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

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

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


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

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

[2.] To prove therefore that the will of Christ was to establish laws so permanent and immutable that in any sort to alter them cannot but highly offend God, thus they reason. First, if Moses, being but a servant in the house of God,
The book of Mutability no Mark of comparative Disfavour:

Ch. xi. 3. did therein establish laws of government for perpetuity, laws which they that were of the household might not alter; shall we admit into our thoughts, that the Son of God hath in providing for this his household declared himself less faithful than Moses? Moses delivering unto the Jews such laws as were durable, if those be changeable which Christ hath delivered unto us, we are not able to avoid it, but (that which to think were heinous impiety) we of necessity must confess even the Son of God himself to have been less faithful than Moses. Which argument shall need no touchstone to try it by but some other of the like making. Moses erected in the wilderness a tabernacle which was moveable from place to place; Salomon a sumptuous and stately temple which was not moveable: therefore Salomon was faithfuller than Moses, which no man endued with reason will think. And yet by this reason it doth plainly follow.

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

[3.] Our Lord and Saviour doth make protestation, “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.” Faithful therefore he was, and concealed not any part of his Father’s will. But did any part of the immutability of laws concerning church polity? They answer, Yea. For God would not have less favour us than the Jews.

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

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


3 [Invent. Ecclesia Judæorum omnia, “descripta sunt, et a Deo praedita, “quæ ad regendum non modo... “Ae mæ moribus commendata.”]

[civilem sed etiam ecclesiasticum

[* Hooker more probably refers to Flavy. Nat. Hist. vii. 1: “Præcipium jure tributor hominæ, cujus causa videtur cuncta alia genuisse natura, magna secura mercede contra tantus suas munera: non sit ut satia estimare, parentes melior, hominum, an triuēter novera uerita. Ante omniam, usum animantium contractum, aliusvel obi, exterius varie tenendum tribuit, testas corticis, coria, spinas... Hominem tantum nudum (Lucret. v. 224) et in nudum humo natalis die alibiui ab uagus statum et ploratum.”] 1886.}
The Law Positive was relative to Things as they were.

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

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

1 Rom. xi. 17. 2 Ephes. ii. 12-16. 3 Deut. iv. 5. 4 Deut. iv. 12-14. 5 Deut. v. 22.

1 Deut. v. 27. 2 Deut. v. 28-31.
BOOK III.

Ch. xi. 7, 8.

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

[7.] But that which most of all maketh for the clearing of this point is, that the Jews 1, who had laws so particularly determining and so fully instructing them in all affairs what to do, were notwithstanding continually injured with causes exorbitant, and such as their laws had not provided for. And in this point much more is granted us than we ask, namely, that for one thing which we have left to the order of the Church, they had twenty which were undecided by the express word of God; and that as their ceremonies and sacraments were multiplied above ours, even so grew the number of those cases which were not determined by any express word. So that if we may devise one law, they by this reason might devise twenty; and if their devising so many were not forbidden, shall their example prove us forbidden to devise as much as one law for the ordering of the Church? We might not devise no not one, if their example did prove that our Saviour had utterly forbidden all alteration of his laws; inasmuch as there can be no law devised, but needs it must either take away from his, or add thereunto more or less, and so make some kind of alteration. But of this so large a grant we are content not to take advantage. Men are oftentimes in a sudden passion more liberal than they would be if they had leisure to take advice. And therefore so bountiful words of course and frank speeches we are contented to let pass, without turning them unto advantage with too much rigour.

[8.] It may be they had rather be listened unto, when they commend the kings of Israel “which attempted nothing in “the government of the Church without the express word of “God,” and when they urge 3 that God left nothing in his word “undescribed,” whether it concerned the worship of God or outward polity, nothing unset down, and therefore

1 “Whereas you say, that they 2 (the Jews) had nothing but what was determined by the law, and we have many things undetermined and left to the order of the Church; I will offer, for one that you shall bring that we have left to the order of the Church, to shew you that they had twenty which were undecided by the express word of God.” T. C. lib. i. p. 35.

2 [22.] T. C. in the table to his second book.

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

which were supplied by occasional Revelation.