

BOOK VII.

THEIR SIXTH ASSERTION, THAT THERE OUGHT NOT TO BE IN THE CHURCH, BISHOPS ENDUED WITH SUCH AUTHORITY AND HONOUR AS OURS ARE.

THE MATTER CONTAINED IN THIS SEVENTH BOOK.

- I. The state of Bishops, although some time oppugned, and that by such as therein would most seem to please God, yet by his providence upheld hitherto, whose glory it is to maintain that whereof himself is the author.
- II. What a Bishop is, what his name doth import, and what doth belong unto his office as he is a Bishop.
- III. In Bishops two things traduced; of which two, the one their authority; and in it the first thing condemned, their superiority over other ministers: what kind of superiority in ministers it is which the one part holdeth, and the other denieth lawful.
- IV. From whence it hath grown that the Church is governed by Bishops.
- V. The time and cause of instituting every where Bishops with restraint.
- VI. What manner of power Bishops from the first beginning have had.
- VII. After what sort Bishops, together with presbyters, have used to govern the churches which were under them.
- VIII. How far the power of Bishops hath reached from the beginning in respect of territory, or local compass.
- IX. In what respects episcopal regiment hath been gainsaid of old by Aërius.
- X. In what respect episcopal regiment is gainsaid by the authors of pretended reformation at this day.
- XI. Their arguments in disgrace of regiment by Bishops, as being a mere invention of man, and not found in Scripture, answered.
- XII. Their arguments to prove there was no necessity of instituting Bishops in the Church.
- XIII. The fore-alleged arguments answered.
- XIV. An answer unto those things which are objected concerning the difference between that power which Bishops now have, and that which ancient Bishops had more than other presbyters.
- XV. Concerning the civil power and authority which our Bishops have.
- XVI. The arguments answered, whereby they would prove that the law of God, and the judgment of the best in all ages condemneth the ruling superiority of one minister over another.

- XVII. The second malicious thing wherein the state of Bishops suffereth obloquy, is their honour.
- XVIII. What good doth publicly grow from the Prelacy.
- XIX. What kinds of honour be due unto Bishops.
- XX. Honour in Title, Place, Ornament, Attendance, and Privilege.
- XXI. Honour by Endowment with Lands and Livings.
- XXII. That of ecclesiastical Goods, and consequently of the Lands and Livings which Bishops enjoy, the propriety belongs unto God alone.
- XXIII. That ecclesiastical persons are receivers of God's rents, and that the honour of Prelates is to be thereof his chief receivers, not without liberty from him granted of converting the same unto their own use, even in large manner.
- XXIV. That for their unworthiness to deprive both them and their successors of such goods, and to convey the same unto men of secular callings, now [were ?] extreme sacrilegious injustice.

I HAVE heard that a famous kingdom¹ in the world being solicited to reform such disorders as all men saw the Church exceedingly burdened with, when of each degree great multitudes thereunto inclined, and the number of them did every day so increase that this intended work was likely to take no other effect than all good men did wish and labour for; a principal actor herein (for zeal and boldness of spirit) thought it good to shew them betimes what it was which must be effected, or else that there could be no work of perfect reformation accomplished. To this purpose, in a solemn sermon, and in a great assembly, he described unto them the present quality of their public estate by the parable of a tree, huge and goodly to look upon, but without that fruit which it should and might bring forth; affirming that the only way of redress was a full and perfect establishment of Christ's discipline (for so their manner is to entitle a thing hammered out upon the forge of their own invention), and that to make way of entrance for it, there must be three great limbs cut off from the body of that stately tree of the kingdom: those three limbs were three sorts of men; nobles, whose high estate would make them otherwise disdain to put their necks under

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The state of Bishops although sometime oppugned, and that by such as therein would most seem to please God, yet by his providence upheld hitherto, whose glory it is to maintain that whereof himself is the author.

¹[This anecdote must relate either to France or Scotland: the editor has not succeeded in tracing it in either history. From the tone in which Hooker describes the state of the country, it would seem that France was meant; comp. b. iii. c. xi. § 14. The anecdote might be one of the many reports of what had passed in the conference at Poissy, 1561.]

that yoke ; lawyers, whose courts being not pulled down, the new church consistories were not like to flourish ; finally, prelates, whose ancient dignity, and the simplicity of their intended church discipline, could not possibly stand together. The proposition of which device being plausible to active spirits, restless through desire of innovation, whom commonly nothing doth more offend than a change which goeth fearfully on by slow and suspicious paces ; the heavier and more experienced sort began presently thereat to pull back their feet again, and exceedingly to fear the stratagem of reformation for ever after. Whereupon ensued those extreme conflicts of the one part with the other, which continuing and increasing to this very day, have now made the state of that flourishing kingdom even such, as whereunto we may most fitly apply those words of the Prophet Jeremiah¹, "Thy breach is great like the sea, who can heal thee?"

[2.] Whether this were done in truth, according to the constant affirmation of some avouching the same, I take not upon me to examine ; that which I note therein is, how with us that policy hath been corrected. For to the authors of pretended reformation with us, it hath not seemed expedient to offer the edge of the axe to all three boughs at once, but rather to single them, and strike at the weakest first, making show that the lop of that one shall draw the more abundance of sap to the other two, that they may thereby the better prosper.

All prosperity, felicity and peace we wish multiplied on each estate, as far as their own hearts' desire is : but let men know that there is a God, whose eye beholdeth them in all their ways ; a God, the usual and ordinary course of whose justice is to return upon the head of malice the same devices which it contriveth against others. The foul practices which have been used for the overthrow of bishops, may perhaps wax bold in process of time to give the like assault even there, from whence at this present they are most seconded.

[3.] Nor let it over dismay them who suffer such things at the hands of this most unkind world, to see that heavenly estate and dignity thus conculcated, in regard whereof so many their predecessors were no less esteemed than if they had not been men, but angels amongst men. With

¹ [Lam. ii. 13.]

former bishops it was as with Job in the days of that prosperity which at large he describeth, saying¹, "Unto me men gave ear, they waited and held their tongue at my counsel ; after my words they replied not ; I appointed out their way and did sit as chief ; I dwelt as it had been a king in an army." At this day the case is otherwise with them ; and yet no otherwise than with the selfsame Job at what time the alteration of his estate wrested these contrary speeches from him², "But now they that are younger than I mock at me, the children of fools, and offspring of slaves, creatures more base than the earth they tread on, such as if they did shew their heads, young and old would shout at them and chase them through the streets with a cry, their song I am, I am a theme for them to talk on." An injury less grievous if it were not offered by them whom Satan hath through his fraud and subtilty so far beguiled as to make them imagine herein they do unto God a part of most faithful service. Whereas the lord in truth, whom they serve herein, is as St. Cyprian telleth them³, like, not Christ, (for he it is that doth appoint and protect bishops,) but rather Christ's adversary and enemy of his Church.

[4.] A thousand five hundred years and upward the Church of Christ hath now continued under the sacred regiment of bishops. Neither for so long hath Christianity been ever planted in any kingdom throughout the world but with this kind of government alone ; which to have been ordained of God, I am for mine own part even as resolutely persuaded, as that any other kind of government in the world whatsoever is of God. In this realm of England, before Normans, yea before Saxons, there being Christians, the chief pastors of their souls were bishops. This order from about the first establishment of Christian religion, which was publicly begun through the virtuous disposition of King Lucie not fully two hundred years after Christ⁴, continued till the coming in of the Saxons ; by whom Paganism being every where else replanted, only one part of the island, whereinto the ancient

¹ [Job xxix. 21, 22, 25.]

² [Job xxx. 1-9.]

³ Cyp. lib. i. Ep. 3. [al. Ep. 59. c. 3. "Exaltatio, et inflatio, et arrogans ac superba jactatio non de

"Christimagisterio, qui humilitatem docet, sed Antichristi spiritu nascitur." ii. 127. ed. Fell.]

⁴ [Bed. Hist. Eccl. i. 4.]

natural inhabitants the Britons were driven, retained constantly the faith of Christ, together with the same form of spiritual regiment, which their fathers had before received. Wherefore in the histories of the Church we find very ancient mention made of our own bishops. At the council of Ariminum¹, about the year three hundred and fifty-nine, Britain had three of her bishops present. At the arrival of Augustine the monk², whom Gregory sent hither to reclaim the Saxons from Gentility about six hundred years after Christ, the Britons he found observers still of the selfsame government by bishops over the rest of the clergy; under this form Christianity took root again, where it had been exiled. Under the selfsame form it remained till³ the days of the Norman conqueror. By him and his successors thereunto⁴ sworn, it hath from that time till now by the space of five hundred years more been upheld.

O nation utterly without knowledge, without sense! We are not through error of mind deceived, but some wicked thing hath undoubtedly bewitched us, if we forsake that government, the use whereof universal experience hath for so many years approved, and betake ourselves unto a regiment neither appointed of God himself, as they who favour it pretend, nor till yesterday ever heard of among men. By the Jews Festus⁵ was much complained of, as being a governor

¹ Sulpit. Sever. lib. ii. [c. 55. "Missis per Illyricum, Italiam, "Africam, Hispanias, Galliasque "magistris officialibus, acciti ac in "unum coacti quadringenti et ali- "quanto amplius Occidentales Epi- "scopi, Ariminum convenere; qui- "bus omnibus annonas et cellaria "dare imperator præceperat; sed "id nostris, i. e. Aquitanis, Gallis ac "*Britannis* indecens visum, repu- "diatis fiscalibus, propriis sumpti- "bus vivere maluerunt. Tres tan- "tum ex *Britannia*, inopia proprii, "publico usi sunt." More than three it seems were present from Britain, but three only received the public allowance.]

² Beda Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. c. 2. ["Augustinus . . . convocavit ad "suum colloquium episcopus sive "doctores proximæ Britonum pro-

"vinciæ . . . Convenerunt, ut per- "hibent, septem Britonum episcopi "et plures viri doctissimi.]"

³ An. 1066.

⁴ "Alfredus Eboracensis Archi- "episcopus Gulielmum cognomento "Nothum spirantem adhuc mina- "rum et cædis in populum mitem "reddit: et religiosis pro conser- "vanda repub. tuendaque ecclesias- "tica disciplina sacramentis ad- "strinxit." Neubrig. l. i. c. 1. [Wil- liam of Newbridge, 1135-1208.] [ap. Rer. Britannic. Script. Heidel- berg, 1587. p. 357.]

⁵ [Rather Albinus the successor of Festus; of whom Josephus writes, B. J. ii. 14. ed. Huds. Οὐκ ἔστι δὲ ἦν τινα κακουργίας ἰδέαν παρέλπειν . . . τοιοῦτον δὲ ὄντα τὸν Ἀλβίνον ἀπέ- δειξεν ὁ μετὰ τοῦτον ἔλθων Γέσσιος Φλώρος ἀγαθώτατον κατὰ σύγκρισιν.]

marvellous corrupt, and almost intolerable: such notwith- standing were they who came after him, that men which thought the public condition most afflicted under Festus, began to wish they had him again, and to esteem him a ruler commendable. Great things are hoped for at the hands of these new presidents, whom reformation would bring in: notwithstanding the time may come, when bishops whose regiment doth now seem a yoke so heavy to bear, will be longed for again even by them that are the readiest to have it taken off their necks.

But in the hands of Divine Providence we leave the order- ing of all such events, and come now to the question itself which is raised concerning bishops. For the better under- standing whereof we must beforehand set down what is meant, when in this question we name a bishop.

II. For whatsoever we bring from antiquity, by way of defence in this cause of bishops, it is cast off as impertinent matter, all is wiped away with an odd kind of shifting answer, "That the bishops which now are, be not like unto them "which were." We therefore beseech all indifferent judges to weigh sincerely with themselves how the case doth stand. If it should be at this day a controversy whether kingly regiment were lawful or no, peradventure in defence thereof, the long continuance which it hath had sithence the first beginning might be alleged; mention perhaps might be made what kings there were of old even in Abraham's time, what sovereign princes both before and after. Suppose that herein some man purposely bending his wit against sovereignty, should think to elude all such allegations by making ample discovery through a number of particularities, wherein the kings that are do differ from those that have been, and should therefore in the end conclude, that such ancient examples are no convenient proofs of that royalty which is now in use. Surely for decision of truth in this case there were no remedy, but only to shew the nature of sovereignty, to sever it from accidental properties, make it clear that ancient and present regality are one and the same in substance, how great odds soever otherwise may seem to be between them. In like manner, whereas a question of late hath grown, whether ecclesiastical regiment by bishops be lawful in the Church of

Christ or no : in which question, they that hold the negative, being pressed with that general received order, according whereunto the most renowned lights of the Christian world have governed the same in every age as bishops ; seeing their manner is to reply, that such bishops as those ancient were, ours are not ; there is no remedy but to shew, that to be a bishop is now the selfsame thing which it hath been ; that one definition agreeth fully and truly as well to those elder, as to these latter bishops. Sundry dissimilitudes we grant there are, which notwithstanding are not such that they cause any equivocation in the name, whereby we should think a bishop in those times to have had a clean other definition than doth rightly agree unto bishops as they are now. Many things there are in the state of bishops, which the times have changed ; many a parsonage at this day is larger than some ancient bishoprics were ; many an ancient bishop poorer than at this day sundry under them in degree. The simple hereupon lacking judgment and knowledge to discern between the nature of things which changeth not, and these outward variable accidents, are made believe that a bishop heretofore and now are things in their very nature so distinct that they cannot be judged the same. Yet to men that have any part of skill, what more evident and plain in bishops, than that augmentation or diminution in their precincts, allowances, privileges, and such like, do make a difference indeed, but no essential difference between one bishop and another ? As for those things in regard whereof we use properly to term them bishops, those things whereby they essentially differ from other pastors, those things which the natural definition of a bishop must contain ; what one of them is there more or less applicable unto bishops now than of old ?

[2.] The name Bishop hath been borrowed from the Grecians¹, with whom it signifieth one which hath principal charge to guide and oversee others. The same word in eccle-

¹ Οἱ παρ' Ἀθηναίων εἰς τὰς ὑπηκόους πόλεις ἐπισκέψασθαι τὰ παρ' ἑκάστοις πεμπόμενοι, Ἐπίσκοποι καὶ φύλακες ἐκαλοῦντο· οὓς οἱ Δάκωνες ἀρμοστὰς ἔλεγον. Suid. [voc. ἐπίσκοπος.] Κατέστησεν ἐφ' ἑκάστοις [ἐκάστου] τῶν πάγων ἀρχοντα ἐπίσκοπόν τε καὶ περίπολον τῆς ἰδίας μοίρας. Dionys. Halicar. de Numa Pompilio, Antiq. lib. ii. [c. 76.] "Vult me Pompeius esse quem tota "hæc Campania et maritima ora "habeat Ἐπίσκοπον, ad quem delectus et negotii summa referatur." Cic. ad Attic. lib. vii. Epist. 11.

siastical writings being applied unto church governors, at the first unto all and not unto the chiefest only¹, grew in short time peculiar and proper to signify such episcopal authority alone, as the chiefest governors exercised over the rest. For with all names this is usual, that inasmuch as they are not given till the things whereunto they are given have been sometime first observed, therefore generally² things are ancients than the names whereby they are called.

Again, sith the first things that grow into general observation, and do thereby give men occasion to find names for them, are those which being in many subjects, are thereby the easier, the oftener, and the more universally noted ; it followeth that names imposed to signify common qualities or operations are ancients, than is the restraint of those names, to note an excellency of such qualities and operations in some one or few amongst others. For example, the name disciple being invented to signify generally a learner, it cannot choose but in that signification be more ancient than when it signifieth as it were by a kind of appropriation, those learners who being taught of Christ³ were in that respect termed disciples by an excellency. The like is to be seen in the name Apostle, the use whereof to signify a messenger must needs be more ancient than that use which restraineth it unto messengers sent concerning evangelical affairs ; yea this use more ancient than that whereby the same word is yet restrained further to signify only those whom our Saviour himself immediately did send. After the same manner the title or name of a Bishop having been used of old to signify both an ecclesiastical overseer in general, and more particularly also a principal ecclesiastical overseer ; it followeth, that this latter restrained signification is not so ancient as the former, being more common⁴. Yet because the things themselves are always ancients than their names ; therefore that thing which the restrained use of the word doth import,

¹ Acts xx. 28 ; Phil. i. 1.

² "And God brought them unto Adam, that Adam might see or consider what name it was meet he should give unto them." Gen. ii. 19.

³ So also the name deacon, a

minister appropriated to a certain order of ministers.

⁴ The name likewise of a minister was common to divers degrees, which now is peculiarly among ourselves given only to pastors, and not, as anciently, to deacons also.

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[3.] But to let go the name, and come to the very nature of that thing which is thereby signified. In all kinds of regiment whether ecclesiastical or civil, as there are sundry operations public, so likewise great inequality there is in the same operations, some being of principal respect, and therefore not fit to be dealt in by every one to whom public actions, and those of good importance, are notwithstanding well and fitly enough committed. From hence have grown those different degrees of magistrates or public persons, even ecclesiastical as well as civil. Amongst ecclesiastical persons therefore bishops being chief ones, a bishop's function must be defined by that wherein his chiefly consisteth.

A Bishop is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance there is given not only power of administering the Word and Sacraments, which power other Presbyters have; but also a further power to ordain ecclesiastical persons, and a power of chiefly in government over Presbyters as well as Laymen, a power to be by way of jurisdiction a Pastor even to Pastors themselves. So that this office, as he is a Presbyter or Pastor, consisteth in those things which are common unto him with other pastors, as in ministering the Word and Sacraments: but those things incident unto his office, which do properly make him a Bishop, cannot be common unto him with other Pastors.

Now even as pastors, so likewise bishops being principal pastors, are either at large or else with restraint: at large, when the subject of their regiment is indefinite, and not tied

¹ [Othello, Act ii. sc. 1. "O most lame and impotent conclusion!" The date of this play is 1611. The phrase is a translation of "*manca et debilis*," which had somehow become proverbial. Cf. in Faccioliati, Plaut. Mercator. 3. 4. 45, "Cæcus, mutus, *mancus*, *debilis*;" Liv. 7, 13, "*mancorum et debiliū ducem*;" Cic. pro Mil. 9, "*mancam ac debilem Præturam*."]]

to any certain place; bishops with restraint are they whose regiment over the Church is contained within some definite, local compass, beyond which compass their jurisdiction reacheth not. Such therefore we always mean when we speak of that regiment by bishops which we hold a thing most lawful, divine and holy in the Church of Christ.

III. In our present regiment by bishops two things there are complained of, the one their great authority, and the other their great honour. Touching the authority of our bishops, the first thing which therein displeaseth their adversaries, is their superiority which bishops have over other ministers. They which cannot brook the superiority which bishops have, do notwithstanding themselves admit that some kind of difference and inequality there may be lawfully amongst ministers. Inequality as touching gifts and graces they grant, because this is so plain that no mist in the world can be cast before men's eyes so thick, but that they needs must discern through it, that one minister of the gospel may be more learned, holier, and wiser, better able to instruct, more apt to rule and guide them than another: unless thus much were confessed, those men should lose their fame and glory whom they themselves do entitle the lights and grand worthies of this present age. Again, a priority of order they deny not but that there may be, yea such a priority as maketh one man amongst many a principal actor in those things whereunto sundry of them must necessarily concur, so that the same be admitted only during the time of such actions and no longer; that is to say, just so much superiority, and neither more nor less may be liked of, than it hath pleased them in their own kind of regiment to set down. The inequality which they complain of is, "That one minister of the word and sacraments should have a permanent superiority above another, or in any sort a superiority of power mandatory, judicial, and coercive over other ministers." By us on the contrary side, "inequality, even such inequality as unto bishops being ministers of the word and sacraments granteth a superiority permanent above ministers, yea a permanent superiority of power mandatory, judicial and coercive over them," is maintained a thing allowable, lawful and good.

In Bishops two things traduced; of which two the one their authority; and in it the first thing condemned, their superiority over other ministers: what kind of superiority in ministers it is which the one part holdeth and the other denieth lawful.