

regulation appointed by divine authority, in a society that was designed to continue to the end of time, bears the stamp of perpetuity upon the face of it. It should become impracticable, before it should cease to be practised by those who take the Word of God for their guide. All laws which are not expressly made for a limited time, are of course perpetual, until they are abrogated by an authority equal to that by which they were enacted. Christians of all persuasions seem to agree in these sentiments; for they either profess to form their Church government on what they conceive to be the primitive model, or attempt to support, by the authority of Scripture, that order which they have adopted for accidental circumstances.

2. The commands relative to Church government, like those which relate to many other duties, are partly positive, and partly discretionary.

In this case we are as much bound by the positive declarations, as if nothing had been left to our discretion. General directions are also given for the regulation of those circumstances which are committed to our discretion. We stand in the same predicament with relation to other duties. Alms-deeds, for instance, are positively enjoined, but no specific proportion of our wealth is directed to be set apart for this purpose. Yet we have general directions to guide our conduct in this discretionary circumstance. It is our duty to collect those particulars which the apostles clearly enjoined, by precepted example, in the formation of the Christian Church, as far as they are applicable to a settled state of the Church. Such injunctions we are bound to follow. No private opinions of what is best, can authorise us to depart from them. In all matters left to our discretion, we must conduct ourselves by those general rules which the Scriptures afford for the guidance of that discretion. If it should appear, for instance, that the apostles appointed different orders of mi-