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Chapter 1: The Cause of Writing This General Discourse

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“The Cause of Writing This General Discourse Concerning Laws”

Chapter 1 of Book 1 in

Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity

By Richard Hooker

1594

[Hooker, Richard. “Concerning Laws and Their Several Kinds in General.” Book 1 in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. In Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton*. Arranged by the Rev. John Keble MA. 7th edition revised by the Very Rev. R.W. Church and the Rev. F. Paget (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888). 3 vols. Vol. 1. The Online Library of Liberty. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/921>. In the public domain. Some modernized vocabulary and contructions have been substituted in the text by the Witherspoon Institute.]

Within the text, numbers within brackets indicate the page divisions of the 1888 edition from which this text was taken; prose within text are insertions of the Witherspoon Institute to supply words required by modern English usage. In places the Witherspoon Institute has modernized archaic or obsolete vocabulary or constructions in Hooker’s text. In cases where the changes are very basic and risk no alteration to the original meaning of the text (such as changing “whereof” to “of which” and “saith” to “says”) there is no notation in the text; changes to more substantive vocabulary are noted with footnotes that show the original word that Hooker used.

Within the footnotes, text not within brackets are Hooker’s original notes; text within single brackets is supplied by the Witherspoon Institute; text within double brackets (that is, [[]]) is supplied by the editors of the 1888 edition.

Chapter 1: The cause of writing this general Discourse concerning Laws.

. . .

[3.] The Laws of the Church, whereby for so many ages together we have been guided in the exercise of Christian religion and the service of the true God, our rites, customs, and orders of ecclesiastical government, are called in question: we are accused as men that will not have Christ Jesus to rule over them, but have wilfully cast his statutes behind their backs, hating to be reformed and made subject to the sceptre of his discipline. Behold therefore we offer the laws whereby we live to the general trial and

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judgment of the whole world; heartily beseeching Almighty God, whom we desire to serve according to his own will, that both we [200] and others (all kind of partial affection being clean laid aside) may have eyes to see and hearts to embrace the things that in his sight are most acceptable.

And because the point about which we strive is the quality of our laws, our first entrance hereinto cannot better be made, than with consideration of the nature of law in general, and of that law which gives life to all the rest, which are commendable, just, and good; namely the law whereby the Eternal himself does work. Proceeding from hence to the law, first of Nature, then of Scripture, we shall have the easier access to those things which come after to be debated, concerning the particular cause and question which we have in hand.

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