentem illis stimulum addere, quo ad officium excitentur, et singularem consolationem afferre potest, quâ muneris sui difficultates (quæ multæ certe et graves sunt) leniant. Quantum enim integritatis, prudentiæ, mansuetudinis, continentiæ, innocentæ studium sibi ipsis imperare debent, qui Divinæ justitiæ ministros se constitutos esse norunt? Quâ fiduciâ iniquitatem in tribunal suum admittent, quod Dei viventis thronum esse audiunt? Quâ conscientiam in impia decreta subscribent eâ manu, quam ad perscribenda Dei acta sciunt ordinatam? In summâ, si se Dei vicarios esse meminerint, omni curâ, sedulitate, industriâ invigilent oportet, quo hominibus quandam Divinæ providentiæ, custodiæ, bonitatis, benevolentæ, justitiæ imaginem in se repræsentent." See the whole of this fine passage, Calvin, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xx. 4, 6, etc.]

Church to exercise authority, in a certain sense, over the understanding and moral nature of man. There are, in short, two visible and separate departments in God's one universal government over His human creatures, marked out and divided from each other by deep and indelible lines. There is His visible government over the outward and temporal estate of man, and there is His visible government over the inward and spiritual estate of man. God has sovereign and absolute authority over both; but He expresses and administers that authority through separate channels and by different instruments. The state is the Divine and public organ for representing and expressing His authority over the first. The Church is the Divine and public organ for representing and administering His authority over the second. Beyond these two ordinances or organs of Divine authority, we know of no other power of a public and general kind among men.

Restricting our attention more especially to the case of the Church, as a Divine ordinance or organ for representing and exercising a power not its own, but given to it by Christ,—what, I ask, is the nature or character of its authority? What is the kind of power which is administered and enforced within the Christian Church?

I. The power of the Church may be demonstrated to be spiritual, because the purposes for which it is instituted and administered can be attained through means of a spiritual power, and are inconsistent with every other.

The slightest attention given to the matters about which Church power is employed, and to the objects for which it is bestowed, will suffice to show this. Church power—to follow the old and well-established division of it—may be regarded as of three sorts, according to the three different and separate classes of things with which it is conversant.

1st. There is the "potestas dogmaticæ," or the authority which the Church possesses and administers in regard to dogmas, or articles of faith. There is a certain office and place which the Church is appointed to occupy in regard to Divine truth, as revealed in God's Word, both in reference to those within and those without her pale. The Church is a divinely appointed witness for God's truth to those that are without; she is both a witness and a teacher to those that are within. It is her office to

attest and publish that truth to the world; ministerially to declare—under reservation of an appeal to the Word of God—what men are to believe and practise; to preach the Gospel to every creature; and to frame and exhibit a summary or confession of the faith of Christ in opposition to error, whensoever circumstances may call upon her to do so. Her right is not to bring her own authority to bear upon the conscience or the understanding, so as to enforce this confession or belief of the truth, as if it were her own; but it is her right, by explaining and enforcing and preaching God's Word, and by a direct appeal to it, to bring God's authority to bear on the souls of men, so as to secure both their faith and obedience to Him. Now, none but a spiritual power is involved in this: any other but a spiritual power is inconsistent with the very object in view. To secure the belief and obedience of men to the Word of God, the Church may and ought to put forth her power to teach, to instruct, to persuade, to preach the Gospel, and enforce it by the authority of God, who has revealed it. Anything beyond this exercise of spiritual authority defeats the very end intended, and, so far from securing, prevents the belief of the truth by men that they may be saved. A compulsory power can never secure my belief: it may force my submission, or hypocritical pretence of submission, to certain truths, but not the conviction of the understanding or the assent of the heart. It is not sufficient to say that a power not spiritual, but compulsory, ought not to be employed to secure my belief in the truth of God. The true state of the case is, that a power compulsory, and not spiritual, cannot be so employed. The very nature of the object to be attained renders it not merely improper, but impossible. The "potestas *δογματικη*" is a spiritual authority on the part of the Church to be a witness and interpreter, ministerially, of the truth of God to the consciences and understandings of men; and it is essentially incompatible with any power addressed to aught but the conscience and the understanding.

2d. There is the "potestas *διατακτικη*," the power belonging to the Church in the way of administering ordinances and government in the Christian society. This power comprehends the right to carry into effect the institutions and laws which Christ has appointed within the Church: it does not involve the power to bind the conscience or obedience of its members to the observance of new or additional ordinances, enacted by itself. In re-

gard to ordinances, the authority of the Church in the dispensation of them is purely administrative; the Church communicating to them no authority and no virtue from itself, but dispensing them solely as the appointed channels through which the Spirit of God conveys a spiritual influence to those who use them in faith, and not as charms to which the Church has imparted grace of its own. In regard to laws, the authority of the Church is no more than declaratory, and can neither enforce the obedience nor punish the transgression of them by any other than the authority wherewith Christ has made them binding, or the censures wherewith Christ has given sanction to their hold on the conscience. The Church has no physical influence, *ex opere operato*, wherewith to make ordinances or Sacraments of virtue, apart from the spiritual grace communicated through them by Christ; nor has the Church any temporal or coercive power, wherewith to secure obedience to its laws, or to revenge the transgression of them, apart from Christ's spiritual authority. Let the Church pretend to exercise a physical and not a spiritual influence in the dispensation of ordinances, and Sacraments become a trick of magic, a fantastic charm, not a spiritual service or a channel of grace. Let the Church pretend to use a compulsory, not a spiritual authority, in enforcing laws; and obedience becomes a dead and mechanical and worthless form, not a living and spiritual obedience. It is not merely that power physical and outward, and not spiritual and inward, ought not to be employed to dispense the Sacraments, or carry into effect the laws of the Church. More than that. A power physical and not spiritual cannot be used in the administration of grace or authority through ordinances or through laws, without changing and destroying their very nature as spiritual things in the Church of Christ.

3d. The third branch of Church power is the "potestas *διακριτικη*," or that which concerns discipline, and the admission to or exclusion from the fellowship of the Church. It comprehends all the authority necessary in the way of dealing with the understanding and conscience of men for the purpose of confirming them in faith and obedience, or convincing them of their offences, and recovering them by the exercise of admonition, warning, censure, and rebuke; or, if these methods shall fail of accomplishing their object, finally, as a last step, by the imposition of the spiritual sentence of exclusion from the ordinances and

communion of the Church. The discipline, for the due administration of which this power is conferred on the Church, is entirely of a spiritual kind, having for its one object and aim "the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."¹ A mere compulsory authority affecting the persons of men, or one not purely spiritual, and not limited to instruction, admonition, reproof, and censure, cannot, from the very nature of the case, secure the object in view. A discipline not spiritual, not addressed to the understanding and conscience, cannot be discipline in the proper sense of the term at all. To attain the ends of the "*potestas διακριτικη*" in the Christian Church, compulsion is not merely improper, but impossible.

In whatever light, then, the power of the Church is regarded, and whatever matters it may be conversant with, the object to be attained demonstrates that the power is spiritual, and spiritual only. A spiritual result must, from the very nature of things, be accomplished by a spiritual instrumentality.²

II. That the administration of Church power implies a spiritual and not a civil or temporal authority, may be demonstrated from the unambiguous statements of Scripture, and more especially from the express declarations of our Lord Himself. It is not difficult to recognise the different positions or steps by which such a demonstration can be made out, as they were laid down at different times, and separately exhibited in the statements of the Saviour.

First of all, we have the broad principle laid down of the deep and essential distinction, never to be obliterated or overlooked, between spiritual authority on the one side, and temporal authority on the other; and of the separation not in degree only, but in kind and obligation, between the things that are ranked under the one, and the things that are ranked under the other. "Then sent the Pharisees out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true,

¹ 1 Cor. v. 5. [Quum se tradidisse scribit (apostolus) Corinthium Satanæ, "ut spiritus salvus fieret in die Domini," hoc est, ut ego quidem interpretor, concessisse in damnationem temporaneam, ut æternum salvus fieret. Ideo autem Satanæ tradere dicit, quia extra Ecclesiam Diabolus est, quemadmodum in Ecclesia Christus. Nam quod quidam ad certam carnis vexationem referunt, mihi videtur incertissimum; cf. Aug. de Verb. Apost. in loc.—CALVIN, *Inst.* lib. iv. cap. xii. 5.]

² Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* Pars i. lib. i. tract. ii. cap. i. 3, 4.

and teachest the way of God in truth; neither carest thou for any man. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then said He unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."¹ In that brief but pregnant saying, our Lord recognised the broad and ineffaceable distinction between spiritual and temporal authority, and sanctioned neither of the opposite extremes of opinion, the representatives of which stood before Him, tempting Him to deny the separate authority of the civil magistrate on the one side, or the separate authority of God upon the other. Our Lord would not countenance the doctrine of the Pharisees, which tended to deny the lawfulness of the power of the Roman governor over their countrymen; nor would He countenance the doctrine of the Herodians, which tended to subject the authority of God in religious matters to Herod. Our Lord recognised the separate authority of each, and the separate province of each, drawing broadly and deeply the line of demarcation between the two. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Second, we find in our Lord's sayings another and an additional step in the argument which goes to separate the power of His Church from any approach to what is civil or compulsory. "There came unto Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom." After gently rebuking the folly and pretension of the two brethren in their expectation of temporal authority and aggrandizement, our Lord goes on in these emphatic words: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to

¹ Matt. xxii. 16-21.

minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."¹ We have here something additional to our Lord merely drawing the line, however deeply and broadly, between the things of God and the things of Cæsar. We hear Him expressly disclaiming for Himself, and the members or officers of His Church, the civil authority that kings claimed, and repudiating the idea that the power He came to wield or bestow on His disciples was a temporal lordship like theirs. "It shall not be so among you."

Third, we find in our Lord's sayings another and a further position laid down, in order, as it were, to complete and crown the argument; showing not only that there was a broad and indelible distinction between things spiritual and things temporal—not only that the power He claimed for Himself and His Church was not the civil authority of kings; but also, and finally, that the power of the Church was one distinctively different, because entirely of a spiritual kind. When placed in circumstances that called upon Him more explicitly to define what was the authority He claimed, and what the power that belonged to His kingdom, our Lord plainly asserted that it was of a spiritual kind, and that only. "My kingdom," said He to the Roman magistrate, "my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."²

We have here all that was needed to complete the argument that the power peculiar to the Church of Christ is distinctively a spiritual power. There are three positions bearing on the question in the statement of our Lord to the Roman magistrate.

First, His kingdom was not of this world, to be upheld or protected by the sword; *second*, and more than that, it was from heaven, and not of human authority: "My kingdom is not from hence;" and *thirdly*, and further still, it was a kingdom founded on the truth of God, and upheld only by the authority and force of truth: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." These three positions, laid down by our Lord in His

¹ Matt. xx. 20-28.

² John xviii. 36, 37.

remarkable confession before Pilate, sufficiently indicate that His kingdom was to be one distinctively spiritual, reigning only by the power of truth over the understanding and conscience, and in this respect not identical, but contrasted with the dominion of the civil magistrate. In addition to the other declarations of our Lord, made at other times in the history of His life, they bring before us very plainly the fact, that the power He established in His Church is entirely a spiritual power, and is limited in the sphere of its operation to an authority over the understanding and conscience of men.¹

Now this great and fundamental principle, that the nature of Church power is distinctively and exclusively spiritual, involves in it various inferences of a very important kind.

1. It manifests the unsoundness of the theory that would in any way identify the authority committed to the Church with the authority committed to the state. It is the leading error of the Erastian scheme, under all its various modifications, that in one way or other it virtually makes the power of the Church to be *one* with the power of the state, instead of their being two authorities fundamentally unlike and essentially separate. The older Erastians, including Erastus himself, made the power of discipline and government in the ecclesiastical body to be a trust committed to ecclesiastical office-bearers by the civil magistrate—a delegation to them of his temporal authority for the use of the Church. The more modern adherents of the scheme which identifies the civil with the ecclesiastical power, such as the late Dr. Arnold, restrict their theory to the case of a Christian state, and seem to make the power of the civil magistrate to be a spiritual power, accruing to him from his identification with the Church. In either shape of the theory, it is opposed directly to the very explicit separation made in Scripture between the nature of the two swords; and the no less explicit declaration following up this distinction, that the authority of the Church of Christ, in contradistinction to that of the state, is wholly spiritual. It is a very remarkable fact, indeed, that the harmony between the two powers or authorities of the Church on the one hand, and the state on the other, is to be established and maintained on the very opposite principle from that involved in the theories, whether of more ancient or more recent Erastians, and is to be upheld, not

¹ [Turretin, tom. iii. loc. xviii. Qu. 29-32.]

because these two authorities can be identified or brought into one, but because they are so diametrically and fundamentally opposite in their nature that they never can be identified. A harmony between the spiritual and the temporal authorities is brought about just because they are totally opposite in character, and cannot be merged into each other; not because they are alike, and may be regarded as essentially one. Were the leading principle of the Erastian scheme true, that the ecclesiastical and civil powers are fundamentally one and the same, they could not exist together in the same community, without the sacrifice, on the one side or other, of their interest, power, and independence. Their claims would be inconsistent with each other's existence as independent bodies; and occupying the same field, and asserting the same kind of jurisdiction, and demanding, it might be, opposite obedience, they would inevitably run counter to one another. The irreconcilable distinction in nature between spiritual and temporal authority, is the very reason why they can exist together in perfect harmony. The things of God are not inconsistent with the things of Cæsar, just because they are fundamentally distinct. The authority committed to the Church is in perfect unison with that other authority committed to the state, seeing that the spiritual administration of the one is essentially different from, and cannot be identified with, the temporal dominion entrusted to the other.

2 The great truth which we have endeavoured to establish, of the essentially spiritual nature of the authority committed to the Church of Christ, exposes the fallacy of those claims to civil rights and powers which, in various shapes, have been made in virtue of such spiritual authority on the part of the Church.

The mischievous tendency of that error which confounds what is spiritual with what is temporal, has been established in the history of the Church of Christ in wholly opposite forms, leading to the most different yet equally pernicious results. We have a memorable example of the injurious consequences of such an error in the instructive history of the revolt of the Anabaptists in Germany, at the time of the Reformation, against all civil government, and their assertion of a claim, on the part of those whom they called "the saints," to the dominion of the earth in the name of their Master. It was a fundamental principle in their creed, that the Church of Christ consisted of a society of

saints, who, in virtue of their character as Christ's servants, and in consequence of His authority over all, were vested in a civil supremacy over the rest of mankind, and in a Divine right to the inheritance of the earth as theirs, with all its temporal privileges and possessions. The very same principle in substance was the tenet of the Fifth Monarchy men in this country, during the confusion caused by the numerous sectaries that prevailed during a part of the seventeenth century, affirming as they did, that the possession of grace by the Church or its members gave them also a title to the possession of civil rights and property. The history of fanaticism affords frequent and not uninteresting illustration of the mischievous consequences resulting from the confounding together of what is distinctively spiritual with what is temporal, and from attempting to engraft the one kind of authority upon the other.

But the most memorable example, without doubt, of all those given of the injurious effects of confounding and mingling together the spiritual and the temporal, is afforded us from a very opposite quarter. The enthusiasm of the fanatics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, presents to our view no such flagrant and monstrous violation of the fundamental doctrine, that the power of the Christian Church is distinctively spiritual, and exclusively so, as does the elaborate and systematic endeavour of the Romish Church to graft a temporal authority upon a spiritual one. As a direct demand, or as an indirect assumption arising out of the spiritual power of the Church, it has been the attempt of Popery in every age to bring in, along with the spiritual pretensions of the clergy, from the highest to the lowest of them, the claim of temporal privileges or authority. We see this in the exemptions claimed by the Popish clergy, in virtue of their spiritual character and office, wherever these claims were likely to be tolerated or to prove successful, from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals, both in respect to their persons and property. We see it again in the effects of a temporal and civil kind, ascribed to the sentence of excommunication pronounced by the Church, wherever circumstances and opportunity conspired to favour the ascription. We see it, above all, in the practical assumption by popes, and that grounded on the plea of their spiritual supremacy, of the right to exercise control in temporal matters, to dispose of kingdoms and crowns, to depose sove-