

David Dickson's
Truth's Victory Over Error
Chapter XXX. (Part 1.)
Of Church Censures.

QUESTION I.

HAth the Lord Jesus as King, and Head of his Church, appointed therein a Government in the hands of Church-Officers, distinct from the Civil Magistrate?

Yes. *Isaiah* 9.6,7. *1 Tim.* 5.17. *1 Thes.* 5.12. *Acts* 20.17,18. *Heb.* 13.7, 17, 24. *1 Cor.* 12.28. *Matth.* 28.18-20.

Well then, *Do not the Erastians and others err, who maintain, that in the Holy Scripture there is no particular form of Church Government set down, and appointed by Christ?*

Yes.

By what reasons are they confuted?

(1) Because, the Lord Jesus Christ hath delivered to the Ministers of his Church, as to his own *Delegates* and *Ambassadors* (and therefore according to his own laws) the whole power of Governing the Church, which he himself received from the Father, to be managed, and put in execution in his own name and authority; *John* 20.21. *Matth.* 28.19. *Acts* 1.2. *Eph.* 4.7,8,11. (2) Because, all the substantial of *Church Government*, under the *New Testament*, which either concern *Ministers*, *Ordinances*, *Censures*, *Synods*, *Councils*, and their power, are proposed, and set down in Scripture, namely in the third Chapter of the first Epistle to *Timothy*, [and] *Acts* 15[th] chapter, and *1 Cor.* 14.26,40. (3) Because, the Lord Jesus Christ, hath looked to the good of his Church, no less under the *New Testament*, than under the *Old*. Therefore, since the Church under the *Old Testament*, had a most perfect form of Government prescribed to it: and since there is as great need and necessity of Church order, and discipline, under the *New Testament*, as was under the *Old*, it must follow, that there is a Pattern and Form of Church government no less set down, and prescribed under the *New Testament*, than was under the *Old*; *Heb.* 3.1,2,4,5. *Heb.* 13.8. *1 Cor.* chap. 5. *1 Tim.* 5.20. And *1 Tim.* 1.20. (4) The end of the Church Government is spiritual, namely the gaining of men's souls to Christ. But nothing that's merely of human authority, can reach this end; *Matth.* 18.15-17. (5) Because, all the parts of Church Government, are particularly set down in Scripture. As first, those things which concern the key of doctrine, as publick prayer, and giving of thanks; *1 Tim.* 2.1-2. *1 Cor.* 14.14-16.

Singing of *Psalms*: *Eph.* 5.18,19. *Col.* 3.16. Public reading of the Word, Preaching, and Expounding the same; *Acts* 6.4. *Acts* 13.15,27. *Acts* 5.20-21. *2 Cor.* 3.14. *Matth.* 18.19,20. *2 Tim.* 4.2. *Heb.* 6.1. *Gal.* 6.6. Secondly, those parts likewise, which concern the key of Discipline, namely the ordination of *Presbyters*, with the imposition of the hands of the *Presbytery*; *1 Tim.* 4.14, and *1 Tim.* 5.22. *Titus* 1.5. *Acts* 14.21,23. Thirdly, the Authoritative giving of Judgment, and sentence concerning doctrine; and that according to the Word, *Acts* 15.15, 24, 28. Fourthly, Admonition and publick Rebuking of those who have offended; *Matth.* 18.15-17. *1 Thes.* 5.14. *1 Tim.* 5.20. Fifthly, The excommunicating of those who are contumacious, and ungodly, and who are convicted of manifest crimes, and scandals; *Matth.* 18.17. *Titus* 3.10. *1 Tim.* 1.20. *1 Cor.* 5.2-5. Lastly, the receiving again into the fellowship of the Church persons cast out by excommunication, having testified their Repentance; *2 Cor.* 2.6-9.

Do not the same Erastians err, who make no distinction between Church power and the Secular power?

Yes.

By what reasons are they confuted?

(1) Because, Christ hath committed the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to the Officers of his Church which are Governours distinct from the civil Magistrate; *Matth.* 16.18,19. *Matth.* 18.18-19. *John* 20.21-23. (2) Because, Church power and civil power differ specifically. The Church, and the Common-wealth are Polities formally, and essentially, different. They are not, as such, powers subordinate, at least in a right line, but co-ordinate; *Acts* 4.19,20. *2 Chron.* 26.18. Next, God the Creator and Governor of the World, is the Efficient of the power of the civil Magistrate, *Rom.* 13.1-4. But God-Christ, our blessed Mediator, and Lord of his Church, is the Efficient of the church particuarly, and of its Government. The matter (*materia ex qua*) of the civil Government, is the secular sword: but the matter of the church Government, are the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. The matter of the civil Government (*materia in qua*) may be a Senate, many people, the Person of one king, of a child, a woman. But the matter of the *church government*, is not of this kind; *Heb.* 13.24. *1 Tim.* 3.15. *1 Cor.* 14.34,35. The matter of the *Civil Government* (*materia circa quam*) are men and women, as members of the *common-wealth*, without, as well as within the *Church*: but as *Christians* and *members* of the *Church*, they are not such; *1 Cor.* 5.13. The formal causes of both are distinct; the one inflicts *punishments* merely *spiritual*; the other inflicts *punishments* merely *civil*. Lastly, the end of this, is the *corporal* and *external* good of a *society*; but the end of that, is the *spiritual* good of the *church* and its *edification*; *Matth.* 14.15. *1 Cor.* 5.5. *2 Cor.* 10.8.