

Spirit of God the distractions and disorders which would arise from a multitude of *equals*, substituted *Episcopal* Government instead of *their own*. General Councils to make a *law* for a general change for many ages, there were none. There was no Christian Emperor, no co-ercive power over the Church to *enforce* it: Or, if there had been any, we know no force equal to the courage of the Christians of those times. Their lives were then at command (for they had not then learnt to *fight* for Christ); but their obedience to any thing against his law was not to be commanded—for they had perfectly learnt to *die* for him. Therefore, there was no power then to command this change; or if there had been any, it had been vain.

2ndly.—What device, then, shall we study; or to what fountain shall we reduce this strange pretended alteration; can it enter into our hearts to think that all the Presbyters and other Christians then, being the *Apostles' Scholars*, could be generally ignorant of the will of Christ touching the necessity of a Presbyterial Government? Or dare we adventure to think them so strangely wicked, all the world over, as against knowledge and conscience to conspire? Imagine the spirit of Diotrophes had entered into some or a great many of the Presbyters and possessed them with an ambitious desire of a forbidden superiority; was it possible that they should attempt and achieve it at once without any opposition or contradiction? And besides that the contagion of this ambition should spread itself and prevail without stop or control; nay without any noise or notice taken of it, though all the Christian Churches of the world—all the watchmen, in the mean time, being so fast asleep and all the watch-dogs so dumb, that not so much as *one* should open his mouth against it?

3rdly.—But let us suppose (though it be a horrible untruth) that the Presbyters and people *then* were not so good Christians as the Presbyterians are *now*: that *they* were generally so negligent to retain the Government of Christ's Church commanded by Christ, which are now so zealous to restore it; yet certainly we must not forget nor deny that they were *men* as we are. And if we look upon them but as mere natural men, yet knowing by experience how hard a thing it is even for policy armed with power, by many attempts and contrivances and in a long time, to gain upon the liberty of any *one* people; undoubtedly we shall never entertain so wild an imagination as that, among *all* the Christian Presbyteries in the world, neither conscience of duty, nor love of liberty, nor averseness from pride and usurpation of others over them, should prevail so much with any one as to oppose this pretended universal invasion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the liberty of Christians.